

Grand Canyon Education, Inc.
Form 10-K
February 17, 2016
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UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549

Form 10-K

(Mark One)

☒ **ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**

For the fiscal year ended: December 31, 2015

OR

☐ **TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**

For the transition period from [] to []

Commission file number: 001-34211

GRAND CANYON EDUCATION, INC.

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

DELAWARE (State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization)	20-3356009 (I.R.S. Employer Identification No.)
3300 W. CAMELBACK ROAD, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85017	

(Address of principal executive offices, including zip code)

Registrant's telephone number, including area code: (602) 639-7500

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

(Title of Each Class)	(Name of Each Exchange on Which Registered)
Grand Canyon Education, Inc.	The NASDAQ Global Market

Common stock, \$.01 par value

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:

None

(Title of class)

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Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes ☒ No ☐

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act. Yes ☐ No ☒

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant: (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes ☒ No ☐

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files). Yes ☒ No ☐

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K. ☒

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of large accelerated filer, accelerated filer and smaller reporting company in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. (Check one):

Large accelerated filer ☒

Accelerated filer ☐

Non-accelerated filer ☐ (Do not check if a smaller reporting company)

Smaller reporting company ☐

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Securities Exchange Act). Yes ☐ No ☒

The total number of shares of common stock outstanding as of February 12, 2016 was 46,486,319

As of June 30, 2015, the last business day of the registrant's most recently completed second fiscal quarter, the registrant's common stock was listed on the NASDAQ Global Market. As of June 30, 2015, the aggregate market value of the registrant's common stock held by non-affiliates was approximately \$2.0 billion.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Certain portions of the registrant's Definitive Proxy Statement for its 2016 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (which is expected to be filed with the Commission within 120 days after the end of the registrant's 2015 fiscal year) are incorporated by reference into Part III of this Report.

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Special Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements

This Annual Report on Form 10-K, including Item 1, *Business*; Item 1A, *Risk Factors*; and Item 7, *Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations*, contains certain forward-looking statements, which include information relating to future events, future financial performance, strategies, expectations, competitive environment, regulation, and availability of resources. These forward-looking statements include, without limitation, statements regarding proposed new programs; statements as to whether regulatory developments or other matters may or may not have a material adverse effect on our financial position, results of operations, or liquidity; statements concerning projections, predictions, expectations, estimates, or forecasts as to our business, financial and operational results, and future economic performance; and statements of management's goals and objectives and other similar expressions concerning matters that are not historical facts. Words such as *may*, *should*, *could*, *would*, *predicts*, *potential*, *continue*, *expects*, *anticipates*, *future*, *intends*, *plans*, *believes*, *estimates* and *similar*, as well as statements in future tense, identify forward-looking statements.

Forward-looking statements should not be read as a guarantee of future performance or results, and will not necessarily be accurate indications of the times at, or by, which such performance or results will be achieved. Forward-looking statements are based on information available at the time those statements are made or management's good faith belief as of that time with respect to future events, and are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause actual performance or results to differ materially from those expressed in or suggested by the forward-looking statements. Important factors that could cause such differences include, but are not limited to:

our failure to comply with the extensive regulatory framework applicable to our industry, including Title IV of the Higher Education Act and the regulations thereunder, state laws and regulatory requirements, and accrediting commission requirements;

the ability of our students to obtain federal Title IV funds, state financial aid, and private financing;

potential damage to our reputation or other adverse effects as a result of negative publicity in the media, in the industry or in connection with governmental reports or investigations or otherwise, affecting us or other companies in the for-profit postsecondary education sector;

risks associated with changes in applicable federal and state laws and regulations and accrediting commission standards, including pending rulemaking by the Department of Education;

our ability to properly manage risks and challenges associated with strategic initiatives, including the potential conversion of our university operations to non-profit status, the expansion of our campus, potential acquisitions of, or investments in, new businesses, acquisitions of new properties, or the development of new campuses;

our ability to hire and train new, and develop and train existing employees and faculty;

the pace of growth of our enrollment;

our ability to convert prospective students to enrolled students and to retain active students;

our success in updating and expanding the content of existing programs and developing new programs in a cost-effective manner or on a timely basis;

industry competition, including competition for qualified executives and other personnel;

risks associated with the competitive environment for marketing our programs;

failure on our part to keep up with advances in technology that could enhance the online experience for our students;

the extent to which obligations under our credit agreement, including the need to comply with restrictive and financial covenants and to pay principal and interest payments, limits our ability to conduct our operations or seek new business opportunities;

our ability to manage future growth effectively;

general adverse economic conditions or other developments that affect the job prospects of our students; and

other factors discussed under the headings Risk Factors, Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations, Business, and Regulation.

Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date the statements are made. You should not put undue reliance on any forward-looking statements. We assume no obligation to update forward-looking statements to reflect actual results, changes in assumptions, or changes in other factors affecting forward-looking information, except to the extent required by applicable securities laws. If we do update one or more forward-looking statements, no inference should be drawn that we will make additional updates with respect to those or other forward-looking statements.

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Part I

Item 1. *Business*
Overview

We are a comprehensive regionally accredited university that offers approximately 200 graduate and undergraduate degree programs and certificates across eight colleges both online and on ground at our 200+ acre campus in Phoenix, Arizona, at leased facilities and at facilities owned by third party employers of our students. We are committed to providing an academically rigorous educational experience with a focus on professionally relevant programs that meet the objectives of our students. Our undergraduate programs are designed to be innovative and meet the future needs of employers, while providing students with the needed critical thinking and effective communication skills developed through a Christian-oriented, liberal arts foundation. We offer master and doctoral degrees in contemporary fields that are designed to provide students with the capacity for transformational leadership in their chosen industry, emphasizing the immediate relevance of theory, application, and evaluation to promote personal and organizational change. We utilize an integrated, innovative approach to marketing, recruiting, and retaining both traditional aged students attending on our campus in Phoenix, Arizona and working adult students attending on our campus or at off-site locations in cohorts (referred to by us as professional studies students) or online, which has enabled us to increase enrollment to approximately 74,500 students at December 31, 2015. At December 31, 2015, 79.6% of our students were enrolled in our online programs, and, of our working adult students (online and professional studies students), 47.8% were pursuing masters or doctoral degrees.

We define working adults as students age 25 or older who are pursuing a degree while employed. As of December 31, 2015, 87.1% of our online and professional studies students were age 25 or older. We believe that working adults are attracted to the convenience and flexibility of our online programs because they can study and interact with faculty and classmates during times that suit their schedules. We also believe that working adults, particularly those who have some college experience, represent an attractive student population because they are better able to more readily recognize the benefits of a postsecondary degree, have higher persistence and completion rates than other students, and to finance their education generally.

In 2015, we continued to increase the number of students in attendance at our expanding traditional ground campus. We attribute the significant growth in our enrollment to our increasing brand recognition and the value proposition that our ground traditional campus affords to traditional-aged students and their parents. After scholarships, our ground traditional students pay for tuition, room, board, and fees, often half to a third of what it costs to attend a private, traditional university in another state and an amount comparable to what it costs to attend a public university. We plan to increase enrollment growth for our traditional campus over the next few years, and seek to have 17,500 traditional ground students in attendance at the beginning of our 2016-2017 academic year. In November 2012, we accepted an invitation to become a member of the Division I Western Athletic Conference beginning with the 2013-2014 academic year, and in 2013 we began the four-year process to reclassify our NCAA membership from Division II to Division I. During the reclassification process we are considered a Division I university and are playing full conference schedules but are ineligible to compete for national championships which, for example, precludes us from playing in the end-of-year NCAA basketball tournament during that period of time.

We have experienced significant growth in enrollment, net revenue, and operating income over the last several years. Our enrollment at December 31, 2015 was approximately 74,500, representing an increase of approximately 9.9% over our enrollment at December 31, 2014. Our net revenue and operating income for the year ended December 31, 2015 were \$778.2 million and \$210.4 million, respectively, representing increases of 12.6% and 16.3%, respectively,

over the year ended December 31, 2014. Our net revenue and operating income for the year ended December 31, 2014 were \$691.1 million and \$180.8 million, respectively, representing increases of 15.5% and 26.2%, respectively, over the year ended December 31, 2013. We seek to achieve continued growth in a manner that reinforces our reputation for providing academically rigorous, professionally relevant educational programs that advance the educations and careers of our students.

We have been regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and its predecessor since 1968, and we were reaccruited in 2007 for the maximum term of ten years. We are regulated by the Department of Education as a result of our participation in the federal student financial aid programs authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act (hereafter, Title IV), and, at the state level, we are licensed to operate and offer our programs by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education (AZPPSE), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and Arizona State Board of Education for Institutional Recommendation Programs and the Arizona Board of Nursing. In addition, we have specialized accreditations for certain programs from the National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission (NASAC), the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). In addition, we are a candidate for accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). We believe that our institution-wide state authorization and regional accreditation, together with these specialized accreditations, reflect the quality of our programs, enhance their marketability to students, and improve the employability of our graduates.

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History

Grand Canyon College was founded in Prescott, Arizona in 1949 as a traditional, private, non-profit college and moved to its existing campus in Phoenix, Arizona in 1951. Established as a Baptist-affiliated institution with a strong emphasis on religious studies, the school initially focused on offering bachelor's degree programs in education. Over the years, the school expanded its curricula to include programs in the sciences, nursing, business, music, and arts. The college obtained regional accreditation in 1968 from the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the predecessor to the Higher Learning Commission, and began offering nursing programs and master's degree programs in education and business in the 1980s. In 1989, it achieved university status and became Grand Canyon University. The university introduced its first distance learning programs in 1997, and launched its first online programs in 2003 in business and education. In early 2000, it discontinued its Baptist affiliation and became an interdenominational Christian university.

In late 2003, the school's Board of Trustees initiated a process to evaluate alternatives as a result of the school's poor financial condition and, in February 2004, a group of investors acquired the assets of the school and converted the school into a for-profit institution.

Our Approach to Academic Quality

Some of the key elements that we focus on to promote a high level of academic quality include:

Academically rigorous, professionally relevant curricula. We prepare learners to become global citizens, critical thinkers, effective communicators and responsible leaders by providing an academically challenging, values-based curriculum from the context of our Christian heritage. We create academically rigorous curricula that are designed to enable all students to gain the foundational knowledge, professional competencies, and demonstrable skills required to be successful in their chosen fields. Our curriculum is designed and delivered by faculty and industry-specific subject-matter experts who are committed to high quality, rigorous education and professional preparedness. We design our curricula to address specific objectives that pre-career and working-adult students need and are seeking. Through this combination, we believe that we produce graduates that can compete with integrity and become leaders in their chosen fields.

Qualified faculty. We demonstrate our commitment to high quality education by hiring qualified faculty with relevant practical experience. Substantially all of our current faculty members hold at least a master's degree in their respective fields and approximately 46% of our faculty members of record are doctorate prepared. Further, the University has implemented a full time faculty model for online course instruction. In 2015, almost all of the online first year courses were taught by an online, full time faculty member. We believe the presence of a full time faculty member in the classroom for the first year students results in increased student retention. We invest in the professional development of our faculty members by providing online and ground pedagogical training along with hosting events that encourage the development and sharing of best practices. Additionally, we also monitor and evaluate teaching effectiveness through assessment content reviews, peer reviews, and student evaluations.

Centralized program design and curriculum development. We employ a college driven highly collaboratively designed curriculum development process to ensure a consistent learning experience. We continuously review our programs at least every 3 years in an effort to ensure that they remain consistent, up-to-date, relevant, and effective in producing the desired learning outcomes. We also annually review programmatic assessment results, mission based competency results, graduation rates, retention rates and constituency surveys to identify opportunities for course modifications and upgrades.

Effective student services. We establish teams comprised of admissions and student services advisor personnel that act as the primary support contact point for each of our students, beginning at the application stage and continuing through graduation. We also continually focus on improving the technology used to support student learning, including delivering a new online learning platform and further improving student services through the implementation of online interfaces. As a result, many of our support services, including academic, administrative, financial, library, and career services, are accessible online, generally allowing users to access these services at a time and in a manner that is convenient to them.

Continual academic oversight. We have centralized the support functions of assessment for all of our programs through our Office of Assessment. While each of our colleges continuously evaluates the desired learning outcomes for each of their programs, the Office of Assessment provides data collection and analysis support. We continuously assess outcomes data to determine whether our students graduate with the knowledge, competencies, and skills that are necessary to succeed in the workplace. The Office of Assessment also initiates and manages periodic examinations of the mission-based competencies in our curricula by full-time and adjunct reviewers to evaluate and verify mission-based competency attainment. Based on these processes and student feedback from both programmatic and mission-based assessment, we determine whether to modify or discontinue programs that do not meet our standards or market needs, or to create new programs.

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We also offer the following features in an effort to enrich the academic experience of current and prospective students:

Flexibility in program delivery. We seek to meet market demands by providing students with the flexibility to take courses exclusively online or to combine online coursework with various campus and onsite options. For example, based on market demand, particularly in connection with our nursing programs, we have established satellite locations at multiple hospitals that allow nursing students to take clinical courses onsite while completing other course work online. We have established similar onsite arrangements with other major employers, including schools and school districts through which students can pursue student teaching opportunities. This flexibility raises our profile among employers, encourages students to take and complete courses, and eliminates inconveniences that tend to lessen student persistence.

Small class size. At December 31, 2015, 93.4% of our online and professional studies classes had 25 or fewer students. Our average, class size on our ground traditional campus is 25 students. These class sizes provide each student with the opportunity to interact directly with course faculty and to receive individualized feedback and attention while also affording our faculty with the opportunity to engage proactively with a manageable number of students. We believe this interaction enhances the academic quality of our programs by promoting opportunities for students to participate actively and thus build the requisite knowledge, competencies, and skills.

Accreditation and Program Approvals

We believe that the quality of our academic programs is evidenced by our university, college-, and program-specific accreditations and approvals. Grand Canyon University has been continuously accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and its predecessor since 1968, most recently obtaining reaccreditation in 2007 for the ten-year period through 2017. We are licensed in Arizona by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education. In addition, we have obtained the following specialized accreditations and approvals for our core program offerings:

Specialized Accreditations and Program

College	Approvals	Current Period	
<i>College of Nursing and Health Care Professions</i>	The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accredits our Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing degree programs.	2006	2016 (B.S.)
		2011	2021 (M.S.)
	The Arizona State Board of Nursing approves our Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing degree programs.	2006	2016 (B.S.)
		2011	2021 (M.S.)
<i>College of Education</i>	The Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education accredits our Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training.	2008	2018
		2014	2016 (teacher)

The Arizona Department of Education and Arizona State Board of Education approves our College of Education to offer Institutional Recommendations for the certification of elementary, secondary, and special education teachers (B.A./B.S./M.Ed.) and school principals (M.Ed.).	2014 2018 (principal)
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Our College of Education is a candidate for accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), www.ncate.org. Candidacy status means that the College of Education has met preconditions for accreditation but is not accredited. NCATE has merged with another accrediting body and is now the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), www.caepnet.org. We have maintained our NCATE candidacy status and are proceeding through the CAEP accreditation process. This candidacy covers our initial teacher preparation programs and advanced educator preparation programs.	2011 2016
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Specialized Accreditations and Program

College	Approvals	Current Period
<i>Colangelo College of Business</i>	The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs accredits our Executive Master of Business Administration degree program, Master of Business Administration degree program, and our Bachelor of Science degree programs in Accounting, Business Administration, Marketing, Finance and Economics, Entrepreneurial Studies, and Sports Management.	2007 2017
<i>College of Fine Arts and Production</i>	The Arizona Department of Education and Arizona State Board of Education approves the College of Fine Arts and Production to offer programs leading to initial teacher licensure in the area of arts education for the elementary and secondary levels.	2014 2016

Our regional accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission, and our specialized accreditations and approvals for our core programs, reflect the quality of, and standards we set for, our programs, enhance their marketability, and improve the employability of our graduates.

Curricula

We offer the degrees of Doctor of Education, Doctor of Business Administration, Doctor of Nursing Practice, Doctor of Philosophy, Education Specialist, Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Education, Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration, Master of Public Health, Master of Science, Bachelor of Arts, and Bachelor of Science and a variety of programs leading to each of these degrees. Many of our degree programs also offer a selection of emphases. We also offer certificate programs, which consist of a series of courses focused on a particular area of study, for both the post-baccalaureate and post-graduate students who seek to enhance their skills and knowledge or achieve additional licensure.

We offer approximately 200 graduate and undergraduate degree programs and certificates through our eight distinct colleges:

the College of Nursing and Health Care Professions, which, as a result of, among other things, the strong pass rates of our Bachelor of Science in Nursing (pre-licensure) students on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), has a strong reputation within the Arizona nursing community and is the largest nursing program in Arizona when considering total college enrollment (bachelor and masters students);

the College of Doctoral Studies, which utilizes innovative technology, collaboration, and learning communities to develop expert practitioners and researchers who can become leaders in the disciplines and communities they serve;

the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, which develops and provides many of the general education course requirements in our other colleges and also serves as one of the vehicles through which we offer programs in additional targeted disciplines;

the College of Science, Engineering, and Technology, which with science, engineering, technology, and mathematics professions in extremely high demand, driving our economy, continuously evolving, and redefining modern day life is focused on preparing exceptionally competent graduates to enter the dynamic and highly competitive workforce of the 21st century;

the College of Education, which has greater than a 60-year history as one of Arizona's leading teacher's colleges and consistently graduates teachers who meet or exceed state averages on the Arizona Educator Proficiency Assessment exams;

the Colangelo College of Business, which has a well-known brand among our target student population, an advisory board that includes nationally recognized business leaders, and a reputation for offering professionally relevant degree programs;

the College of Fine Arts and Production, which continues the long and highly regarded tradition that the University has in the Fine Arts; and

the College of Theology, which serves as one of the many vehicles through which the University affirms its Christian heritage.

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Under the overall leadership of our senior academic affairs personnel and the deans of the individual colleges, each of the colleges organizes its academic programs through various departments and schools.

We have established relationships with community colleges, health-care systems, school districts, and other employers through which we offer programs to provide flexibility and convenience to students and their employers. For example, for our nursing programs, we offer clinical courses onsite at hospitals and other health-care centers with which we have partnerships, and also arrange to allow these students to complete their clinical work onsite.

We currently offer our ground-based programs to traditional students through three 15-week semesters in a calendar year and to online students in five, seven, eight or sixteen week courses throughout the calendar year. Traditional students generally enroll in three or four courses per semester while online students typically concentrate on one course at a time. We require our online students to be actively engaged in their online student classroom at least three or four times each week, depending on the content and degree level of the class, in order to maintain an active dialogue with their professors and classmates. Our online programs provide a digital record of student interactions for the course instructor to assess students' levels of engagement and demonstration of required competencies.

New Program Development

To aid us in the identification of potentially new degree programs or emphasis areas, we investigate market demand and review proposals developed by faculty, staff, students, alumni, college specific advisory boards comprised of leaders in their field or other partners. We then perform an analysis of the consistency of the proposed program or emphasis with our mission, long-term demand, and development costs. If, following this analysis, the University Development Committee decides to proceed with a new program, our college faculty and administrators approve subject-matter experts with whom our Curriculum Design and Development Team members, including instructional designers, curriculum developers, librarians, and editors, work to design the program competencies so that it is consistent with our academically rigorous, professionally oriented program standards. The program is then reviewed by the dean of the applicable college, the Program Standards and Evaluation Faculty Committee, the Academic Affairs Committee, and finally, our Provost and Chief Academic Officer. Upon accreditation and regulatory approval, the subject matter experts develop course syllabi, and our Marketing Department creates a marketing plan to publicize the new program. Our average program development process is six months from proposal to course introduction. The development process is typically longer if we are expanding into a new field or offering a new level of degree.

Assessment

Our Office of Assessment serves as our central resource for measuring learning outcomes and student satisfaction and driving systematically engineered and data-driven continuous-improvement cycles for updating our curricula. Among other things, the assessment team reviews student course satisfaction surveys; analyzes archived student assignments to assess whether a given program is developing students' foundational knowledge, professional competencies, and college skills to achieve the expected learning outcomes; and provides feedback as to program effectiveness. Based on this data and the conclusions of the assessment team, we modify programs as necessary to meet our student satisfaction and educational development standards.

Faculty

Our faculty includes full-time faculty, as well as adjunct faculty with relevant practical experience whom we employ to teach on a course-by-course basis for a specified fee. Our current faculty members hold at least a master's degree in their respective fields and approximately 46% of our teaching faculty of record hold doctorate degrees.

We believe that the quality of our faculty is critical to our success, particularly because faculty members have more interaction with our students than any other university employee. Accordingly, we regularly review the performance of our faculty, including, but not limited to, engaging our full-time faculty and other specialists to conduct peer reviews of our adjunct faculty, monitoring the amount of contact and the quality of feedback that faculty have with students in our online programs, reviewing student feedback, conducting content reviews and evaluating the learning outcomes achieved by students. If we determine that a faculty member is not performing at the level that we require, we work with the faculty member to improve performance, including, among other things, assigning him or her a mentor or through other means. If the faculty member's performance does not improve, we terminate the faculty member's contract and employment.

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Student Support Services

Encouraging students that enter Grand Canyon University to complete their degree programs is critical to our success. We focus on developing and providing resources that simplify the student enrollment process, acclimate students to our programs and our online environment, support the student educational experience, and track student performance toward degree completion. Many of our support services, including academic, administrative, and library services, are accessible online and are available to our online and ground students, allowing users to access these services at a time and in a manner that is generally convenient to them. The student support services we provide include:

Academic services. We provide students with a variety of services designed to support their academic studies. Our Learning Lounge offers research services, writing services, and other tutoring services. Learning sessions are offered on a one-on-one basis and group sessions.

Administrative services. We provide students with the ability to access a variety of administrative services both telephonically and via the Internet. For example, students can apply for financial aid, pay their tuition, order their transcripts online, and apply for graduation. We believe this online accessibility provides the convenience and self-service capabilities that our students value. Our student services advisors provide personalized online and telephonic support to our students.

Library services. We provide a mix of online and ground resources, services, and instruction to support the educational and research endeavors of all students, faculty, and staff, including ground and online libraries and a qualified library staff that is available to help faculty and students with research, teaching, and library resource instruction. Collectively, our library services meet, or exceed, the requirements set by relevant accrediting bodies for us to offer undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs.

Career services. For those students seeking to change careers or explore new career opportunities, we offer career services support, including resume review and evaluation, career planning workshops, and access to career services specialists for advice and support. Other resources that we offer include a Job Readiness Program, which advises students on matters such as people skills, resumes and cover letters, mock interviews, and business etiquette; a job board, which advertises employment postings and career exploration opportunities; career counseling appointments and consultations; and career fairs.

Technology support services. We provide online technical support 18 hours per day during the week and 17 hours per day on weekends to help our students remedy technology-related issues. We also provide online tutorials and Frequently Asked Questions for students who are new to online coursework.

Marketing, Recruitment, Admissions and Retention

Marketing. We engage in a range of marketing activities designed to position us as a provider of academically rigorous, professionally relevant educational programs, build strong brand recognition in our core disciplines, differentiate us from other educational providers, raise awareness among prospective students, generate enrollment inquiries, and stimulate student and alumni referrals. We target our online programs to working adults focused on program quality, convenience, and career advancement goals. We target our ground programs to traditional college students, working adults seeking a high quality education in a traditional college setting, and working adults seeking to take classes with a cohort onsite at our leased facilities or at their employer's facility. In marketing our programs to prospective students, we emphasize the value of the educational experience and the academic rigor and professional relevancy of the programs, as well as the cost of the program. We believe this approach reinforces the qualities that we want associated with our brand and also attracts students who tend to be more persistent in starting and finishing their

programs.

Recruitment. Once a prospective student has indicated an interest in enrolling in one of our programs, our lead management system identifies and directs an admissions advisor to initiate immediate communication. The admissions advisor serves as the primary, direct contact for the prospective student and the advisor's goal is to help that individual gain sufficient knowledge and understanding of our programs so that he or she can assess whether there is a good match between our offerings and the prospective student's goals. Upon the prospective student's submission of an application, the admissions advisor, together with our student services personnel, works with the applicant to gain acceptance, arrange financial aid, if needed, register for courses, and prepare for matriculation.

Admissions. Admission to Grand Canyon University is available to qualified students who are at least 16 years of age. Undergraduate applicants may qualify in various ways, including by having a high school diploma, certain minimum grade point average levels, certain minimum composite scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test or on the ACT test, or certain minimum scores on the General Education Development (GED) tests. Some of our programs require a higher grade point average and/or other criteria to qualify for admission. Applicants to our graduate programs must generally have an undergraduate degree from an accredited college, university, or program with a grade point average of 2.8 or greater, or a graduate degree from an accredited college, university, or program. In addition, some students who do not meet the qualifications for admission may be accepted with specification. A student being considered for such admission may be asked to submit additional information such as personal references and an essay addressing academic history. Students may also need to schedule an interview to help clarify academic goals and help us make an informed decision.

