



CASE STUDY

# The Future of Learning in Practice

A Prometric/Western Governor's University Case Study

Western Governor's University is truly "the future of education" in practice. It is an entirely "online" university, and is the first online university in the U.S. to be competency-based. Partnering with Prometric to grow its credit-by-exam, e-learning model has helped WGU increase the number of assessments administered to a student body, which is comprised mostly of adult learners who need academic flexibility, by 100% over the last year.

Prometric's Internet-Based Testing (IBT) platform solutions are fully integrated and support the entire lifecycle of a testing program, including: authoring, publishing, candidate test delivery, test administration and reporting.

## The Past

Prior to partnering with Prometric, Western Governor's University administered its course curriculums and assessment exams from its own website. Maintaining its own computer-based delivery model, while functional, was inefficient. Since any assessment exam needs to be proctored to ensure security, WGU would be required to give specific instructions to each proctor to log on to the school's website. The problems with this delivery model stemmed from the technology required to support it. Administering its programs this way was a software-based solution, which frequently resulted in downtimes and other "glitches." As the student population grew, it became obvious to WGU that it would need a more flexible and scalable course and assessment delivery model to accommodate its anticipated growth.

In addition to the delivery model, the popularity of WGU among adult learners nationwide caused it to begin adding exams and courses to its regularly offered curriculum. A great deal of time and effort goes into developing academically sound materials, including the need to track down subject matter experts who help determine what content should be included, as well as its creation and review.

WGU was founded on the premise that: "It is important that continuing education meet the challenges of a changing economy and society." Its primary commitment is producing highly competent graduates and "using flexible distance education techniques to expand access." With a rapidly growing student base, clearly the concept of flexible distance learning, whenever, wherever, caught on. As a result, WGU needed to find ways to expand student access to assessments instrumental to their program offerings.

## The Present

Western Governor's University needed a flexible, easily available, user-friendly platform over which it could offer a countless number of online degree programs and multiple forms of the assessment exams on which its competency-based concept is founded. It also needed a partner who could take a bigger hand in not only recruiting subject matter experts to develop new curriculum and assessment exams, but who could play a role itself in development analysis of content, to ensure its validity, legal defensibility, accuracy and relevancy to educational and corporate requirements.

Prometric, the recognized leader in testing and assessment services, could support all of WGU's requirements reliably, cost-effectively, and in a way that would never impede its growth: The Prometric Internet Based Testing Platform.

Prometric's Internet-Based Testing (IBT) platform solutions are fully integrated and support the entire lifecycle of a testing program, including: authoring, publishing, candidate test delivery, test administration and reporting. All functions are accomplished with just a PC, Internet connection and Web browser.



A major benefit to WGU is that IBT content can be accessed through a web browser anywhere, anytime and can handle thousands of simultaneous users. The IBT tool is "always on" providing access for exam authoring, delivery and reporting 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The powerful combination of services allows WGU the option of publishing a test from anywhere on the front-end

and delivering the assessment at the back-end via a proctor at any Web-accessible location.

In addition, all data is stored by Prometric and hosted in Prometric's secure data center. Product architecture, including Web site launch, creation of customizable pages and server hosting, is also managed by Prometric. During assessment exam delivery, WGU has the ability to activate "lock-down" features that restrict access to any other systems, providing an added measure of security. As a benefit to WGU students, test results are available immediately and can even be e-mailed to them.

Using Prometric's IBT testing platform gives WGU ubiquitous coverage anywhere one of its students sits and provides the scalability for unlimited growth. IBT also hosts a series of pre-assessment exams for WGU students who wish to measure their level of knowledge in a specific area before sitting for an exam. Using IBT over the last year, WGU's assessment volume has grown by 100 percent; forty percent of that growth can be attributed to pre-assessment tests, which, thanks to IBT, are available anywhere a student has Internet access.

Prometric also takes part in course and assessment exam development projects for WGU. Prometric's staff of psychometricians has helped to develop over 100

assessment exams and case studies, and assisted in the identification and engagement of subject matter areas in any necessary content development area.

## The Outcome

The outcome is true partnership. Prometric and WGU work closely to uphold the WGU mission: "to improve quality and expand access to post-secondary educational opportunities by providing a means for individuals to learn independent of time or place and to earn competency-based degrees and other credentials that are credible to both academic institutions and employers."

Using e-Learning to expand access and ease of use, and to provide the most flexible path to education possible for adult learners, has clearly been a success. From 500 students in 2003 to 10,000 today, Western Governor's University is on par for even more students, and is clearly blazing a trail to growth spurred by the prudent application of e-learning techniques.