At WGU, there are subject matter experts within the Student Learning department called “Course Mentors” to assist you as you work to build competence in a particular subject area. The Course Mentors have professional training and advanced degrees in the subject-matter they oversee, in addition to intimate knowledge of the Course of Study and Learning Resources. The Course Mentors should be your first contact when you have questions about the domain of study, including any and all questions pertaining to Course of Study clarification, accessing and/or using the learning resources effectively and efficiently to build competence, and any content you encounter while engaging the learning resources. While Course Mentors are not evaluators and thus cannot guarantee you will pass an assessment, they can provide you with valuable assistance and advice.

“You came across a chat session that a course mentor had done on the exact problem I was having. I followed the advice that the mentor recommended in the chat session and I completed my revised essay with a 4.0!”

- WGU Student

It is the ultimate goal of the Course Mentor hosting the community chat to create an educational environment that is supportive and comfortable. The community chats offer you a great opportunity to build relationships with both students and Course Mentors in the domain of study while building competence in the domain objectives. Past students have found community chats to be one of the most helpful aspects of their education at WGU.

Please feel free to contact any of our Course Mentors at WGU when you have specific content questions about a particular topic and they will help you to gain the competence necessary to succeed with your goal of earning your degree.

“Thank you so very much for all of your help. I appreciate the time you took to call, e-mail, and to help me gain a better understanding of the areas I was lacking in. All of your mentoring has helped me pass my assessment with an 83%! I cannot thank you enough or express my gratitude enough for all you have done to help me be more successful. THANK YOU!!!!!”

- WGU Student
Where in the World is WGU?

As an online university, WGU has graduates and students scattered across the nation. Some even live outside the United States. It’s amazing that thousands of miles separate many of us, while others might find a student or graduate right around the corner from where they live! The common bonds we share, however, are WGU and our determination. You’ll find WGU graduates and students living in the big city, in a small rural farming community, stationed at a military base overseas, or on a small tropical island.

WGU is currently promoting its geographic diversity by holding a small contest. We are looking for alumni and students to take a picture next to a landmark (Eg: White House, Empire State Building, Golden Gate Bridge, etc) in their WGU gear. If you’re on vacation or traveling for business, take the opportunity to grab a snapshot, as well. Please email your picture to alumni@wgu.edu and we will post it on the web site for graduates and students to vote for the best picture. The winner will receive a $100 gift card. Show your WGU pride no matter where you are!

Did I major in Business or English and Literature?

I’ve spent the past 20 years as a very successful businessman. My background is sales and management, and I’ve been very good at both. I’ve worked both in automotive and real estate. At my mid-life crisis, I wanted a degree in business, I thought it would be easy (most of the business classes have been). Then there was LAC1, LAE1, LAT1, and LUT1. My background didn’t prepare me for these assessments.

I struggled with the annotated bibliography more than any project I’ve ever taken on. I felt no matter what I did, it was not enough. I began to feel WGU was a bad idea, but then I made the phone call that changed my academic life. I called the course mentor listed on the community page. The Language Mentors help with all four classes. The person I spoke to was not the mentor of that class; however she took ownership of my issues and helped me learn to solve them. Before resubmitting my annotated bibliography, she had me send it to her so she could proof it before the grader. After some excellent notes and suggestions, I was ready to submit it for the fifth time. With her help I passed, needing no further revisions.

Her help did not stop there. As I struggled with my paper, I called and she gave great advice. She even helped me with an MS Word issue (not her job). My confidence grew; I was ready to submit my final eleven-page paper, and the question was how many revisions would it need and would she be there to help me? I sent a copy of my paper to her and she sent it back with some grammatical corrections, but thought I did a good job. The grader thought so also and I passed on the first try.

Up to this point, I have only referred to the Mentor as “my mentor” or “she/her.” I did this because I’ve become a better writer and hopefully kept you reading until the end. My favorite course mentor at WGU is Dr. Patricia Ploesch. I called Jaime Martinez, my mentor, and told him if he has anyone struggling with English, she truly is a godsend. I am done with the courses she mentors, but if I need help in an area she could help in, I know she would be there for me. If all course mentors were as great as Dr. Ploesch, Harvard would be worrying.
The morning fog rolled across the San Francisco bay, shark infested waters hummed below, and 2,000 of the best tri-athletes in the world tensed in anticipation to make the 6-foot dive. I asked myself, what am I doing here? The fog horn sounded!

Last year my son, Austin, began his battle with a rare type of blood cancer, APML Leukemia. Just weeks before his diagnosis, Austin and I were watching the Escape From Alcatraz triathlon on TV. He got so excited watching the athletes swim, bike, and run. Austin said with a voice full of pride; “Dad you can do that!” I responded, “sure I could buddy” knowing deep down if I were ever going to accomplish something like that there were a few obstacles I would have to overcome.

I am no stranger to endurance events however they have all been foot races. I had not ridden a bike since Boy Scouts nor swam in over a decade. In regards to the swim, the race director states, “Triathletes face the risks of strong currents, treacherous 55 degree waters and two ton sea lions. This is for serious participants.”

The popularity of the race has grown such that getting an invitation is extremely difficult. The only way to get an invitation is to have a professional athlete status or place a top finisher in another high profile triathlon neither of which I could ever dream of accomplishing anytime soon. For everyone else it’s a lottery drawing where they guarantee two individuals from each state.

The moment Austin and I shared watching the event on TV played over and over in my mind as we spent months up at Primary Children’s Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was one of the last good moments I held on to and longed to experience again with my son.

Austin responded incredibly well to the treatments, his cancer went into remission and we were able to return to our home in Eagle Mountain. I knew we would once again have the opportunity to play catch, tell bedtime stories, and watch Saturday morning sports. However, after watching Austin summon strength beyond his years, I wanted nothing more than to be a real hero for Austin as he had been for me. I put my name in the lottery drawing where they guarantee two individuals from each state.

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When asked why I would do something so “crazy”, more often than not I respond inside and think, “Why not?” I love the words that Apsley Cherry-Garrard wrote in the book “The Worst Journey in the World,” which documented Sir Robert Falcon Scott’s tragic expedition to the Antarctic. Those words are appropriate for this occasion. “What lots and lots I could tell you of this journey. How much better has it been than lounging in too great comfort at home.” Austin showed me what it means to survive the most grueling test of human endurance and he did it all with a smile on his face and a joyous heart. This race was for Austin. I love you, son.

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The race started with a foghorn, it sounded loud and clear, and reminded me of all my training. I remembered my son, I knew why I was there, and I jumped into the icy cold 55-degree water. Immediately I noticed two things: the cold, it took my breath away; and the salt, I should have closed my mouth. Without hesitation, I began to stroke away from the San Francisco Belle ferry boat avoiding the hundreds of athletes jumping into the water.
Calling all Students and Graduates: What’s hot in Jobs for 2010 - 2019

WrittEn By Leeta Jackson-Angel, Wgu Mentor

Despite the iffy-economy and the dour unemployment statistics, there are industries with expected growth out there – with opportunities aplenty for graduates that distinguish themselves from the maddening crowd.

Statistics say that computers and technology, accounting and finance, office and administrative support, government positions, and healthcare, are the industries to watch in 2010! According to the 2010-11 edition of the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the next eight years are going to be interesting ones for the following industries:

The Big Bang Theory: No big surprises there – tech workers are always in demand. With positions like network administrators, CIS security managers and engineers playing a necessary role in today’s businesses, the continuing technology evolution will continue to demand workers with specialized knowledge. Another big deal is just over the horizon – expect to see an explosion of data security specialists for hire and consulting. One of the biggest growth sectors in technology is data management and security. Identity thieves beware – the IT department is watching YOU!

Death and taxes: Even Albert Einstein said that there is nothing harder to understand than the income tax! As long as the IRS and the tax code exists, the job market for accountants, CPA’s, CMA’s and financial specialists, will experience growth. With the continuing effects of FASB and Sarbanes-Oxley – enter the suddenly lucrative accounting occupation – the compliance officers or consultants. With great paychecks comes great responsibility, however, as these individuals are responsible for keeping their companies in line with the code and regulations, as well as ensuring continuing profitability.