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Retention. A key component in retaining our students is providing an outstanding learning experience. We feel that our team-based, proactive approach to recruitment and enhanced student services results in increased retention due to our systematic approach to contacting students at key milestones during their enrollment, providing encouragement and highlighting their achievements. Our student services advisors proactively assist each student with the student's selection of an appropriate payment option, and monitor the student's progress and account balance to ensure a smooth financial aid experience and to help ensure our students are well prepared for the financial obligations they incur. These advisors also assist students with their academic schedules and regularly monitor triggering events, such as the failure to participate in the classroom or failure to matriculate in a timely manner, which signal that a student may be at-risk for dropping out. Upon identifying an at-risk student, these advisors proactively interact with the student to resolve any issues and encourage the student to continue with his or her program. We have found that personally involving our employees in the student educational process, and proactively seeking to resolve issues before they become larger problems, can significantly increase retention rates among students. These frequent interactions between student services advisors and students are a key component to our retention strategy.

Enrollment

At December 31, 2015, we had 74,506 students enrolled in our courses, of which 59,311, or 79.6%, were enrolled in our online programs, and 15,195, or 20.4%, were enrolled in our ground programs. Of our students in online programs, which were geographically distributed throughout all 50 states of the United States, and Canada, and in professional studies programs, 87.1% were age 25 or older. Of our traditional on-campus students, 93.8% were under age 25 and, although we draw students from throughout the United States, a majority were from Arizona.

The following is a summary of our student enrollment at December 31, 2015 and 2014 by degree type and by instructional delivery method:

	December 31, 2015⁽¹⁾		December 31, 2014⁽¹⁾	
	# of Students	% of Total	# of Students	% of Total
Graduate degree ⁽²⁾	29,237	39.2%	26,319	38.8%
Undergraduate degree	45,269	60.8%	41,487	61.2%
Total	74,506	100.0%	67,806	100.0%

	December 31, 2015⁽¹⁾		December 31, 2014⁽¹⁾	
	# of Students	% of Total	# of Students	% of Total
Online ⁽³⁾	59,311	79.6%	55,060	81.2%
Ground ⁽⁴⁾	15,195	20.4%	12,746	18.8%
Total	74,506	100.0%	67,806	100.0%

⁽¹⁾ Enrollment at December 31, 2015 and 2014 represents individual students who attended a course during the last two months of the calendar quarter. Includes 679 and 585 students pursuing non-degree certificates at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively.

- (2) Includes 6,302 and 5,570 students pursuing doctoral degrees at December 31, 2015 and 2014, respectively.
- (3) As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, 47.8% and 46.0%, respectively, of our working adult students (online and professional studies students) were pursuing graduate or doctoral degrees.
- (4) Includes our traditional on-campus students, as well as our professional studies students.

Tuition and Fees

For the 2014-15 academic year (the academic year begins in May), our prices per credit hour range from \$350 to \$465 for undergraduate online and professional studies courses, \$325 to \$600 for graduate online courses, \$630 for doctoral online programs, and \$688 for undergraduate courses for ground students. For our active duty military and active reserve online and professional studies students, our prices per credit hour are \$250 for undergraduate, \$400 for graduate courses and \$599 for doctoral courses. The overall price of each course varies based upon the number of credit hours per course (with most courses representing four credit hours), the degree level of the program, and the discipline. In addition, we charge a fixed \$8,250 block tuition for undergraduate ground students taking between 12 and 18 credit hours per semester, with an additional \$688 per credit hour for credits in excess of 18. A traditional undergraduate degree typically requires a minimum of 120 credit hours. The minimum number of credit hours required for a master's degree and overall cost for such a degree varies by program, although such programs typically require approximately 36 credit hours. The doctoral program requires approximately 60 credit hours. A tuition increase of approximately 1% was implemented for the majority of online programs in September 2015. The University has not raised tuition for its traditional ground programs in seven years.

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Based on current tuition rates, tuition for a full program would generally equate to between \$15,450 and \$37,000 for an online master's program, between \$42,600 and \$56,400 for a full four-year online bachelor's program, \$38,400 for a full doctoral program, and approximately \$66,000 for a full four-year bachelor's program taken on our ground campus. The tuition amounts referred to above assume no reductions for transfer credits or scholarships, which many of our students utilize to reduce their total program costs. For example, the average student on our ground traditional campus will pay approximately \$8,300 in tuition in the 2015-16 school year after scholarships. Thus, based on the number of transfer credits and the scholarships they receive it is likely that a student will pay less than \$34,000 in tuition for a bachelor's degree on our ground campus. For the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, our revenue was reduced by approximately \$163.9 million, \$140.0 million and \$111.8 million, respectively, as a result of scholarships that we offered to our students. The increase in scholarships reflects our increasing use of academic scholarships, to attract high performing students to our ground traditional campus.

We have established a refund policy for tuition and fees based upon individual course start dates. Under our policy, for courses offered through a working adult modality, generally if a student drops or withdraws from a course before the course begins, 100% of the charges for tuition and fees are refunded. If a student drops or withdraws from a course during the first week of the course, 75% of the charges for tuition are refunded. If a student drops or withdraws from a course during or after the second week of a course, tuition charges and fees are not refunded. Most fees, including materials fees, are non-refundable for non-traditional students after the start of a course. We will refund tuition and fees according to the above policy unless a student attending courses online is a resident of a state that requires us to comply with different, state specific guidelines. For traditional students attending 15-week courses, generally if a student withdraws before the course begins, 100% of the charges for tuition and fees are refunded. If a student withdraws during the first week of the course, 90% of the charges for tuition are refunded and instructional fees and ground campus-related fees are refunded. If a student drops or withdraws from a course during the second week of a course, 75% of the tuition charges are refunded but most fees are non-refundable. If a student drops during the third week of a course, 50% of the tuition charges are refunded and during or after the fourth week, there are no refunds for tuition charges. Fees charged by us include graduation fees as well as fees for access to certain educational resources such as online materials. This tuition and fees refund policy is different from, and applies in addition to, the return of Title IV funds policy we are required to follow as a condition of our participation in the Title IV programs.

Sources of Student Financing

Our students finance their education through a combination of methods, as follows:

Title IV programs. The federal government provides for grants and loans to students under the Title IV programs, and students can use those funds at any institution that has been certified as eligible by the Department of Education. Student financial aid under the Title IV programs is primarily awarded on the basis of a student's financial need, which is generally defined as the difference between the cost of attending the institution and the amount the student and the student's family can reasonably contribute to that cost. All students receiving Title IV program funds must maintain satisfactory academic progress toward completion of their program of study. In addition, each school must ensure that Title IV program funds are properly accounted for and disbursed in the correct amounts to eligible students.

During fiscal 2015 and 2014, we derived approximately 74.8% and 76.5%, respectively, of our net revenues (calculated on a cash basis in accordance with Department of Education standards currently in effect) from tuition financed under the Title IV programs. The primary Title IV programs that our students receive funding from are the Federal Direct Loan program or FDL Program, and the Federal Pell Grant, or Pell, Program.

Student loans administered through the FDL Program are currently the most significant source of U.S. federal student aid. There are two types of federal student loans: subsidized loans, which are based on the U.S. federal statutory

calculation of student need, and unsubsidized loans, which are not need-based. Neither type of student loan is based on creditworthiness although annual and aggregate loan limits apply based on a student's grade level. Students are not responsible for interest on subsidized loans while the student is enrolled in school. However, the interest subsidy was temporarily eliminated for those students who received a direct Stafford loan with a first disbursement made on or after July 1, 2012 and before July 1, 2014. The interest subsidy for subsidized loans was reinstated for direct Stafford loans with a first disbursement after July 1, 2014. Students are responsible for the interest on unsubsidized loans while enrolled in school, but have the option to defer payment while enrolled. Repayment on federal student loans begins six months after the date the student ceases to be enrolled. The loans are repayable over the course of 10 years and, in some cases, longer. Both graduate and undergraduate students are eligible for loans. During 2015, federal student loans (both subsidized and unsubsidized) represented approximately 82.8% of the gross Title IV funds that we received.

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Grants under the Pell Program (Pell Grants) are awarded based on need and only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or professional degree. Unlike loans, Pell Grants are not repayable. During fiscal year 2015, Pell Grants represented approximately 13.7% of the gross Title IV funds that we received. For the 2014-2015 award year, the maximum amount available under Pell Grants was \$5,730 and the maximum income that makes an applicant for Title IV Program funds eligible for an automatic zero Expected Family Contribution was \$24,000. For the 2015-16 award year, the maximum amount available under Pell Grants was increased to \$5,775 and the maximum income that makes an applicant for Title IV Program funds eligible for an automatic zero Expected Family Contribution remained at \$24,000.

Our students also receive funding under other Title IV programs, including the Federal Perkins Loan Program, the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant Program, the Federal Work-Study Program, and the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grant Program.

Other financial aid programs. In addition to the Title IV programs listed above, eligible students may participate in several other financial aid programs or receive support from other governmental sources. These include veterans educational benefits administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and state financial aid programs. During fiscal 2015 and 2014, we derived an immaterial amount of our net revenue from tuition financed by such programs.

Private loans. Some of our students also use private loan programs to help finance their education. Students can apply to a number of different lenders for private loans at current market interest rates. Private loans are intended to fund a portion of students' cost of education not covered by the Title IV programs and other financial aid. During fiscal 2015 and 2014, payments derived from private loans constituted less than 1% of our net revenues for each year, respectively.

Other sources. We derived the remainder of our net revenue from tuition that is self-funded or attributable to employer tuition reimbursements.

Technology Systems and Management

We believe that we have established secure, reliable and scalable technology systems that provide a high quality educational environment and that give us the capability to substantially grow our online and traditional programs and enrollment.

Online course delivery and management. In 2010, we entered into an agreement with an affiliated entity to develop a new learning management system for our use. Through this agreement, we prepaid perpetual license fees, acquired source code rights for the software developed, and prepaid maintenance and service fees, for an aggregate amount of \$4.9 million. Through our modular implementation of this platform, called LoudCloud, we have a platform that can scale to support our growing student population. The platform provides in depth analytics that allows us to closely monitor student success and the quality of our instructional resources. All ground and online students receive online course delivery and resources through this learning management platform.

Internal administration. We utilize a commercial customer relations management software package to distribute, manage, track, and report on all interactions with prospective student leads as well as all active and inactive students. This software is scalable to capacity levels well in excess of current requirements. We also utilize a commercial software package to track Title IV funds, student records, grades, accounts receivable, accounts payable and general ledger.

Infrastructure. We operate two data centers, one at our campus and one at another Phoenix-area location. All of our servers are networked and we have redundant data backup. We manage our technology environment internally. Our wide area network uses fully redundant technology to ensure maximum uptime, bandwidth capacity and network performance while allowing the flexibility needed to bring on additional data centers and remote sites as needed. Student access is load balanced for maximum performance. Real-time monitoring provides current system status across server, network, and storage components.

Ground Campus

We own our ground campus, which is located on 200+ acres in the center of the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area, near downtown Phoenix. Our on-campus facilities currently consist of classroom buildings, lecture halls, a 300-seat theater, a newly renovated library, a media arts complex that provides communications students with audio and video equipment, a 55,000 square foot recreation center for both student-athletes and on-campus students, a 140,000 square foot/ 7,500 seat basketball and entertainment arena, a gymnasium, an activity center that contains a food court, a bowling alley and other student services, a student union which was recently remodeled and expanded, residence halls, apartments, campus pools, athletic facilities and parking garages. Additionally, we have several office buildings used for administration. In order to accommodate the continued growth of our traditional ground population, we completed four additional residence halls, an additional classroom building for our College of Science, Engineering and Technology and a third parking structure prior to the 2015/2016 school year and has recently started construction on three apartment style residence halls, a 170,000 square foot classroom building for its College of Science, Engineering and Technology, a student service center and a fourth parking structure.

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We have 22 intercollegiate athletic teams that currently compete in Division I of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Our athletic facilities include the University Arena (a 7,500 seat venue for all men's and women's basketball games plus select other GCU athletic competitions, concerts, speakers and other events), and a competition/practice gymnasium, which accommodates basketball, volleyball, and wrestling competitive events. In addition, the University's 55,000 square foot student recreation center has state of the art training facilities for our 400 student-athletes plus practice space and locker rooms for men's and women's basketball and wrestling. Our baseball, softball and track and field programs utilize on-campus practice and competition sites. An on-campus soccer facility which includes classrooms and team locker facilities in addition to 3,000 permanent seats and grassed berm seating to accommodate another 3,000 fans will be completed in Spring 2016. In January 2016 the Grand Canyon University Championship golf course opened to the public. The men's and women's golf teams have dedicated practice facilities, a team room and coaches offices at the course. Tennis, cross-country and swimming programs utilize off-campus sites for practice and competition. The University won the 2012-13 and 2011-12 Learfield Sports Directors Cup as the top overall NCAA Division II intercollegiate athletic program based on the combined success in all of the sports in which we competed. We advanced 16 of 22 programs into NCAA Championship competition and gained top 10 finishes in nine separate sports. In November 2012, we accepted an invitation to be a member of the NCAA Division I Western Athletic Conference beginning with the 2013-14 academic year and in September 2013 we began playing full Division I schedules. In June 2015, the University completed requirements for year 2 of the four year reclassification period and were passed on to year three in the membership process. In the first two years of membership in the Western Athletic Conference the Women's Indoor Track and Field, Softball, Baseball and Women's Tennis teams won regular season conference titles. GCU televises home athletic events in multiple sports highlighted by the men's basketball games that have averaged approximately 5,500 fans per night with most games played when the students are not on semester break at or near capacity.

