



WGU News

For Immediate Release

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## A Debt Worth Having

*[Getting a degree online](#) can be a wise investment*

Salt Lake City, Utah – (January 30, 2009) If you're looking for a job, hoping to get a promotion, or just trying to stay employed during these tough economic times, finding a way to distinguish yourself from the ever-increasing competition is getting harder every day. And, if you've been thinking about getting a degree, you know that having the right degree from an accredited institution is one of the best ways to improve your short-term job prospects as well as your long-term earning potential. So it seems pretty simple—it's time to get that degree—but is now a good time to borrow money for college?

The answer is yes—there's no question that investing in a degree in your field will make you more employable and increase your earning potential. 2005 U.S. Census figures indicate that average annual salaries for individuals with bachelor's degrees are more than 40% higher than for those with high school diplomas. And if you're considering a master's degree, salaries for individuals with advanced degrees are 33% higher than for those with bachelor's.

As you consider investing in your education, you should approach it just as you would any other investment—research your options, consider the “pros and cons,” and make a plan that will work for you and help keep your debt as low as possible. Here are some tips to help you ensure that you're investing wisely:

1. **Choose the right degree**—Make sure the degree you choose is one that will advance your career. CareerBuilder.com, the nation's largest recruitment and career advancement source, recently identified the top five sectors for job growth: Education, Government, Sales, Healthcare, and Information Technology.
2. **Choose a program that's right for you**—As you consider your options and make your plans, be sure to take the time to learn all you can. Here are some things to consider:
  1. Are you working full-time?

Student loans offer some unique features that make them easier to handle:

- Some loans don't start accruing interest until after you've graduated or stop attending school.
- For many student loans, no payments are required until after you graduate or drop below a defined enrollment level.
- Depending on your income, your student loan interest, as well as your tuition, may be tax deductible.
- Most online colleges and universities will work help you put together a financial aid package that includes loans as well any grants or scholarships that might be available.

2. Have you completed some coursework in your field?
3. Do you have real-world experience in your field?
4. Do you enjoy setting your own pace and learning independently?

If you answered yes to these questions, [an online university](#) could be your best—and most affordable—option. You can keep working, which will allow you to borrow less, and complete your degree at your own pace.

3. **Choose the right school**—Once you decide that an online degree program makes sense for you, you'll find that there are many online colleges and universities to choose from. Be sure to investigate [Western Governors University](#), recently recognized by [TIME Magazine](#) as “the best relatively cheap university you’ve never heard of.” Fully accredited, WGU offers 50 bachelor’s and master’s degree programs in education, IT, business and healthcare, all completely online. The WGU model is ideal for working adults:
  - *Real-world experience and previous education count*—you’ll earn your degree by demonstrating competency, not taking classes.
  - *You determine the pace*—WGU is for students who are serious about earning their degrees in as little time as possible, but programs are designed to be flexible to allow you to live your life and meet your other responsibilities. You can start your degree at the beginning of any month—you don’t have to wait for the next semester to begin.
  - *It’s affordable*—WGU is a nonprofit university, and undergrad tuition starts at \$2,890 per six-month term. Unlike other schools that charge by the credit or limit how much you can do in a term, WGU allows you to complete as much work as you choose during your term. So, you can accelerate your work and earn your degree faster, saving on tuition and reducing the amount you’ll need to borrow.
  - *Help with financial aid is available*—WGU can help you understand the process and find the student loan that’s right for you.
  - *Alumni have access to career services*—Through WGU’s alumni website, you’ll be able to get tips for building your resume as well as access to a number of employment databases.

Money borrowed to complete a degree *is* a debt worth having. Getting your degree can be the most important thing you’ll do to build a career, improve your job security, and enhance your earning potential. By earning your degree online at Western Governors University, you can make the most of every dollar and start realizing the return on your investment sooner.

### [About Western Governors University \(WGU\)](#)

*“[WGU is] the best relatively cheap university you’ve never heard of.”*

– TIME magazine (Nov. 2008)

WGU is the only accredited online university in the U.S. offering competency-based degree programs. The private non-profit university has been a leader in online education for more than 10 years. WGU is the recipient of the **USDLA 21<sup>st</sup> Century Award for Best Practices in**

**Distance Learning for 2008**, awarded in recognition of WGU's success in expanding access to higher education. WGU has been honored as one of the **2008 Top 20 Military Friendly Colleges and Universities** by Military Advanced Education magazine. WGU sponsors the [Online Student Survival Guide](#), a blog that addresses many of the questions and daily concerns online students from any online college or university face.

Now serving more than 11,000 students, WGU was founded by 19 U.S. governors, and is supported by more than 20 leading corporations and foundations. They include institutions such as AT&T, BearingPoint, Dell, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Hewlett-Packard, HCA, Microsoft, Oracle, Qwest, SunGard Higher Education, Sun Microsystems, and Zions Bank. WGU offers bachelor's and master's degrees in business, information technology, teacher education, and health professions, with students in all 50 states. More information is available at [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu).