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Western Governors University and Illinois Primary Health Care Association Announce Collaborative Agreement

*New agreement will connect IPHCA members and employees to WGU's
flexible, affordable, high-quality online programs and scholarship offerings*

Springfield, Ill., May 24, 2023 – Nonprofit, fully online Western Governors University (WGU) and Illinois Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA) today announced they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to help meet the critical workforce need for skilled healthcare professionals. Together, the two will seek to provide a streamlined approach and expand access to higher education for IPHCA's 53 member organizations and more than 10,000 community health center employees who wish to pursue their bachelor's or master's degrees through WGU. The partnership will further both organizations' missions of continuing to develop the talent pipeline in hopes of building a future-ready workforce.

"IPHCA is proud to partner with WGU to assist staff at community health centers with an affordable option for advancing their education and helping them position themselves for new or expanded roles within their health center," said Ashley Colwell, Vice President of Clinical Services and Workforce Development for IPHCA. "WGU offers self-paced learning, which allows students to take courses on a schedule that fits with their personal and professional lives. We know that building a strong workforce is key to the success of community health centers. While pipeline development is important, we know retention of current staff is critical. Our partnership with WGU will allow health centers to encourage existing staff to expand their education and upskill them for new roles within their health center."

IPHCA is a nonprofit trade association that serves as the voice of and champion for Illinois' community health centers. The association delivers tools, training, and support to Federally Qualified Health Centers/Community Health Centers around the state so they can provide whole-person, exceptional care to the more than 1.5 million patients they serve annually.

WGU offers IPHCA members and employees a competency-based approach to learning, which allows students to take advantage of their knowledge and previous experience to quickly move through material they already know so they can focus on what they still need to learn. Students complete their programs by studying on schedules that fit their lives, advancing as soon as they demonstrate they have mastered the subject matter. WGU faculty members work one-on-one with students as mentors, offering guidance, support and individualized instruction. While WGU's degree programs are rigorous and challenging, competency-based learning makes it possible for students to accelerate their progress and graduate faster, saving both time and money.

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Under the terms of the agreement, those who enroll in any of WGU's 80-plus undergraduate or graduate degree programs in business, IT, or health professions – including nursing – will also be eligible to apply for scholarships offered through the university's [Community Outreach Partners Scholarship](#) program. The scholarships, each valued at up to \$5,000, are applied to WGU's already-low, flat-rate tuition of about \$3,800 per six-month term. Recipients of the scholarship will receive a \$1,250 tuition credit each term, renewable for up to four terms based on academic performance. Applicants who lack access to affordable, high-speed internet will also be eligible to apply for the [WGU Online Access Scholarship](#), which covers internet installation and monthly access costs for the duration WGU students who qualify are active students and in good standing. The program also provides devices to students who are in need.

"We're pleased to partner with Illinois Primary Health Care Association and provide their members and employees with an affordable pathway to furthering their education and advancing their careers," said Dr. Terrance Hopson, Regional Vice President of Western Governors University. "Our academic programs are designed to fit into busy work and home schedules, all while ensuring graduates have the core knowledge and skills required to compete and succeed in the ever-changing workplace. This partnership with IPHCA will help to address their critical professional development needs to equip the next generation of health pioneers."

About IPHCA

IPHCA is committed to fulfilling its mission of positioning community health centers to be the providers of choice within the communities they serve through advocacy, education, and technical assistance emphasizing the high quality, accessible and integrated health center model of care. IPHCA fosters communication to resolve mutual problems and share successes; provides education and training to enhance the operation of health care services; provides fiscal and management technical assistance to promote efficiency of Community Health Center (CHC) operations; assists in the recruitment and retention of professional clinical staff; develops and maintains information systems; and promotes linkages between CHCs and related organizations and agencies. Learn more at iphca.org

About WGU

Established in 1997 by 19 U.S. governors with a mission to expand access to high-quality, affordable higher education, online, nonprofit WGU now serves more than 140,000 students nationwide and has more than 300,000 graduates in all 50 states. Driving innovation as the nation's leading competency-based university, WGU has been recognized by the White House, state leaders, employers, and students as a model that works in postsecondary education. In just 25 years, the university has become a leading influence in changing the lives of individuals and families, and preparing the workforce needed in today's rapidly evolving economy. WGU is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, has been named one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies, and has been featured on NPR, NBC Nightly News, CNN, and in The New York Times. Learn more at wgu.edu.

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