We believe our ground-based programs and traditional campus not only offer our ground students, faculty, and staff an opportunity to participate in a traditional college experience, but also provide our online students, faculty, and staff with a sense of connection to a traditional university. Additionally, our full-time ground faculty play an important role in integrating online faculty into our academic programs and ensuring the overall consistency and quality of the ground and online student experience. We believe the mix of our online program with our traditional ground-based program with a greater than 60-year history and heritage differentiates us from other for-profit postsecondary education providers.

We intend to continue to expand the size and enhance the profile and reputation of our ground campus by, among other things, adding faculty, excelling in the performance areas such as athletics, debate, theatre, music and dance, expanding upon our campus infrastructure and technological capabilities, and potentially adding additional locations in the Southwest United States. These activities will require significant capital expenditures.

Employees

As of December 31, 2015, we employed over 3,650 full-time faculty, and staff and administrative personnel in university services, academic advising and academic support, enrollment services, university administration, financial aid, information technology, human resources, corporate accounting, finance, and other administrative functions. None of our employees is a party to any collective bargaining or similar agreement with us. We consider our relationships with our employees to be good.

Competition

There are more than 4,000 U.S. colleges and universities serving traditional and adult students. Competition is highly fragmented and varies by geography, program offerings, modality, ownership, quality level, and selectivity of

admissions. No one institution has a significant share of the total postsecondary market.

Our ground program competes with Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona, the in-state public universities, as well as two-year colleges within the state community college system. Our ground program also competes with geographically proximate universities with similar religious heritages, including Azusa Pacific University, Baylor University, and Pepperdine University. Our online programs compete with local, traditional universities geographically located near each of our prospective students, and with other for-profit postsecondary schools that offer online degrees, particularly those schools that offer online graduate programs within our core disciplines.

Non-profit institutions receive substantial government subsidies, and have access to government and foundation grants, tax-deductible contributions and other financial resources generally not available to for-profit schools. Accordingly, non-profit institutions may have instructional and support resources that are superior to those in the for-profit sector. In addition, some of our competitors, including both traditional colleges and universities and other for-profit schools, have substantially greater name recognition and financial resources than we have, which may enable them to compete more effectively for potential students. We also expect to face increased competition as a result of new entrants to the online education market, including established colleges and universities that had not previously offered online education programs.

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We believe that the competitive factors in the postsecondary education market include:

availability of professionally relevant and accredited program offerings;

the types of degrees offered and the marketability of those degrees;

reputation, regulatory approvals, and compliance history of the school;

convenient, flexible and dependable access to programs and classes;

qualified and experienced faculty;

quality of the ground campus facilities;

level of student support services;

cost of the program;

marketing and selling effectiveness; and

the time necessary to earn a degree.

Proprietary Rights

We own or are licensed to use various intellectual property rights, including copyrights, trademarks, service marks, trade secrets and domain names. We license the right to utilize the name of Jerry Colangelo in connection with our Colangelo School of Sports Business that we operate within the business school, and we have spent significant resources in related branding efforts. While such intellectual property rights are important to us, we do not believe that the loss of any individual property right or group of related rights would have a material adverse effect on our overall business.

Available Information

Our Internet address is www.gcu.edu. We make available free of charge on our website our Annual Report on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q, Current Reports on Form 8-K, Forms 3, 4, and 5 filed on behalf of directors and executive officers, and all amendments to those reports filed or furnished pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, as soon as reasonably practicable after such reports are electronically filed with, or furnished to, the Securities and Exchange Commission (hereafter, the SEC). In addition, our earnings conference calls are web cast live

via our website. In addition to visiting our website, you may read and copy any document we file with the SEC at the SEC's Public Reference Room at 100 F. Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20549 or at www.sec.gov. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for information on the Public Reference Room.

REGULATION

We are subject to extensive regulation by state education agencies, accrediting commissions, and the federal government through the Department of Education under the Higher Education Act. The regulations, standards, and policies of these agencies cover the vast majority of our operations, including our educational programs, facilities, instructional and administrative staff, administrative procedures, marketing, recruiting, financial operations, athletics and financial condition.

As an institution of higher education that grants degrees and certificates, we are required to be authorized by appropriate state education authorities. These state education authorities also exercise regulatory oversight of our institution. In addition, in order to participate in the federal student financial aid programs, we must be accredited by an accrediting commission recognized by the Department of Education. Accreditation is a non-governmental process through which an institution submits to qualitative review by an organization of peer institutions, based on the standards of the accrediting commission and the stated aims and purposes of the institution. The Higher Education Act requires accrediting commissions recognized by the Department of Education to review and monitor many aspects of an institution's operations and to take appropriate action if the institution fails to meet the accrediting commission's standards.

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Our operations are also subject to regulation by the Department of Education due to our participation in the federal student financial aid programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. Those Title IV programs include educational loans with below-market interest rates that are issued by the federal government under the Federal Direct Loan program (the FDL Program), as well as grant programs for students with demonstrated financial need. To participate in the Title IV programs, a school must receive and maintain authorization by the appropriate state education agency or agencies, be accredited by an accrediting commission recognized by the Department of Education, and be certified as an eligible institution by the Department of Education.

Our business activities are planned and implemented to comply with the standards of these regulatory agencies. We employ a Vice President of Student Financial Aid Compliance who is knowledgeable about regulatory matters relevant to student financial aid programs and our Chief Financial Officer, Chief Risk Officer, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and General Counsel also provide oversight designed to ensure that we meet the requirements of our regulated operating environment.

State Education Licensure and Regulation

We are authorized to offer our educational programs by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education, the regulatory agency governing private postsecondary educational institutions in the State of Arizona, where we are located. We do not presently have campuses in any states other than Arizona, although we do have one location in Albuquerque, New Mexico. We are required by the Higher Education Act to maintain authorization from the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education in order to participate in the Title IV programs. This authorization is very important to us and our business. To maintain our state authorization, we must continuously meet standards relating to, among other things, educational programs, facilities, instructional and administrative staff, marketing and recruitment, financial operations, addition of new locations and educational programs, and various operational and administrative procedures. Our failure to comply with the requirements of the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education could result in us losing our authorization to offer our educational programs, which would cause us to lose our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs and could force us to cease operations. Alternatively, the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education could restrict our ability to offer certain degree and non-degree programs.

We are an approved institutional participant in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is an agreement among member states, districts and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a national Council (NC-SARA) and administered by four regional education compacts, for which Arizona is a W-SARA member. There is a yearly renewal for participating in NC-SARA and AZ-SARA and institutions must agree to meet certain requirements to participate.

Some states that do not participate in SARA impose regulatory requirements on out-of-state educational institutions operating within their boundaries, such as those having a physical facility or conducting certain academic activities within the state. We currently enroll students in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Although we are currently licensed, authorized, in-process, or exempt in all non-SARA jurisdictions in which we operate, if we fail to comply with state licensing or authorization requirements for a state, or fail to obtain licenses or authorizations when required, we could lose our state license or authorization by that state or be subject to other sanctions, including restrictions on our activities in, and fines and penalties imposed by, that state, as well as fines, penalties, and sanctions imposed by the Department of Education. While we do not believe that any of the states in which we are currently licensed or authorized, other than Arizona, are individually material to our operations, the loss of licensure or authorization in any state could prohibit us from recruiting prospective students or offering services to current students in that state, which

could significantly reduce our enrollments.

Individual state laws establish standards in areas such as instruction, qualifications of faculty, administrative procedures, marketing, recruiting, financial operations, and other operational matters, some of which are different than the standards prescribed by the Department of Education or the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education. Laws in some states limit schools' ability to offer educational programs and award degrees to residents of those states. Some states also prescribe financial regulations that are different from those of the Department of Education, and many require the posting of surety bonds. In non-SARA states, regulatory requirements for online education vary among the states, are not well developed in many states, are imprecise or unclear in some states, and can change frequently. Laws, regulations, or interpretations related to doing business over the Internet could also increase our cost of doing business and affect our ability to recruit students in particular states, which could, in turn, negatively affect enrollments and revenues and have a material adverse effect on our business.

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State Professional Licensure

Many states have specific requirements that an individual must satisfy in order to be licensed as a professional in specified fields, including fields such as education and healthcare, and counseling. These requirements vary by state and by field. A student's success in obtaining licensure following graduation typically depends on several factors, including the background and qualifications of the individual graduate, as well as the following factors, among others:

whether the institution and the program were approved by the state in which the graduate seeks licensure, or by a professional association;

whether the program from which the student graduated meets all requirements for professional licensure in that state;

whether the institution and the program are accredited and, if so, by what accrediting commissions; and

whether the institution's degrees are recognized by other states in which a student may seek to work. Many states also require that graduates pass a state test or examination as a prerequisite to becoming certified in certain fields, such as teaching and nursing. Many states will certify individuals if they have already been certified in another state.

Our College of Education is approved by the Arizona State Department of Education to offer Institutional Recommendations (credentials) for the certification of elementary, secondary, and special education teachers and school administrators. Our College of Nursing and Health Care Professions is approved by the Arizona State Board of Nursing for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and advanced practice Master of Science in Nursing degrees. Our College of Humanities and Social Sciences is approved by the National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission (NASAC). Due to varying requirements for professional licensure and certification in states other than Arizona, we inform students of the risks associated with obtaining professional licensure or certification and that it is each student's responsibility to determine what state, local or professional licensure and certification requirements are necessary in his or her individual state.

In addition, the Department of Education convened a negotiated rulemaking to discuss, among other issues, teacher training requirements under the Higher Education Act generally and in connection with institutional applicability for the TEACH Grant. In April 2012, the negotiating committee ceased its work without reaching consensus. On December 3, 2014, the Department of Education published proposed new federal standards in the Federal Register related to teacher training programs and new standards applicable to the TEACH Grant. The comment period for that proposed regulation ended on February 2, 2015. As with other Department of Education proposals, the Department of Education may change the proposed rule for a number of reasons, including in light of comments received. We are still evaluating the proposed rule and will follow this issue.

Accreditation

We have been continuously accredited since 1968 by the Higher Learning Commission and its predecessor, each a regional accrediting commission recognized by the Department of Education. Our accreditation was reaffirmed in 2007 for a ten-year period, and the next scheduled comprehensive evaluation will be conducted in 2016-2017. Accreditation is a private, non-governmental process for evaluating the quality of educational institutions and their programs in areas including student performance, governance, integrity, educational quality, faculty, physical resources, administrative capability and resources, and financial stability. To be recognized by the Department of Education, accrediting commissions must adopt specific standards for their review of educational institutions, conduct peer-review evaluations of institutions, and publicly designate those institutions that meet their criteria. An accredited school is subject to periodic review by its accrediting commissions to determine whether it continues to meet the performance, integrity and quality required for accreditation.

There are six regional accrediting commissions recognized by the Department of Education, each with a specified geographic scope of coverage, which together cover the entire United States. Most traditional, public and private non-profit, degree-granting colleges and universities are accredited by one of these six regional accrediting commissions. The Higher Learning Commission, which accredits Grand Canyon University, is the same regional accrediting commission that accredits such universities as the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, and other degree-granting public, private non-profit, and proprietary colleges and universities in the states of Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission is important to us for several reasons, including the fact that it enables our students to receive Title IV financial aid. Other colleges and universities depend, in part, on an institution's accreditation in evaluating transfers of credit and applications to graduate schools. Employers rely on the accredited status of institutions when evaluating candidates' credentials, and students and corporate and government sponsors under tuition reimbursement programs look to accreditation for assurance that an institution maintains quality educational standards. If we fail to satisfy the standards of the Higher Learning Commission, we could lose our accreditation by that agency, which would cause us to lose our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs.

