

# BGS Transitions



## Western's BGS Degree

As we celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Bachelor of Arts in General Studies degree program, it seems appropriate to share some history and interesting details about the program.

Originally named the Board of Governors degree in 1972, the program's leading proponent was Dr. Robert Pringle, who served as Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for the Illinois Board of Governors of State Colleges and Universities. Dr. Pringle initiated and developed the nontraditional degree program for the five Illinois schools governed by the Board of Governors. It was intended to serve mature students unable to attend a traditional college program due to family, work, and community obligations. When the Board of Governors was dismantled in 1997 and each of the five Illinois institutions was given its own board of trustees, the program's name was changed to the Board of Trustees Bachelor of Arts.

In 2010 the degree program received its current title: Bachelor of Arts in General Studies. Rather than requiring a specific major, the program allows the student to design her or his program to meet individual educational goals.

Emerging technology and the popularity of online courses have caused rapid growth of distance learning methods worldwide. WIU's Bachelor of Arts in General Studies degree is easily accessible, efficient, cost effective, and has built-in flexibility. It affords students easy access to course work and other tools and provides them with the groundwork necessary to gain new skills and begin rewarding, meaningful careers or to reach a long-desired personal goal of earning a bachelor's degree.

Currently, 8,813 of WIU's alumni are BGS, BOT, or BOG graduates. More than 1,400 students from 32 states are enrolled in the BGS program and it is now offered internationally. There are 19 recognized minors available to our students. A unique option developed for BGS students that satisfies the Writing Instruction in the Disciplines graduation requirement is the UNIVERSITY 490 Career Internship, which allows students to earn 2-12 semester hours while gaining practical work experience. To date, 338 students have earned credit toward graduation as UNIVERSITY 490 interns.

WIU is extremely fortunate to have benefited from Dr. Pringle's vision and the establishment of the initial Board of Governors degree. We treasure our history and are proud to continue offering students a reputable bachelor's degree program that fits well with their already full and busy lives.

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## Important Dates

**October 13** - First 8-Week Courses End

**October 14** - WIU Family Day

**October 15** - Last Day 50% Credit Tuition/  
Fees, Room/Board for Total Withdrawal

**October 15** - Deadline for BGS Graduates'  
Names to Appear in Commencement Program

**October 16** - Second 8-Week Courses Begin

**October 22** - Last Day 40% Credit Tuition/  
Fees, Room/Board for Total Withdrawal

**October 23** - Last Day for Return of Federal  
Student Aid Funds for Total Withdrawal

**October 29** - Last Day 30% Credit Tuition/  
Fees, Room/Board for Total Withdrawal

**November 8** - November Bill Emailed

**November 20-24** - Thanksgiving Break - No  
Classes; University Closed November 23-24

**December 5** - December Bill Emailed

**December 11-15** - Finals Week

**December 16** - Undergraduate & Graduate  
Commencement

**December 18-January 12** - Semester Break

**January 9** - January Bill Emailed

**January 15** - M. L. King Day Holiday -  
University Closed

**January 16** - Spring Classes Begin

**January 23-29** - Restricted Schedule  
Changes

**January 29** - Last Day 100% Credit Tuition/  
Fees, Prorated Credit Room/Board for Total  
Withdrawal

**January 29** - Last Day to Waive Health  
Insurance

**February 4** - Last Day 80% Credit Tuition/  
Fees, Room/Board for Total Withdrawal

**February 6** - February Bill Emailed

**February 11** - Last Day 70% Credit Tuition/  
Fees, Room/Board for Total Withdrawal



## BGS Students: Be Sure To...

- Complete your FAFSA. October 1 was the opening date.
- Discuss spring registration with your advisor.
- Register for classes as early as possible.

## Accomplishing More With To-Do Lists

A colleague suggested that I include time management tips in this newsletter. Related to that topic, I'm offering my take on the importance of list making because utilizing to-do lists helps keep me from procrastinating. Some argue that to-do lists aren't effective, and maybe it's a personality thing. You can decide for yourself.

