

WGU-Gallup Study Finds Alumni Report Low Loan Debt, High Median Income Increases

WGU graduates also report stronger career preparation, educational value and wellbeing outcomes than national peers.

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 9, 2026 — Western Governors University (WGU) and Gallup today released findings from the 2025 Alumni Survey, *The Value of the WGU Experience: Alumni Perspectives on Career Outcomes, Support and Wellbeing*. The new report reveals that WGU graduates report high levels of satisfaction with the value of their education, strong alignment between their degrees and careers and positive wellbeing outcomes compared with bachelor's degree holders nationally. Alumni from historically underserved groups report experiences and outcomes comparable to their WGU peers from historically well-served groups across measures including academic experience, belonging and wellbeing.

The study, based on responses from more than 2,400 WGU alumni who earned bachelor's degrees between 2020 and 2024, examined graduates' perspectives on career outcomes, academic support, mentorship and wellbeing.

"Today's learners need an education that prepares them to adapt, grow, and thrive throughout their careers," said WGU President Scott Pulsipher. "These results reflect WGU's commitment to delivering the outcomes that matter most to our students, to the communities they serve and to a broader public increasingly focused on the value and relevance of higher education."

Graduates Report Strong Return on Educational Investment

Nearly seven in 10 WGU alumni (69%) strongly agree that their education was worth the cost, compared with 38% of bachelor's degree holders nationally. WGU graduates who borrowed for their education also report lower median undergraduate student loan debt than national alumni — approximately \$15,000 compared with \$27,000 nationally.

The report also finds evidence of career and income progression following graduation. Sixty-nine percent of WGU alumni say their income increased after completing their degree, with graduates reporting a median personal income increase of approximately \$25,000 since enrolling at WGU. Among alumni who worked full time while enrolled, 73% report income growth after graduation.

Career-Relevant Skills Linked to Alumni Outcomes

WGU alumni report strong alignment between their education and employment. Eighty-six percent of alumni working full time say their current job is closely related to their field of study, and two-thirds strongly agree (43%) or agree (23%) that their first job after graduation aligned with their career goals.

Among alumni who graduated at age 25 or older and now work full time, 80% say they frequently apply skills learned during their degree program in their current role, compared with 70% of national graduates in the same category. Nearly three-quarters of WGU alumni also strongly agree or agree that the university prepared them with the skills needed to succeed professionally.

Support, Mentorship and Belonging Shape Alumni Experience

In addition to career outcomes, alumni describe positive experiences with student support, mentorship and belonging. Fifty-eight percent of WGU alumni strongly agree they had access to the resources needed to succeed academically, compared with 43% of national graduates. WGU alumni are also more likely than national peers to say faculty and staff treated them with respect during their studies (71% strongly agree).

Mentorship emerged as another distinguishing factor in the findings. Seventy-eight percent of WGU alumni strongly agree or agree they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams, compared with 54% nationally.

WGU graduates also report a stronger sense of belonging than national alumni. Nearly three-quarters (73%) say they felt like they belonged at their university, compared with 65% nationally.

Forty-four percent of alumni say that if WGU were not an option, they either would not have been able to earn a degree elsewhere (20%) or are unsure whether they could have (24%).

About Western Governors University (WGU)

WGU's mission is to change lives for the better by creating pathways to opportunity. That mission drives lasting impact for individuals and communities while strengthening the talent economy of tomorrow.

Established in 1997 by 19 U.S. governors, the nonprofit was founded on the belief that talent is universal, but opportunity is not — and that education is a powerful catalyst for upward mobility and workforce resilience. Purpose-built as a tech-enabled, competency-based university, WGU expands access to affordable, high-quality education through workforce-aligned programs and pathways that deliver value for students, particularly those not well served by traditional higher education.

By continually reimagining how education is designed, delivered and accessed, WGU connects talent to opportunity and advances economic mobility for individuals and families. This model prepares learners for in-demand roles and supports a workforce equipped to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving economy. Learn more at wgu.edu.

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of the world's constituents than any other organization.

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