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In addition to institutional accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, there are numerous specialized accrediting commissions that accredit specific programs or schools within their jurisdiction, many of which are in healthcare and professional fields. Accreditation of specific programs by one of these specialized accrediting commissions signifies that those programs have met the additional standards of those agencies. In addition to being institutionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, we also have the following specialized accreditations:

The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs accredits our Master of Business Administration degree program and emphases and our Bachelor of Science degree programs in Accounting, Business Administration, Business Administration with emphasis in Business Intelligence, Marketing, Sports Management and Entrepreneurship;

The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accredits our Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Master of Science in Nursing degree programs;

The Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education accredits our Bachelor of Science in Athletic Training; and

The National Addiction Studies Accreditation Commission accredits our Master of Science in Addiction Counseling Program.

If we fail to satisfy the standards of any of these specialized accrediting commissions, we could lose the specialized accreditation for the affected programs, which could result in materially reduced student enrollments in those programs and prevent our students from seeking and obtaining appropriate licensure in their fields.

Regulation of Federal Student Financial Aid Programs

To be eligible to participate in the Title IV programs, an institution must comply with specific requirements contained in the Higher Education Act and the regulations issued thereunder by the Department of Education. An institution must, among other things, be licensed or authorized to offer its educational programs by the state in which it is physically located (in our case, Arizona) and maintain institutional accreditation by an accrediting commission recognized by the Department of Education (in our case, the Higher Learning Commission).

The substantial amount of federal funds disbursed to schools through the Title IV programs, the large number of students and institutions participating in these programs, and allegations of fraud and abuse by certain for-profit educational institutions have caused Congress to require the Department of Education to exercise considerable regulatory oversight over for-profit educational institutions. As a result, our institution is subject to extensive oversight and review. Because the Department of Education periodically revises its regulations and changes its interpretations of existing laws and regulations, we cannot predict with certainty how the Title IV program requirements will be applied in all circumstances.

Significant regulations and other factors relating to the Title IV programs that could adversely affect us include the following:

Congressional action. Congress must reauthorize the Higher Education Act on a periodic basis, usually every five to six years, and the most recent reauthorization occurred in August 2008. The reauthorized Higher Education Act reauthorized all of the Title IV programs in which we participate, but made numerous revisions to the requirements governing the Title IV programs, including provisions relating to student loan default rates and the formula for determining the maximum amount of revenue that institutions are permitted to derive from the Title IV programs. In addition, members of Congress periodically introduce legislation that would impact Title IV programs and our industry generally. Because a significant percentage of our revenue is derived from the Title IV programs, any action by Congress that significantly reduces Title IV program funding or our ability or the ability of our students to participate in the Title IV programs could increase our costs of compliance, reduce the ability of some students to finance their education at our institution, require us to seek to arrange for other sources of financial aid for our students and materially decrease our student enrollment.

Regulatory changes. Since October 2010, the Department of Education promulgated new rules related to Title IV program integrity issues. The most significant of these rules for our business are the following:

Modification of the standards relating to the prohibition on payment of incentive compensation to employees involved in student recruitment and enrollment;

Implementation of standards for state authorization of institutions of higher education; and

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Expansion of the definition of misrepresentation, relating to the Department of Education's authority to suspend or terminate an institution's participation in Title IV programs if the institution engages in substantial misrepresentation about the nature of its educational program, its financial charges, or the employability of its graduates, and expansion of the sanctions that the Department of Education may impose for engaging in a substantial misrepresentation.

Although most of the rules were effective in July 2011, parts of the rules, including those related to state authorization of online programs and parts of the rule on misrepresentation, were vacated as a result of a June 2012 decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

On October 20, 2014, the Department of Education published the final rules related to the implementation of the Section 304 of the Violence Against Women Act of 2013. These rules, which add additional compliance requirements related to the Clery Act, address issues related to campus crime, sexual assault, and various administrative requirements in support of maintaining a campus free of sexual discrimination. Although these requirements have added modest costs associated with compliance, management does not believe these costs have had a material effect on our business.

On October 31, 2014, the Department of Education published the final gainful employment rule. This was a follow up to a 2011 effort by the Department to adopt a definition of what it means to provide a program leading to gainful employment in a recognized profession, which was largely overturned by a 2012 district court decision. For more information see *Gainful Employment Rule* below.

On June 2, 2015, the Department of Education released a memorandum regarding enforcement of the prohibition on the payment of incentive compensation by postsecondary institutions to any person or entity engaged in any student recruiting or admissions activities or in making decisions regarding the award of student financial assistance based directly or indirectly upon success in securing enrollments or financial aid. Institutions agree to comply with the incentive compensation rules as a condition of their participation in the Title IV financial aid programs. The memorandum indicated that the Department of Education will revert to its pre-2002 approach to measuring damages for noncompliance with the prohibition against incentive compensation. That approach holds institutions liable to the Department of Education for up to the entire amount of federal student aid provided to students who were recruited in violation of the incentive compensation prohibition. As a result, should an institution be found to have violated the incentive compensation prohibition, it may be required to return all federal student aid received for students who were recruited in violation of the prohibition.

On September 12, 2015, the Department released its consumer data tool The New Scorecard. This data set was released in lieu of the previously contemplated college ranking system. The impact of this new consumer data tool cannot be predicted. However, if information in the data set is used to compare schools with materially different demographics and missions without appropriate qualifications, it could cast a negative light on the proprietary sector generally, and our reputation and enrollment could be adversely affected.

On October 27, 2015, the Department of Education announced the publication of final regulations to amend its cash management regulations, which we refer to as the Cash Management Regulations. The Cash Management Regulations go into effect on July 1, 2016. Among other topics, the Cash Management Regulations address arrangements between postsecondary institutions and financial account providers to disburse Title IV program credit balances to students, including through the use of debit or prepaid cards. The Cash Management Regulations require institutions to establish a process to facilitate student choice in how students receive Title IV program federal student financial aid credit balances; limit the personally identifiable information about students that may be shared with financial account providers; and require institutions to obtain student consent before opening an account in the student's name. Under the Cash Management Regulations, an institution that has entered into an arrangement with a financial account provider

must mitigate certain fees incurred by Title IV aid recipients, and certain types of fees are prohibited. The Cash Management Regulations require that contracts governing arrangements with financial account providers be publicly disclosed and evaluated in light of the best financial interests of students. The Cash Management Regulations also make other changes to requirements for the institutional administration of Title IV programs, including by clarifying how previously passed coursework is treated for Title IV eligibility purposes, altering the requirements for converting clock hours to credit hours, and updating other provisions in the Department of Education's cash management regulations. For example, the Cash Management Regulations establish a requirement that institutions participating in the Title IV programs under the reimbursement or heightened cash monitoring payment methods must pay any credit balance due to a student before seeking reimbursement or a request for funds, respectively. The Cash Management Regulations also specify the circumstances under which an institution may include the cost of books and supplies as part of institutional tuition and fees charged to a student, such as if the institution has made arrangements with publishers to obtain books at below-market rates or if books or electronic course materials are not available elsewhere. We are currently assessing the impact of these regulations and are unable to predict the impact that compliance with the Cash Management Regulations might have on our operations and operating results, although we do not anticipate the impact to be material.

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Eligibility and certification procedures. Each institution must apply periodically to the Department of Education for continued certification to participate in the Title IV programs. Such recertification generally is required every six years, but may be required earlier, including when an institution undergoes a change in control. An institution may also come under the Department of Education's review when it expands its activities in certain ways, such as opening an additional location, adding a new educational program or modifying the academic credentials it offers. The Department of Education may place an institution on provisional certification status if it finds that the institution does not fully satisfy all of the eligibility and certification standards and in certain other circumstances, such as when an institution is certified for the first time or undergoes a change in control. During the period of provisional certification, the institution must comply with any additional conditions included in the school's program participation agreement with the Department of Education. In addition, the Department of Education may more closely review an institution that is provisionally certified if it applies for recertification or approval to open a new location, add an educational program, acquire another school, or make any other significant change. If the Department of Education determines that a provisionally certified institution is unable to meet its responsibilities under its program participation agreement, it may seek to revoke the institution's certification to participate in the Title IV programs without advance notice or opportunity for the institution to challenge the action. Students attending provisionally certified institutions remain eligible to receive Title IV program funds.

On October 28, 2013, the University received a new program participation agreement with full certification from the Department of Education, which gives the University the ability to participate in the Title IV programs through September 30, 2017.

Administrative capability. Department of Education regulations specify extensive criteria by which an institution must establish that it has the requisite administrative capability to participate in the Title IV programs. To meet the administrative capability standards, an institution must, among other things:

comply with all applicable Title IV program requirements;

have an adequate number of qualified personnel to administer the Title IV programs;

have acceptable standards for measuring the satisfactory academic progress of its students;

not have student loan cohort default rates above specified levels;

have various procedures in place for awarding, disbursing and safeguarding Title IV funds and for maintaining required records;

administer the Title IV programs with adequate checks and balances in its system of internal controls;

not be, and not have any principal or affiliate who is, debarred or suspended from federal contracting or engaging in activity that is cause for debarment or suspension;

provide financial aid counseling to its students;

refer to the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General any credible information indicating that any student, parent, employee, third-party servicer or other agent of the institution has engaged in any fraud or other illegal conduct involving the Title IV programs;

submit all required reports and consolidated financial statements in a timely manner; and

not otherwise appear to lack administrative capability.

If an institution fails to satisfy any of these criteria, the Department of Education may:

require the institution to repay Title IV funds its students previously received;

transfer the institution from the advance method of payment of Title IV funds to heightened cash monitoring status or the reimbursement system of payment;

place the institution on provisional certification status; or

commence a proceeding to impose a fine or to limit, suspend or terminate the institution's participation in the Title IV programs.

If we are found not to have satisfied the Department of Education's administrative capability requirements, our students could lose, or be limited in their access to, Title IV program funding.

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Financial responsibility. The Higher Education Act and Department of Education regulations establish extensive standards of financial responsibility that institutions such as Grand Canyon University must satisfy in order to participate in the Title IV programs. The Department of Education evaluates institutions for compliance with these standards on an annual basis based on the institution's annual audited consolidated financial statements, as well as when the institution applies to the Department of Education to have its eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs recertified. The most significant financial responsibility standard is the institution's composite score, which is derived from a formula established by the Department of Education based on three financial ratios:

equity ratio, which measures the institution's capital resources, financial viability and ability to borrow;

primary reserve ratio, which measures the institution's ability to support current operations from expendable resources; and

net income ratio, which measures the institution's ability to operate at a profit or within its means.

The Department of Education assigns a strength factor to the results of each of these ratios on a scale from negative 1.0 to positive 3.0, with negative 1.0 reflecting financial weakness and positive 3.0 reflecting financial strength. The Department of Education then assigns a weighting percentage to each ratio and adds the weighted scores for the three ratios together to produce a composite score for the institution. The composite score for an institution's most recent fiscal year must be at least 1.5 for the institution to be deemed financially responsible without the need for further Department of Education oversight. Our composite scores for our fiscal years ended December 31, 2014, 2013 and 2012 were 3.0, 3.0 and 2.9, respectively, and, therefore, we are considered financially responsible for purposes of these regulations. We have not yet submitted our consolidated financial statements to the Department of Education for our 2015 fiscal year, but have calculated that our composite score for the 2015 fiscal year will be 2.6. We have modeled our composite score for future years using, among other estimates, our estimated ground campus capital expenditures and believe that our composite score will remain at a financially responsible level for the foreseeable future.

In addition to having an acceptable composite score, an institution must, among other things, provide the administrative resources necessary to comply with Title IV program requirements, meet all of its financial obligations, including required refunds to students and any Title IV liabilities and debts, be current in its debt payments, and not receive an adverse, qualified, or disclaimed opinion by its accountants in its audited consolidated financial statements. If the Department of Education were to determine that we did not meet the financial responsibility standards due to a failure to meet the composite score or other factors, we would expect to be able to establish financial responsibility on an alternative basis permitted by the Department of Education, which could include, in the Department of Education's discretion, posting a letter of credit, accepting provisional certification, complying with additional Department of Education monitoring requirements, agreeing to receive Title IV program funds under an arrangement other than the Department of Education's standard advance funding arrangement, such as the reimbursement system of payment or heightened cash monitoring, and complying with or accepting other limitations on our ability to increase the number of programs we offer or the number of students we enroll.

The requirement to post a letter of credit or other sanctions imposed by the Department of Education could increase our cost of regulatory compliance and adversely affect our cash flows. If we are unable to meet the minimum composite score or comply with the other standards of financial responsibility, and could not post a required letter of credit or comply with the alternative bases for establishing financial responsibility, our students could lose their access

to Title IV program funding.