Why are lists important? How often have you said in exasperation, "I should have written that down"? Point made. But, you say, "Lists take time and brain power, and I have none to spare!" You don't have to do it all at once; just get started, then keep your lists handy so you can add to them as needed and check tasks off as you complete them. Here are suggestions for creating to-do lists, managing them, and being more productive:

- Pick a medium. Pen and paper or digital? It's about what works for you.
- Start with separate lists, such as: work projects, home-related tasks, and ideas.
- Always keep in mind the time required to accomplish a job.
- Don't bother putting items in chronological order at first; just get them written down and segmented.
- Gather all slips of paper you've scribbled reminders on and transfer them to your lists. This goes for emails, texts, and other types of messages.
- When you're ready to prioritize, think in terms of urgency, effort, and time constraints.
- Write down every single idea you have, no matter how big or small.
- Always carry a small notebook in case you aren't able to use your phone or other device.
- Keep a pen and notepad on your night stand.
- Color coding can be an effective way to prioritize activities or sort tasks.
- Make your goals measurable so you know if your plans are working.
- Set far off, outlandish goals. What do you want to achieve by 2020? How about 2050?
- Include personal goals in your lists, not just business-related objectives.
- Share your goals with others. You can motivate and inspire each other.
- Keep in mind that if you cross reference calendar items and use a notebook, you will need to record items accurately.
- Review, assess progress, and update lists daily and weekly.
- Determine whether a task needs to be on the list or if it's there so you can rack up check marks.
- Ask yourself: What's the best way—and the best time of day—to do specific tasks.
- Consider the mindset you need to complete each project (especially the ones that cause you to procrastinate) and use that awareness as you construct lists. Your frame of mind matters. You don't use the same mindset to work on your budget as you do to create a marketing piece or to do research for a paper.
- Consistency is crucial to your success in utilizing lists. Stick with it.
- Enjoy feeling more organized and less stressed over the possibility that you've forgotten something really important.

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## Raise Your Hand if You Need Help Creating or Updating Your Resume!

As a WIU student, you are invited to take advantage of services offered by the Career Development Center. Click [here](#) to view a video by CDC Director Martin Kral giving up-to-date advice about resumes and reference pages. You'll see many other services listed on the CDC home page.

# Reflections From A BGS Grad



**Almost one year ago, Arlen Britton completed his Bachelor of Arts in General Studies degree at WIU and earned two distinguished awards: College Scholar and General Studies Departmental Scholar for Fall 2016. Arlen shared with us how he connected with the BGS Program, took that first step of enrolling in classes, and finished a goal he had set for himself decades earlier.**

## **I am a WIU alum!**

Last December at the age of 62, I was finally (and proudly) able to make that proclamation. It was an eight-year journey that was a roller coaster ride. Working full time at WIU and finding time to take classes while raising a family was definitely a challenge. In the end, the gratification of achieving my bachelor's degree far outweighed the demands of my journey.

I became aware of WIU's Bachelor of Arts in General Studies (then known as the Board of Trustees) degree program almost fifteen years ago, before I was employed at WIU. Mrs. Lorraine Epperson, a friend and WIU alum, and her late husband Ken (both educators and major university donors) informed me about the distance learning opportunity that WIU offered to individuals who wanted to complete bachelor's degrees but did not have the time or opportunity to attend on-campus classes. Once at WIU, I immediately contacted the former director of the School of Distance Learning, International Studies, and Outreach and was assigned an advisor, and I enrolled in the BGS program and began my journey. Due to work demands, I was able to take one or two online classes per semester. As with most nontraditionals, distance learning was the only way I could achieve my ultimate goal. Over the years, the curriculum increased tremendously, offering students a more diverse array of online courses.

I had originally enrolled at WIU after graduation from high school but, as in many cases, life takes us down different paths than what we had planned. I graduated from a broadcasting vocational school in Spokane, Washington, but it didn't materialize into a full-time position. I spent many years in the automotive business and later became a sports journalist for the Macomb Journal. My involvement with area sports eventually led to becoming a sportscaster for local schools, including a stint with WIU's football and basketball programs. Getting involved with WIU athletics rekindled my dream of earning a college degree, and my conversation with Mrs. Epperson helped me realize it was possible.