Adventures in Administration: Organized, detail-oriented people will always have their pick of positions in office administration! The rarely appreciated field of administration is what makes business work. Executive assistants, senior office managers, clerks, and a host of other administrative positions will continue to grease the wheels of business. Customer Relationship/Retention Management is an area in administration that will see explosive growth in the coming years. Savvy business professionals will see these positions as lucrative careers or potential stepping stones to achieving their ultimate career goals.

Big Government = Big Job Opportunity: As in most down economies, the United States government starts looking to fill various jobs from clerks to directors in various departments across all levels of government.

An Apple a Day: Does not always keep the doctor away. With the Baby Boom Generation aging, and with more and more middle-aged career men and women dealing not only with childcare but adult care as well, the healthcare industry is always growing. It’s an industry that is economy-proof! Whether you are interested in hospital administration, home health nursing, marketing, organizational management, whatever – health care needs them all!

Remember, the keys to finding a job in any economy is having an up-to-date resume, taking the time to research your potential employer so you can distinguish yourself from other job-seekers, and approach any interview opportunity with an open mind and impeccable manners.

Happy hunting in 2010!
WGU Graduate Wins Science Teaching Award From Texas Medical Association

WGU graduate, Nikki Skinner, a teacher at Houston's Almeda Elementary School, has been recognized for her outstanding work as a science teacher by the Texas Medical Association. Skinner, who recently completed her master's degree in Science Education at WGU, has been awarded the TMA's 2010 Ernest and Sarah Butler Award for Excellence in Science Teaching.

The award, which was created in 1990, rewards teachers who use innovative teaching methods to share their energy and enthusiasm for science, and encourages young students to consider careers in medicine. Skinner received her award in April at the 2010 TexMed Conference in Fort Worth, Texas.

Skinner completed her Master of Arts in Science Education at WGU earlier this year, and she earned her bachelor's in Elementary Education from Texas Southern University. Last year, she was recognized as Teacher of the Year by her peers at Almeda Elementary.

"As science teachers, we are working hard to make the subject matter meaningful and to make our students lifelong science enthusiasts," said Skinner. "The scientists, doctors, and engineers of tomorrow are sitting in a fifth grade class today, and teachers play a critical role in helping them realize their potential. Science is not just a series of facts but an exciting process. The job of a science teacher is to teach the facts, but keep the wonder."

STUDENT PROFILE

Nanci Farrell

Where are you from? I currently reside in Cincinnati, Ohio.

When did you start at WGU? My WGU experience began in September 2007, right after the birth of my second son, which made me realize I wanted a better life for my family.

Your program of study: I am studying for my Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies to teach K-8.

Your favorite aspect of being a WGU student: There are two aspects which are my favorite. The first aspect is the ability to better myself by earning my degree while still spending plenty of time at home with my family. The other favorite aspect of my experience is the phone calls I have with my mentor, Lisa Maxwell. She has been so supportive of everything I do, and she truly cares about my success. She has never failed to answer a question, and she has never led me in the wrong direction. I couldn't ask for better support during a very important time in my life.

What are your plans after you finish your degree? After completing my degree, I would like to begin teaching in an elementary school near my home. I would also like the opportunity to tutor students who are struggling. Eventually, I plan to obtain a degree in Sign Language Translation so that I may use that ability to teach children who are hearing impaired.

Outside of work and WGU, what do you like to do? I spend a lot of time with my two boys. They are 8 years old and 2 years old. We take walks, we ride bikes, we play baseball in our yard, we kick a soccer ball, and sometimes just kick back and watch a movie together. Family time is a big deal in my family.

More on Nanci: I am 32. I have been married for 11 years and have two boys: Jacob is 8, and Shaun is 2½.

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

Tauamo Adele Leaupepe

Tauamo Adele Leaupepe (aka “Mo”) grew up in Southern California, and today resides in West Jordan, Utah. She loves spending time with her two little girls and husband. In March, they added a new member to their family.