Return of Title IV funds for students who withdraw. When a student who has received Title IV program funds withdraws from school, the institution must determine the amount of Title IV program funds the student has earned and then must return the unearned Title IV program funds (a return to Title IV) to the appropriate lender or the Department of Education in a timely manner, which is generally no later than 45 days after the date the institution determined that the student withdrew. If such payments are not timely made, the institution will be required to submit a letter of credit to the Department of Education equal to 25% of the Title IV funds that the institution should have returned for withdrawn students in its most recently completed fiscal year. Under Department of Education regulations, the letter of credit requirement is triggered by late returns of Title IV program funds for 5% or more of the withdrawn students (and involving more than two student refunds) in the audit sample in the institution's annual Title IV compliance audit for either of the institution's two most recent fiscal years or in a Department of Education program review. We did not exceed this 5% threshold in our annual Title IV compliance audits for 2014 (the most recent year for which we have completed a Title IV compliance audit), 2013 or 2012.

The 90/10 Rule. A requirement of the Higher Education Act, commonly referred to as the 90/10 Rule, that is applicable only to for-profit, postsecondary educational institutions like us, provides that an institution loses its eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs if the institution derives more than 90% of its revenue for each of two consecutive fiscal years from Title IV program funds. For purposes of the 90/10 Rule, revenue is calculated under a complex regulatory formula that requires cash basis accounting and other adjustments to the calculation of an institution's revenue under generally accepted accounting principles that appears in its consolidated financial statements. Under the 90/10 Rule, an institution becomes ineligible to participate in the Title IV programs as of the first day of the fiscal year following the second consecutive fiscal year in which it exceeds the 90% threshold, and its period of ineligibility extends for at least two consecutive fiscal years. If an institution exceeds the 90% threshold for two consecutive fiscal years and it and its students have received Title IV funds during the subsequent period of ineligibility, the institution will be required to return those Title IV funds to the applicable lender or the Department of Education. If an institution's rate exceeds 90% for any single fiscal year, it will be placed on provisional certification for at least two fiscal years.

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Using the Department of Education's cash-basis, regulatory formula under the 90/10 Rule as currently in effect, for our 2015, 2014, and 2013 fiscal years, we derived approximately 74.8%, 76.5%, and 78.5%, respectively, of our 90/10 Rule revenue from Title IV program funds.

As a result of the continuing increase in the number of students attending our ground campus, who typically finance a greater percentage of their educational costs with non-Title IV sources of funds, we expect the percentage of our revenue that we receive from Title IV programs to remain stable or to continue to decrease in the future, although this may be impacted by recent changes in federal law that increased Title IV grant and loan limits, as well as the ongoing economic environment, which has adversely affected the employment circumstances of our students and their parents and increased their reliance on Title IV programs. If we were to exceed the 90% threshold for two consecutive years such that we lost our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs, or if Congress passed legislation changing how certain funds are counted under this rule, revising the percentage of income that proprietary schools must derive from non-federal sources, or both, it would have a material adverse effect on our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations.

Student loan defaults. Under the Higher Education Act, an educational institution may lose its eligibility to participate in some or all of the Title IV programs if defaults by its students on the repayment of their federal student loans exceed certain levels. For each federal fiscal year, the Department of Education calculates a rate of student defaults for each institution (known as a cohort default rate). The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 2008 extended the measurement period for cohort default rates so that the rate is calculated by determining the rate at which borrowers who became subject to their repayment obligation in one federal fiscal year default in that same year or by the end of the second year following federal fiscal year (the three-year method).

The Department of Education applies legal thresholds to measure an institution's compliance. If the Department of Education notifies an institution that its cohort default rates exceeded 30%, for each of its three most recent federal fiscal years, the institution's participation in the FDL Program and the Pell grant program would end 30 days after that notification, unless the institution appeals that determination in a timely manner on specified grounds and according to specified procedures. In addition, an institution's participation in the FDL Program would end 30 days after notification by the Department of Education that its most recent cohort default rate, is greater than 40%, unless the institution timely appeals that determination on specified grounds and according to specified procedures. An institution whose participation ends under either of these provisions may not participate in the relevant programs for the remainder of the fiscal year in which the institution receives the notification or for the next two fiscal years. If an institution's cohort default rate for any single federal fiscal year equals or exceeds 30%, the Department of Education may place the institution on provisional certification status.

Our cohort default rates on federal student loans for the 2012, 2011 and 2010 federal fiscal years, were 10.3%, 15.7% and 19.0%, respectively.

Incentive compensation rule. An institution that participates in the Title IV programs may not provide any commission, bonus, or other incentive payment based directly or indirectly on success in securing enrollments or financial aid to any person or entity engaged in any student recruitment, admissions, or financial aid awarding activity. Prior to July 1, 2011, Department of Education regulations included 12 safe harbors that described payments and arrangements that did not violate the incentive compensation rule. Under new rules effective July 1, 2011, the 12 safe harbors were eliminated. The restrictions of the incentive compensation rule, which extend to any third-party companies that an educational institution contracts with for student recruitment, admissions, or financial aid awarding services, increase the uncertainty about what constitutes incentive compensation and which employees are covered by the regulation. This makes the development of effective and compliant performance metrics more difficult to establish. As such, these changes limit our ability to compensate our employees based on their performance of their

job responsibilities, which could make it more difficult to attract and retain highly-qualified employees.

Compliance reviews. We are subject to announced and unannounced compliance reviews and audits by various external agencies, including the Department of Education, its Office of Inspector General, state licensing agencies, the applicable state approving agencies for financial assistance to veterans, and accrediting commissions. As part of the Department of Education's ongoing monitoring of institutions' administration of the Title IV programs, the Higher Education Act also requires institutions to annually submit to the Department of Education a Title IV compliance audit conducted by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with applicable federal and Department of Education audit standards. In addition, to enable the Department of Education to make a determination of an institution's financial responsibility, each institution must annually submit audited financial statements prepared in accordance with Department of Education regulations.

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In connection with its administration of the Title IV federal student financial aid programs, the Department of Education periodically conducts program reviews at selected schools that receive Title IV funds. In July 2010, the Department of Education initiated a program review of Grand Canyon University covering the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 award years. On September 27, 2013, the University and the Department of Education entered into an agreement that fully resolved the findings in the preliminary program review report and closed the program review. A second program review, focused on the University's administration of the Title IV programs in which it participates, its administration of the Clery Act and related regulations, and its compliance with the requirements of the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 award years, was initiated in April 2014. The final program review determination letter received in June 2014 set forth three findings, each of which involved individual student-specific information gathering and/or reporting errors and all of which the University promptly corrected to the Department of Education's satisfaction. Accordingly, the final program review determination letter concluded that the University had taken all corrective actions necessary to resolve the findings and that the program review had been closed with no further action required. See Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations.

Privacy of student records. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, or FERPA, and the Department of Education's FERPA regulations, require educational institutions to protect the privacy of students' educational records by limiting an institution's disclosure of a student's personally identifiable information without the student's prior written consent. FERPA also requires institutions to allow students to review and request changes to their educational records maintained by the institution, to notify students at least annually of this inspection right, and to maintain records in each student's file listing requests for access to and disclosures of personally identifiable information and the interest of such party in that information. If an institution fails to comply with FERPA, the Department of Education may require corrective actions by the institution or may terminate an institution's receipt of further federal funds. In addition, educational institutions are obligated to safeguard student information pursuant to the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, or GLBA, a federal law designed to protect consumers' personal financial information held by financial institutions and other entities that provide financial services to consumers. GLBA and the applicable GLBA regulations require an institution to, among other things, develop and maintain a comprehensive, written information security program designed to protect against the unauthorized disclosure of personally identifiable financial information of students, parents, or other individuals with whom such institution has a customer relationship. If an institution fails to comply with the applicable GLBA requirements, it may be required to take corrective actions, be subject to monitoring and oversight by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and be subject to fines or penalties imposed by the FTC. For-profit educational institutions are also subject to the general deceptive practices jurisdiction of the FTC with respect to their collection, use, and disclosure of student information. The institution must also comply with the FTC Red Flags Rule, a section of the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, that requires the establishment of guidelines and policies regarding identity theft related to student credit accounts.

Potential effect of regulatory violations. If we fail to comply with the regulatory standards governing the Title IV programs, the Department of Education could impose one or more sanctions, including transferring us to the reimbursement or cash monitoring system of payment, requiring us to repay Title IV program funds, requiring us to post a letter of credit in favor of the Department of Education as a condition for continued Title IV certification, taking emergency action against us, initiating proceedings to impose a fine or to limit, suspend, or terminate our participation in the Title IV programs, or referring the matter for civil or criminal prosecution. If such sanctions or proceedings were imposed against us and resulted in a substantial curtailment or termination of our participation in the Title IV programs, our enrollments, revenues, and results of operations would be materially and adversely affected.

If we lost our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs, or if the amount of available Title IV program funds was reduced, we would seek to arrange or provide alternative sources of revenue or financial aid for students. We believe that one or more private organizations would be willing to provide financial assistance to our students, but

there is no assurance that this would be the case. The interest rate and other terms of such financial aid would likely not be as favorable as those for Title IV program funds, and we might be required to guarantee all or part of such alternative assistance or might incur other additional costs in connection with securing such alternative assistance. It is unlikely that we would be able to arrange alternative funding on any terms to replace all the Title IV funding our students receive. Accordingly, our loss of eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs, or a reduction in the amount of available Title IV program funding for our students, would have a material adverse effect on our results of operations, even if we could arrange or provide alternative sources of revenue or student financial aid.

In addition to the actions that may be brought against us as a result of our participation in the Title IV programs, we are also subject to complaints and lawsuits relating to regulatory compliance brought not only by our regulatory agencies, but also by other government agencies and third parties, such as present or former students or employees and other members of the public.

State authorization. States have the authority to assert jurisdiction, to the extent they so choose, over educational institutions that offer online degree programs in a state but that otherwise have no physical location or other presence in that state. On November 20, 2013, the Department of Education announced its intent to establish a negotiated rulemaking committee to address state authorization of distance and correspondence learning programs. While these negotiated rulemaking sessions were held, the committee failed to reach consensus on all topics by the May 2014 conclusion of those sessions. The Department of Education has not yet published a notice of proposed rulemaking, so we do not yet know whether or how any such proposed rules would impact the University or when such rules may be published. The regulations proposed by the Department of Education prior to the May 2014 negotiating session, however, would impose significant new regulatory burdens on postsecondary institutions that provide distance education, regardless of educational sector.

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We are an approved institutional participant in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is an agreement among member states, districts and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a national Council (NC-SARA) and administered by four regional education compacts, for which Arizona is a W-SARA member. There is a yearly renewal for participating in NC-SARA and AZ-SARA, and institutions must agree to meet certain requirements to participate.

In addition to Arizona, we have determined that our activities in some non-SARA states constitute a presence requiring licensure or authorization under the requirements of the state post-secondary education agency in those states, which we have obtained, while in other states we have determined that we are exempt under applicable state law from licensure or authorization requirements. In other states, we have obtained approvals to operate as we have determined necessary in connection with our marketing and recruiting activities. Although we have a process for evaluating the compliance of our online educational programs with state requirements regarding distance and correspondence learning, and have experienced no significant restrictions on our educational activities to date as a result of such requirements, state regulatory requirements for online education vary among the states, are not well developed in many states, are imprecise or unclear in some states and are subject to change. If we fail to comply with licensing or authorization requirements for a non-SARA state, or fail to obtain licenses or authorizations when required, we could lose our licensure or authorization from that state or be subject to other sanctions, including restrictions on our activities in that state, and fines and penalties, including Department of Education sanctions. The loss of licensure or authorization in a state other than Arizona could prohibit us from recruiting prospective students or offering educational services to current students in that state, which could significantly reduce our enrollments.

Approval of new programs. Department of Education rules effective July 1, 2011 imposed various requirements on an institution's ability to add new academic programs without prior approval of the Department of Education. While the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia subsequently invalidated this requirement, we believe there remains some uncertainty regarding new program approval, which could adversely affect our ability to respond to emerging employment trends and add programs that are responsive to those trends, which in turn could decrease our attractiveness to certain students. In addition, a lack of certainty could increase the risk of future federal False Claims Act qui tam lawsuits in which private plaintiffs assert that students improperly received Title IV aid while attending a program that has not been approved.

