Western Governors University and National Association for Healthcare Quality Collaborate to Reduce Variability in Healthcare Quality Competencies

WGU aligns graduate-level curriculum with NAHQ’s industry-standard competencies

SALT LAKE CITY and CHICAGO – August 21, 2020 – Western Governors University (WGU) and the National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ) have joined forces to address a longstanding challenge for the healthcare industry: reducing variability in healthcare delivery by reducing variability in healthcare quality competencies. To that end, WGU has recently become the first academic institution to align several of its graduate-level programs with industry standards developed by NAHQ.

“The healthcare industry is in a race to make value work. Making value work depends on industry standardization in the form of organizational and workforce competencies,” said former Utah Governor and WGU co-founder Mike Leavitt, who served as U.S. Secretary for Health and Human Services from 2005 to 2009 and is currently co-chair of the Accountable Care Learning Collaborative. “WGU is a university that was founded on competency-based learning, so it makes sense that they would partner with the National Association for Healthcare Quality to combine NAHQ’s industry-developed workforce competencies and standardized framework into WGU programs and curriculum. This is an important first step for both organizations to replicate this model of industry collaboration—collaboration that leads to reskilling and upskilling the workforce with the competencies that are needed to make health value work.”

Amid healthcare’s expansion and advancements in recent years, the industry has been without a single training pathway or established competency standard regarding quality. This has resulted in a workforce that utilizes disparate skillsets, tools, and even vocabulary in addressing similar problems. The COVID-19 pandemic shined a bright light on how this massive inconsistency can yield medical error, negatively impact patient outcomes, and increase operational waste for healthcare facilities and systems. Aligning university curriculum with real-world industry standards can help close that variability gap, according to Stephanie Mercado, CAE CPHQ, NAHQ’s CEO and Executive Director.

“NAHQ believes workforce readiness is the key to delivering on quality in today’s healthcare environment. WGU’s actions speak volumes about its commitment to prepare students with the knowledge and skills required of today’s healthcare professionals to help drive improved patient outcomes and quality,” said Mercado. “NAHQ and its Board of Directors applaud WGU for being the first—among a growing list of academic institutions—to align its healthcare quality curriculum with our twice-validated industry standards at this critical time in healthcare.”

WGU hardwired quality and safety concepts from NAHQ’s HQ Principles online certificate program into its Master of Science in Nursing programs. In addition, the Master of Health Leadership (MHL) program recognizes an alignment of core program competencies with NAHQ’s Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality® (CPHQ) certification. This alignment allows for the granting of five competency units (WGU’s equivalent of the credit hour) for advanced placement toward this graduate degree. Designed for those interested in healthcare who want to change the industry landscape and lead important initiatives such as value-based care, the MHL
program focuses on developing leadership competencies for guiding integrated health systems.

WGU students also receive student memberships to NAHQ, providing them deeper access to quality-related content and resources normally reserved for practicing healthcare and quality professionals.

“Aligning our MSN and MHL programs with NAHQ standards of healthcare quality will help students gain essential skills and knowledge to be positive agents of change in their communities, a crucial component of improving healthcare quality made all the more pressing during the pandemic,” said Jan Jones-Schenk, Senior Vice President and Executive Dean of WGU’s College of Health Professions. “We value NAHQ and their mission to prepare a workforce of healthcare heroes dedicated to quality. Aligning with NAHQ creates a pathway for WGU to recognize the importance of professional certifications, such as the CPHQ, and to give credit for these professional accomplishments.”

About NAHQ
NAHQ is the leader in healthcare quality workforce competencies and creator of the twice-validated, industry-standard Healthcare Quality Competency Framework. NAHQ provides a strategic advantage to healthcare professionals and the organizations they serve by developing and evolving workforce competencies in healthcare quality that result in better patient and financial outcomes to support the goals of healthcare value. NAHQ offers the only accredited certification in healthcare quality, the CPHQ, now held by more than 12,000 individuals worldwide; extensive educational programming; networking opportunities and career resources to more than 8,000 members. Learn more about NAHQ at nahq.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 121,000 students nationwide and has more than 197,000 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 23 years, the university has become a leading influence in the development of innovative workforce-focused approaches to education. 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 www.wgu.edu.

Media Contacts:
WGU
Emily Crawford
385.428.9497
drew.crawford@wgu.edu

NAHQ
Juliana Fishleigh
312.579.3083
jfishleigh@nahq.org