Mo graduated from the University of Phoenix with an MBA - and a Bachelor of Science in Business Management. She has been with WGU for three years as a mentor for the university’s Teacher Education program (Math). Prior to joining WGU, she was working as a director of financial aidadele_leaupepe_tauamo for a post secondary vocational school.

Regarding her work with WGU, Mo says, “I love and enjoy working for an organization whose mission statement includes providing access to education to students who might not otherwise be able to pursue their education through traditional means.”

It never ceases to amaze me what my students are able to accomplish while having a full-time job, a family, and other commitments. I am grateful to be a part of a student's journey as they pursue their dreams of becoming a teacher, and even more so, seeing them overcome the challenges of life to make it come true.”
Where are you from? Originally from Florida. I spent most my life in California and now am in Utah.

When did you start at WGU? I started WGU in November of 2009.

Your program of study: I am studying to receive my bachelor’s degree in Accounting.

Your favorite aspect of being a WGU student: I love being able to study at my own pace. If I “get it”, I can get the course done faster. Likewise, if I am having trouble with a subject, I can spend more time studying for it.

What are your plans after you finish your degree? Once I finish my degree, I plan to put it to work. I have some experience in an accounting office; however, I want to find a more specific accounting field to focus on

Outside of work and WGU, what do you like to do? I love to spend time with my family. My husband and two kids keep me smiling. Yard work keeps me outside, active, and sometimes very sore.

More on Elizabeth: I decided to join WGU with some prodding from my mom. After a recent job loss, I was trying to find ways to make myself more marketable to future employers. What better way than to obtain my bachelor in a field that I already have some experience in and know that I enjoy? With my level of experience and my willingness to learn, earning a degree from WGU just seemed to be the logical choice.

The Fort

WRITTEN BY LARRY MANCH, WGU TEACHER ALUM

A formation of Blackhawk helicopters thunders past, barely 100 feet over my head. Camouflaged soldiers, with automatic weapons slung over their shoulders, walk briskly past as they make their rounds. An armored personnel carrier is parked on the road nearby. I blow my whistle and my charges hurry to line up, straight and tall. No, I’m not a soldier reviewing a line of troops in a combat zone. I’m a teacher with a group of 2nd graders on a playground in Texas.

Montague Village Elementary School (MVES) is much like any other elementary school, with a student population ranging from pre-K to 5th grade. The difference is that MVES is located on an Army post – Fort Hood, Texas – one of the largest U.S. military installations in the world. Ft. Hood is the home of the 1st Cavalry Division – known as “The First Team” – and former home of the 4th Infantry Division, well known for capturing the infamous Saddam Hussein.

My students are the sons and daughters of active duty Army soldiers serving in Iraq or Afghanistan. Teaching at a school located on a military post offers experiences that most would not expect in a teaching career. An armed guard scrutinizes my identification every morning as I enter the gate. Although we have Department of Defense stickers on our car, like everyone else entering this gate, we are occasionally selected for a random search of the car.

Brynn Dryer

Brynn Dryer’s passion for higher education began while she attended the University of Arizona and earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology and human development through the UA Honors College. While working in the admissions department with prospective students and families, she realized this was what she loved. Before working as a mentor for WGU, Brynn worked primarily in academic and career services and began earning her Master of Education in Higher Education Leadership.

A native of Iowa, she now calls sunny Arizona home. During her free time, Brynn enjoys spending time with her husband and two month old baby girl.

About her experience and time at WGU, Brynn says, “I love being able to make a difference in my students’ lives and help them see they can do this and succeed at a goal they didn’t think was possible. All of my students bring me a new challenge and I learn from them as much as they do from me. WGU provides an opportunity to thousands and one that I am proud to be a part of.”

ENHANCE YOUR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING SOCIAL NETWORKS AND CONNECT WITH LIKE-MINDED PROFESSIONALS IN THE WGU ALUMNI LINKEDIN GROUP - WWW.LINKEDIN.COM
Carla Pease

Where are you from? I grew up on a farm/ranch in rural North Dakota. The closest town was Garrison, twenty miles away, with a population of 1,800.

When did you start at WGU? I started at WGU during the January term.