Gainful employment rules. Under the Higher Education Act, proprietary schools are eligible to participate in Title IV programs in respect of educational programs that lead to gainful employment in a recognized occupation, with the limited exception of qualified programs leading to a bachelor's degree in liberal arts. Historically, this concept has not been defined in detail. In October 2014, the Department of Education published final regulations, effective July 1, 2015, on the metrics for determining whether an academic program prepares students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation. This rule establishes requirements related to the debt to earnings ratio of graduates of our programs, and sets additional disclosure requirements for students. Under the final regulations, which apply on a program-by-program basis, students enrolled in a program will be eligible for Title IV student financial aid only if that program satisfies at least one of two tests relating to student debt service-to-earnings ratios. The two tests specify minimum debt service-to-earnings ratios calculated on the basis of the earnings of program graduates. One test measures student loan debt service as a percentage of total earnings, and the other test measures student loan debt service as a percentage of discretionary earnings. The first year a program fails to meet at least one of the minimum ratios for the year, the institution will be required to provide a warning notice to prospective and enrolled students advising that the program has not met the minimum debt measurements and describes any actions planned to improve the program's performance under the Debt Measurements. Programs that fail to meet at least one of the minimum ratios for two consecutive years or for two out of three of the most recent years for which Debt Measures were

calculated, will be required to provide additional warning notices to students before enrollment. If the program does not meet any of the Debt Measures for three out of four years, it will lose its Title IV eligibility.

Under the final regulations, schools are also required to certify to the Department the following for each Title IV eligible program:

The program is included in the schools' accreditation;

The program is programmatically accredited, if required by a federal government entity, or by a government entity in any state in which the school is located or is required to obtain state approval;

The program satisfies any applicable state licensing and certification requirements for the occupations for which the program prepares students to enter; and

The program is not substantially similar to a program offered by the school that became ineligible due to the student debt service-to-earnings ratios.

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We believe we have successfully submitted the certifications required for all pre-existing programs prior to the December 31, 2015 deadline for doing so. In addition, in July and September 2015 we successfully submitted the data required of the University under the gainful employment rule. We believe we have materially complied with the reporting requirements and have not otherwise been notified by the Department.

The Department of Education has indicated that the official 2014 gainful employment debt service-to-earnings ratios will most likely be issued in the winter of 2016. The expected timing of the issuance of the 2015 ratios has not yet been announced. We believe it is likely that some of University's programs will be impacted by the regulations.

The Department of Education has not yet announced the protocol for calculating and disseminating the debt service-to-earnings ratios. Because the ratios will be issued by the Department of Education after the measuring period, we may not know of a program's failure to meet the tests until after the measuring period, and students enrolled in such a program could lose their access to federal financial aid before completing the program.

This is a complicated rule and, although management will work to achieve compliance with this new rule, the continuing eligibility of our educational programs for Title IV funding is at risk due to factors measured by this rule and beyond our control, such as changes in the actual or deemed income level of our graduates, changes in student borrowing levels, increases in interest rates, changes in the federal poverty income level relevant for calculating discretionary income, and other factors. The exposure to these external factors could reduce our ability to confidently offer or continue certain types of programs for which there is market demand, and therefore would impact our ability to maintain or grow our business. *Substantial misrepresentation.* The Higher Education Act prohibits an institution that participates in Title IV programs from engaging in substantial misrepresentation of the nature of its educational program, its financial charges, or the employability of its graduates. The Department of Education has defined a misrepresentation as any statement made by the institution or a third party that provides educational programs, marketing, advertising, recruiting, or admissions services to the institution that is false, erroneous or has the likelihood or tendency to deceive. A substantial misrepresentation is any misrepresentation on which the person to whom it was made could reasonably be expected to rely, or has reasonably relied, to that person's detriment. Considering the breadth of the definition of substantial misrepresentation, it is possible that despite our efforts to prevent such misrepresentations, our employees or service providers may make statements that could be construed as substantial misrepresentations. As a result, we may face complaints from students and prospective students over statements made by us and our agents throughout the enrollment, admissions and financial aid process, as well as throughout attendance at the University, which would expose us to increased risk of enforcement action and applicable sanctions or other penalties and increased risk of private qui tam actions under the Federal False Claims Act. Under the new rules, if the Department of Education determines that an institution has engaged in substantial misrepresentation, the Department of Education may revoke an institution's program participation agreement, impose limitations on the institution's participation in Title IV programs, deny applications from the institution for approval of new programs or locations or other matters, or initiate proceedings to fine the institution or limit, suspend, or terminate its eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. If the Department of Education determines that statements made by us or on our behalf are in violation of the regulations, we could be subject to sanctions and other liability, which could have a material adverse effect on our business.

Regulatory Standards that May Restrict Institutional Expansion or Other Changes

Many actions that we may wish to take in connection with expanding our operations or other changes are subject to review or approval by the applicable regulatory agencies. In addition to those matters described in detail below, most state education agencies impose regulatory requirements on educational institutions operating within their boundaries. See State Educational Licensure and Authorization.

Adding teaching locations, implementing new educational programs, and increasing enrollment. The requirements and standards of state education agencies, accrediting commissions, and the Department of Education limit our ability in certain instances to establish additional teaching locations, implement new educational programs, or increase enrollment in certain programs. Many states require review and approval before institutions can add new locations or programs, and Arizona also limits the number of pre-licensure nursing students we may enroll (which represents a small portion of our overall nursing program). The Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education, the Higher Learning Commission, and other state education agencies and specialized accrediting commissions that authorize or accredit us and our programs generally require institutions to notify them in advance of adding new locations or implementing new programs, and upon notification may undertake a review of the quality of the facility or the program and the financial, academic, and other qualifications of the institution.

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With respect to the Department of Education, if an institution participating in the Title IV programs plans to add a new location or educational program, the institution must generally apply to the Department of Education to have the additional location or educational program designated as within the scope of the institution's Title IV eligibility. However, a degree-granting institution, like Grand Canyon University, that is fully certified to participate in the Title IV programs is not required to obtain the Department of Education's approval of additional programs that lead to a bachelor's, professional, or graduate degree at the same degree level as programs previously approved by the Department of Education, and, similarly, is not required to obtain advance approval for new programs that prepare students for gainful employment in the same or a related recognized occupation as an educational program that has previously been designated by the Department of Education as an eligible program at that institution if it meets certain minimum-length requirements.

Acquiring other schools. While we have not acquired any other schools in the past, we may seek to do so in the future. The Department of Education and virtually all state education agencies and accrediting commissions require a company to seek their approval if it wishes to acquire another school. In our case, we would need to obtain the approval of the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education or other state education agency that licenses the school being acquired, the Higher Learning Commission, any other accrediting commission that accredits the school being acquired, and the Department of Education. The level of review varies by individual state and accrediting commission, with some requiring approval of such an acquisition before it occurs and others only considering approval after the acquisition has occurred. The Higher Learning Commission would require us to obtain its advance approval of such an acquisition. The approval of the applicable state education agencies and accrediting commissions is a necessary prerequisite to the Department of Education certifying the acquired school to participate in the Title IV programs under our ownership. The restrictions imposed by any of the applicable regulatory agencies could delay or prevent our acquisition of other schools in some circumstances.

Title IV program participation. Each institution must apply to the Department of Education for continued certification to participate in the Title IV programs at least every six years, or when it undergoes a change in control, and an institution may come under the Department of Education's review when it expands its activities in certain ways, such as opening an additional location, adding an educational program, or modifying the academic credentials that it offers.

The Department of Education may place an institution on provisional certification status if it finds that the institution does not fully satisfy all of the eligibility and certification standards. In addition, if a company acquires a school from another entity, or if a school undertakes another transaction that constitutes a change in control under Department of Education regulations, the school will automatically be placed on provisional certification when the Department of Education approves the transaction. During the period of provisional certification, the institution must comply with any additional conditions or restrictions included in its program participation agreement with the Department of Education. If the Department of Education finds that a provisionally certified institution is unable to meet its responsibilities under its program participation agreement, it may seek to revoke the institution's certification to participate in the Title IV programs without advance notice or advance opportunity for the institution to challenge that action. In addition, the Department of Education may more closely review an institution that is provisionally certified if it applies for recertification or approval to open a new location, add an educational program, acquire another school, or make any other significant change. Students attending provisionally certified institutions remain eligible to receive Title IV program funds.

On October 28, 2013, the University received a new program participation agreement with full certification from the Department of Education, which gives the University the ability to participate in the Title IV programs through September 30, 2017.

Change in ownership resulting in a change in control. The Department of Education, as well as many accrediting commissions and states, require institutions of higher education to report or obtain approval of certain changes in control and changes in other aspects of institutional organization or control. With respect to publicly traded corporations, like us, Department of Education regulations provide that a change in control occurs if, among other things, the corporation has a stockholder that owns, or has voting control over, at least 25% of the total outstanding voting stock of the corporation and is the largest stockholder of the corporation (defined in the regulations as a controlling shareholder), and that controlling shareholder ceases to own, or have voting control over, at least 25% of such stock or ceases to be the largest stockholder. Under Department of Education regulations, an institution that undergoes a change in control as defined by the Department of Education loses its eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs and must apply to the Department of Education in order to reestablish such eligibility.

The Higher Learning Commission provides that an institution must obtain its approval in advance of a change in ownership, corporate control or structure in order for the institution to retain its accredited status. In June 2009, the Higher Learning Commission adopted new policies and standards for the review of transactions that may constitute such a change in control. One standard provides that a transaction may be considered a change in control if an individual, entity or group increases or decreases its control of shares to greater than or less than 25% of the total outstanding shares of the stock of a parent corporation that owns or controls the accredited institution. In addition, in the event of a change in control, the Higher Learning Commission requires the institution to obtain its approval in advance of the change, and in certain circumstances that process may require several weeks or several months or more to complete. In addition, following a change in control, the Higher Learning Commission will conduct an onsite evaluation within six months in order to continue the institution's accreditation.

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Many states include the sale of a controlling interest of common stock in the definition of a change in control requiring approval, but their thresholds for determining a change in control vary widely. The standards of the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education provide that an institution that is owned by a publicly traded company whose control is vested in the voting members of the board of directors, such as Grand Canyon Education, undergoes a change in control if 50% or more of the voting members of the board of directors change within a 12-month period or the chief executive officer of the corporation changes. A change in control under the definition of one of the other state agencies that regulate us might require us to obtain approval of a change in control in order to maintain our authorization to operate in that state, and in some cases such states could require us to obtain advance approval of the change in control. If we were to undergo a change in control under the standards of the Arizona State Board of Private Postsecondary Education at any time in the future, we would be required to file an application with the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education in order to obtain approval for such change in control. We cannot predict whether the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education would impose any limitations or conditions on us, or identify any compliance issues related to us in the context of the change in control process, that could result in our loss of authorization in Arizona. Any such loss would result in our loss of eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs which would cause a significant decline in our student enrollment.

Item 1A. Risk Factors

You should carefully consider the risks and uncertainties described below and all other information contained in this Annual Report on Form 10-K. In order to help assess the major risks in our business, we have identified many, but not all, of these risks. Due to the scope of our operations, a wide range of factors could materially affect future developments and performance.

If any of the following risks, or risks that we do not anticipate, are realized, our business, financial condition, cash flow or results of operations could be materially and adversely affected, and as a result, the trading price of our common stock could be materially and adversely impacted. These risk factors should be read in conjunction with other information set forth in this Annual Report, including Item 7, *Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations*, and Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*, including the related Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

Risks Related to the Extensive Regulation of Our Industry

Our failure to comply with the extensive regulatory requirements governing our school could result in financial penalties, restrictions on our operations or growth, or loss of external financial aid funding for our students.

To participate in the Title IV programs, a school must be authorized by the appropriate state education agency or agencies, be accredited by an accrediting commission recognized by the Department of Education, and be certified as an eligible institution by the Department of Education. In addition, our operations and programs are regulated by other state education agencies and additional accrediting commissions. As a result of these requirements, we are subject to extensive regulation by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education and education agencies of other states, the Higher Learning Commission, which is our primary accrediting commission, specialized accrediting commissions, and the Department of Education. These regulatory requirements cover the vast majority of our operations, including our educational programs, instructional and administrative staff, administrative procedures, marketing, recruiting, financial operations, and financial condition. These regulatory requirements also affect our ability to open additional schools and locations, add new educational programs, change existing educational programs, and change our corporate or ownership structure. The agencies that regulate our operations periodically revise their requirements and modify their interpretations of existing requirements. Regulatory requirements are not always

precise and clear, and regulatory agencies may sometimes disagree with the way we have interpreted or applied these requirements. Any misinterpretation by us of regulatory requirements could materially adversely affect us. If we fail to comply with any of these regulatory requirements, we could suffer financial penalties, limitations on our operations, loss of accreditation, termination of or limitations on our ability to grant degrees and certificates, or limitations on or termination of our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs, each of which could materially adversely affect us. In addition, if we are charged with regulatory violations, our reputation could be damaged, which could have a negative impact on our stock price and our enrollments. We cannot predict with certainty how all of these regulatory requirements will be applied, or whether we will be able to comply with all of the applicable requirements in the future.

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If the Department of Education does not recertify us to continue participating in the Title IV programs, our students would lose their access to Title IV program funds, or we could be recertified but required to accept significant limitations as a condition of our continued participation in the Title IV programs.