One of the great things about taking online classes is that it can fit into any schedule. In many cases, the majority of students in any particular class were like me—middle-aged nontraditionals who felt it was never too late to earn a degree. Many lived too far from the Macomb or Quad Cities campuses to attend in person. Getting to know fellow classmates along the way, I found their stories were similar to mine: an opportunity to earn a degree and further my career goals.

The BGS degree program at WIU is one of the finest—not only in Illinois, but throughout the Midwest. It offers no major, but up to three minors can be declared. Fortunately, the program offers individuals an excellent chance to earn a career-changing bachelor's degree with a specific minor. I had tremendous guidance from the BGS advisors, who were always ready to offer me assistance and answer my questions.

I managed to earn all of my credit hours online with the exception of a math class I needed to complete last fall. Fortunately, since I was on campus every day, I was able to schedule time off three days a week to attend class, an experience that I totally enjoyed. Being out of the classroom for more than forty years, it was a bit daunting at first. I was by far the oldest student in the room...and then I learned that I was older than my instructor, Dr. Olsen, by two years! The ultimate irony came when I realized I was older than the building where I attended class—by about ten years!

Regardless, my classroom experience with Dr. Olsen and my much younger classmates was a pleasant one which made my eight-year journey complete.

The most notable (and humbling) honors I achieved were being named the College Scholar and the General Studies Departmental Scholar for Fall 2016. These were icing on the cake for me as I proudly walked across the stage at commencement last December to get my degree.

I am still an employee at WIU, but my degree has opened more opportunities to pursue in the months ahead. I would strongly encourage all nontraditional individuals to fulfill your dream of earning a college degree. In today's society, a college degree gains a tremendous advantage in the workplace. And now, with the advanced technology of distance learning opportunities, it's never too late to realize that dream. You can start with one simple step: contacting the BGS Office at WIU.

I'm 63 years old and a proud WIU alum!

## HELPFUL RESOURCES



**BGS ESSENTIAL RESOURCES**  
Success Tools

**STARS COURSE LOOK UP**  
Spring Courses

**CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER**  
Student Services

**UNIV 490 CAREER INTERNSHIP**  
Application Form & Course Syllabus

## Did you know WIU's BGS Program Partners with Community Colleges and Corporations?

The Bachelor of Arts in General Studies degree program has agreements with the community colleges listed below. We provide for our students a wide range of opportunities to complete a bachelor's degree. Students residing in Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin are assessed the in-state tuition rate.

We are also proud of our partnership with a local corporation, Dot Foods, Inc., of Mt. Sterling, Illinois.

Visit WIU Undergraduate Admissions for more information.

Austin Community College, TX  
Black Hawk College  
Carl Sandburg College  
Coastline Community College, CA

College of DuPage  
College of Lake County  
Danville Area Community College  
Eastern Iowa Community College District  
Elgin Community College  
Frontier Community College  
Harold Washington College  
Harper College  
Heartland Community College  
Highland Community College  
Illinois Central College  
Illinois Eastern Community Colleges  
Illinois Valley Community College  
John A. Logan College  
John Wood Community College  
Joliet Junior College  
Kankakee Community College

Kaskaskia College  
Kennedy-King College  
Kishwaukee College  
Lake Land College  
Lewis and Clark Community College  
Lincoln Land Community College  
Lincoln Trail College  
Malcolm X College  
McHenry County College  
Moraine Valley Community College  
Oakton Community College  
Olive-Harvey College  
Olney Central College  
Palmer College of Chiropractic, CA, FL & IA  
Parkland College  
Rend Lake College  
Richland Community College  
Rock Valley College  
Sauk Valley Community College  
Southeastern Community College, IA

Southeastern Illinois College  
Southwestern Illinois College  
Spoon River College  
Wabash Valley College  
Waubonsee Community College  
Western Iowa Tech Community College, IA  
Wilbur Wright College



## WIN A WIU PURPLE T-SHIRT!

The first currently-registered BGS student to email me at [MS-Forman@wiu.edu](mailto:MS-Forman@wiu.edu) with the subject line "HAPPY 45<sup>th</sup>, BGS!" Wins a T-shirt. Tell me your WIU ID number, your mailing address, and shirt size (S through 2XL), and we'll send it to you! Then, please send me a photo of yourself wearing your T-shirt and I'll post it on our BGS Facebook page.

Like us!



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