Your program of study: Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Your favorite aspect of being a WGU student: My favorite aspect of WGU is being able to be task-oriented. I like the competency-based approach because I just complete the tasks and move ahead. It is a very progressive program that I am in. I feel like I am able to move through the courses with ease and help is always available if I need it.

What are your plans after you finish your degree? I plan on pursuing my master's degree in nursing and becoming a geriatric nurse practitioner.

Outside of work and WGU, what do you like to do? I am a typical farm girl. I like spending time in the country with my family, fishing, playing in the mud and camping. I enjoy traveling when I have the time, and I do some public speaking about my Cerebral Palsy and being a nurse. I speak out about the challenges I have faced in life because of my illness. Hopefully, I provide insight into what it is like for someone who faces physical obstacles in the workplace, but has learned to adjust.

More on Carla: If you Google my name, Carla Pease, you will find several web articles about my Cerebral Palsy and being a nurse. To learn more about me, you may want to piece it together through the Internet, or perhaps a phone call would be better. I have done some pretty unique things, including working with the Shriners organization for my internship after being a patient at a Shriners hospital for almost 18 years. I swam with dolphins, continue to speak publicly – all kinds of fun things. All because I have Cerebral Palsy.

Harriet Kastaris

Where are you from? St. Louis, Missouri.

When did you start at WGU? October 2009.

Your program of study: Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Your favorite aspect of being a WGU student: I put off getting my BSN for so long because I didn't want to spend more time away from my kids. After working all day, I didn't want to have to go to class...now class is in my home office. I love it.

What are your plans after you finish your degree? I would like to continue on with WGU and get my master's in nursing. I believe this will make me even more competitive in the medical device business world.

Outside of work and WGU, what do you like to do? I love to stay active by hiking, walking my dog and practicing yoga. I love cooking and entertaining friends at home. I also enjoy traveling.

More on Harriet: I've worked my whole life, raised kids and taken good care of everyone around me. I love my life, but always felt a need to complete my degree. It is important to me and necessary in order to further my career. This is my time. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's not easy but it is possible...and I am almost there.
**IT STUDENT PROFILE**

**John Herman**

Where are you from? I am originally from Florida, though I was a military dependent and moved quite a bit.


Your program of study: My current program of study is Information Technology.

Your favorite aspect of being a WGU student: Learning!!! A close second is the flexibility to complete coursework on a schedule of my choosing.

What are your plans after you finish your degree? My current duties and responsibilities include managing a number of projects. My intent is to gain the skills, competencies, and certifications to advance my career as a Program Manager.

Outside of work and WGU, what do you like to do? I enjoy spending time with my wife, daughter, and granddaughter and when time permits I golf, fish, and exercise.

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**IT MENTOR SPOTLIGHT**

**Craig Thorsted**

Where are you from? I have a military background and am from all over the world - Finland, Germany, Saudi Arabia, but I now call Saint George, Utah, my home. My family goes back five generations in the Northern Utah area of Ogden.

When did you join WGU? Five years ago, March 2005. I was the fifth full-time mentor hired in the IT program. We had less than 200 students then.

What do you enjoy about WGU? Talking with students and helping them succeed. I have assisted nearly 75 students graduate over the past five years. Seeing them complete the program is such a rush! I am grateful to be a part of that journey.

What are your leisure activities? Hiking, camping, scuba diving and most of all going to out-of-the-way places looking for evidence of the past (amateur archaeology). I explored northwest Saudi Arabia for nearly two years. I am also one of only a few non-Saudis who have visited the ancient ruins considered by many to be the actual site of Mount Sinai.

Favorite vacation spot: Outside US – New Zealand and Finland. I particularly like the south island of New Zealand. If you don’t like the weather on the east coast, just travel for a few hours to the west coast! In Finland, the country with thousands of islands, I enjoy staying with friends and visiting the sauna with them, sharing the saunamakkara (sausage) with hot mustard!

Inside the US – Southern Utah. There is so much ground yet to be explored.

Here is my symbol – Part of my name Thor – sted – Thors Hammer in Southern Utah’s Bryce Canyon.