Department of Education certification to participate in the Title IV programs lasts a maximum of six years, and institutions are thus required to seek recertification from the Department of Education on a regular basis in order to continue their participation in the Title IV programs. An institution must also apply for recertification by the Department of Education if it undergoes a change in control, as defined by Department of Education regulations, and may be subject to similar review if it expands its operations or educational programs in certain ways.

On October 28, 2013, the University received a new program participation agreement with full certification from the Department of Education, which gives the University the ability to participate in the Title IV programs through September 30, 2017. See Item 1, *Business Regulation Regulation of Federal Student Financial Aid Programs Eligibility and certification procedures*. There can be no assurance that the Department of Education will recertify us at that time or that it will not impose conditions or other restrictions on us as a condition of approving our application with respect to any future recertification. See Item 1A, *Risk Factors If any of the education regulatory agencies that regulate us do not approve or delay their approval of any transaction involving us that constitutes a change in control, our ability to operate or participate in the Title IV programs may be impaired*. If the Department of Education does not renew or withdraws our certification to participate in the Title IV programs at any time, our students would no longer be able to receive Title IV program funds. Alternatively, the Department of Education could renew our certification, but restrict or delay our students' receipt of Title IV funds, limit the number of students to whom we could disburse such funds, or place other restrictions on us, or it could delay our recertification after our program participation agreement expires on September 30, 2017, in which case our certification would continue on a month-to-month basis. Any of these outcomes could have a material adverse effect on our enrollments and us.

Rulemaking by the U.S. Department of Education could materially and adversely affect our business.

Over the past few years, the U.S. Department of Education has regularly promulgated new regulations that impact our business. See Item 1. *Business Regulation*.

These regulations have increased our operating costs and in some cases required us to change the manner in which we operate our business. In addition, because certain of these regulations have been vacated or blocked as a result of litigation challenging the regulations, there remains substantial uncertainty regarding their present or future effectiveness or enforcement. New or amended regulations in the future, particularly regulations focused on the proprietary sector, could further negatively impact our business.

Increased disclosure and recordkeeping requirements could result in lower enrollment or growth rates in a manner that materially and adversely affects our business.

Department of Education rules require that, for each program leading to gainful employment in a recognized occupation, institutions must provide prospective students with information concerning the occupation that the program prepares students to enter, the program's on-time graduation rate, and the tuition and fees it charges a student for completing the program within normal time, as well as the costs of books, supplies, room, and board, and the median loan debt incurred by students who completed the program. Institutions must also provide the Department of Education with information that will allow determination of student debt levels and incomes after program completion. These reporting and disclosure requirements have caused increased administrative burden and costs and may have a negative effect on our growth and enrollments.

A reduction in funding or new restrictions on eligibility for the Federal Pell Grant Program, or the elimination of subsidized Stafford loans, could make college less affordable for certain students at our institution, which could negatively impact our enrollments, revenue and results of operations.

The U.S. Congress must periodically reauthorize the Higher Education Act and annually determine the funding level for each Title IV program. In 2008, the Higher Education Act was reauthorized through September 30, 2013 by the Higher Education Opportunity Act. Changes to the Higher Education Act, including changes in eligibility and funding for Title IV programs, are likely to occur in subsequent reauthorizations, but we cannot predict the scope or substance of any such changes.

In recent years, there has been increased focus by Congress on the role that proprietary educational institutions play in higher education. See Item 1. Business Regulation Regulation of Federal Student Financial Aid Congressional action. To the extent that any laws or regulations are adopted, or other administrative actions are taken, that limit our participation in Title IV programs or the amount of student financial aid for which the students at our institutions are eligible, our enrollments, revenues and results of operation could be materially and adversely affected.

The continued scrutiny in Congress of the proprietary education sector and the federal budget deficit increases the likelihood of legislation that will adversely impact our business. Any action by Congress that significantly reduces Title IV program funding, whether through across-the-board funding reductions, sequestration or otherwise, or materially impacts the eligibility of our institutions or students to participate in Title IV programs would have a material adverse effect on our enrollment, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows. Congressional action could also require us to modify our practices in ways that could increase our administrative costs and reduce our operating income, which could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition, results of operations and cash flows.

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If Congress significantly reduced the amount of available Title IV program funding, we would attempt to arrange for alternative sources of financial aid for our students, which may include lending funds directly to our students, but private sources may not be able to provide as much funding to our students on as favorable terms as is currently provided by Title IV. In addition, private organizations could require us to guarantee all or part of this assistance and we might incur other additional costs. For these reasons, private, alternative sources of student financial aid would only partly offset, if at all, the impact on our business of reduced Title IV program funding.

If we do not meet specific financial responsibility standards established by the Department of Education, we may be required to post a letter of credit or accept other limitations in order to continue participating in the Title IV programs, or we could lose our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs.

To participate in the Title IV programs, an institution must either satisfy specific quantitative standards of financial responsibility prescribed by the Department of Education, or post a letter of credit in favor of the Department of Education and possibly accept operating restrictions as well. These financial responsibility tests are applied to each institution on an annual basis based on the institution's audited consolidated financial statements, and may be applied at other times, such as if the institution undergoes a change in control. These tests may also be applied to an institution's parent company or other related entity. The operating restrictions that may be placed on an institution that does not meet the quantitative standards of financial responsibility include being transferred from the advance payment method of receiving Title IV program funds to either the reimbursement or the heightened cash monitoring system, which could result in a significant delay in the institution's receipt of those funds. If, in the future, we fail to satisfy the Department of Education's financial responsibility standards, we could experience increased regulatory compliance costs or delays in our receipt of Title IV program funds because we could be required to post a letter of credit or be subjected to operating restrictions, or both. Our failure to secure a letter of credit in these circumstances could cause us to lose our ability to participate in the Title IV programs, which would materially adversely affect us.

If we do not comply with the Department of Education's administrative capability standards, we could suffer financial penalties, be required to accept other limitations in order to continue participating in the Title IV programs, or lose our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs.

To continue participating in the Title IV programs, an institution must demonstrate to the Department of Education that the institution is capable of adequately administering the Title IV programs under specific standards prescribed by the Department of Education. These administrative capability criteria require, among other things, the institution to have an adequate number of qualified personnel to administer the Title IV programs, have adequate procedures for disbursing and safeguarding Title IV funds and for maintaining records, submit all required reports and consolidated financial statements in a timely manner, and not have significant problems that affect the institution's ability to administer the Title IV programs. If we fail to satisfy any of these criteria, the Department of Education may assess financial penalties against us, restrict the manner in which we receive Title IV funds, require us to post a letter of credit, place us on provisional certification status, or limit or terminate our participation in the Title IV programs, any of which could materially adversely affect us.

We would lose our ability to participate in the Title IV programs if we fail to maintain our institutional accreditation, and our student enrollments could decline if we fail to maintain any of our accreditations or approvals.

An institution must be accredited by an accrediting commission recognized by the Department of Education in order to participate in the Title IV programs. We have institutional accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, which is an accrediting commission recognized by the Department of Education. To remain accredited, we must continuously meet accreditation standards relating to, among other things, performance, institutional control,

institutional integrity, educational quality, faculty, administrative capability, resources, and financial stability. We were reaccredited by the Higher Learning Commission in 2007, and the next scheduled comprehensive evaluation will be conducted in 2016-2017. If we fail to satisfy any of the Higher Learning Commission's standards, we could lose our accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission, which would cause us to lose our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs, could cause a significant decline in our total student enrollments, and could have a material adverse effect on us. In addition, many of our individual educational programs are also accredited by specialized accrediting commissions or approved by specialized state agencies. If we fail to satisfy the standards of any of those specialized accrediting commissions or state agencies, we could lose the specialized accreditation or approval for the affected programs, which could result in materially reduced student enrollments in those programs and have a material adverse effect on us.

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A finding that we violated the Department of Education's substantial misrepresentation regulation could materially and adversely affect our business.

The Higher Education Act prohibits an institution that participates in Title IV programs from engaging in substantial misrepresentation of the nature of its educational program, its financial charges, or the employability of its graduates. Under these rules, a misrepresentation is any statement made by the institution or a third party that provides educational programs, marketing, advertising, recruiting, or admissions services to the institution that is false, erroneous or has the likelihood or tendency to deceive or confuse. A substantial misrepresentation is any misrepresentation on which the person to whom it was made could reasonably be expected to rely, or has reasonably relied, to that person's detriment. Considering the breadth of the definition of substantial misrepresentation, it is possible that despite our efforts to prevent such misrepresentations, our employees or service providers may make statements that could be construed as substantial misrepresentations. As a result, we may face complaints from students and prospective students over statements made by us and our agents throughout the enrollment, admissions and financial aid process, as well as throughout attendance at the University, which would expose us to increased risk of enforcement action and applicable sanctions or other penalties and increased risk of private qui tam actions under the Federal False Claims Act. Under the new rules, if the Department of Education determines that an institution has engaged in substantial misrepresentation, the Department of Education may revoke an institution's program participation agreement, impose limitations on the institution's participation in Title IV programs, deny applications from the institution for approval of new programs or locations or other matters, or initiate proceedings to fine the institution or limit, suspend, or terminate its eligibility to participate in Title IV programs. If the Department of Education determines that statements made by us or on our behalf are in violation of the regulations, we could be subject to sanctions and other liability, which could have a material adverse effect on our business.

If we do not maintain our state authorization in Arizona, we may not operate or participate in the Title IV programs.

A school that grants degrees or certificates must be authorized by the relevant education agency of the state in which it is located. We are located in the state of Arizona and are authorized by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education. State authorization is also required for our students to be eligible to receive funding under the Title IV programs. To maintain our state authorization, we must continuously meet standards relating to, among other things, educational programs, facilities, instructional and administrative staff, marketing and recruitment, financial operations, addition of new locations and educational programs, and various operational and administrative procedures. If we fail to satisfy any of these standards, we could lose our authorization by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education to offer our educational programs, which would also cause us to lose our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs and have a material adverse effect on us.

If any of the education regulatory agencies that regulate us do not approve or delay their approval of any transaction involving us that constitutes a change in control, our ability to operate or participate in the Title IV programs may be impaired.

If we experience a change in control under the standards of the Department of Education, the Higher Learning Commission, the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education, or any other applicable state education agency or accrediting commission, we must notify and/or seek the approval of each such agency. These agencies do not have uniform criteria for what constitutes a change in control. Transactions or events that typically constitute a change in control include significant acquisitions or dispositions of the voting stock of an institution or its parent company and significant changes in the composition of the board of directors of an institution or its parent company. With respect to publicly traded corporations, like us, they also may include cases where a corporation has a stockholder that owns, or has voting control over, at least 25% of the total outstanding voting stock of the corporation.

and is the largest stockholder of the corporation (defined in the regulations as a controlling shareholder), and that controlling shareholder ceases to own, or have voting control over, at least 25% of such stock or ceases to be the largest stockholder, or other transactions or events may be beyond our control. Our failure to obtain, or a delay in receiving, approval of any change in control from the Department of Education, the Higher Learning Commission, or the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education could impair our ability to operate or participate in the Title IV programs, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations. Our failure to obtain, or a delay in receiving, approval of any change in control from any other state in which we are currently licensed or authorized, or from any of our specialized accrediting commissions, could require us to suspend our activities in that state or suspend offering the applicable programs until we receive the required approval, or could otherwise impair our operations. The potential adverse effects of a change in control could influence future decisions by us and our stockholders regarding the sale, purchase, transfer, issuance, or redemption of our stock, which could discourage bids for your shares of our stock and could have an adverse effect on the market price of your shares.

Our failure to comply with the regulatory requirements of states other than Arizona could result in actions taken by those states or the Department of Education that could have a material adverse effect on our enrollments.

Almost every state imposes regulatory requirements on educational institutions that have physical facilities located within the state's boundaries. Individual state laws establish standards in areas such as educational programs, facilities, instructional and administrative staff, marketing and recruitment, financial operations, addition of new locations and educational programs, and various operational and administrative procedures, some of which are different than the standards prescribed by the Department of Education or the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education. Several states have sought to assert jurisdiction over educational institutions offering online degree programs that have no physical location in the state but that have some activity in the state, such as enrolling or offering educational services to students who reside in the state, employing faculty who reside in the state, or advertising to or recruiting prospective students in the state. See Item 1. *Business Regulation Regulation of Federal Student Financial Aid Programs State authorization*. State regulatory requirements for online education vary among the states, are not well developed in many states, are imprecise or unclear in some states, and can change frequently. Laws, regulations, or interpretations related to doing business over the Internet could also increase our cost of doing business and affect our ability to recruit students in particular states, which could, in turn, negatively affect enrollments and revenues and have a material adverse effect on our business.

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We are an approved institutional participant in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is an agreement among member states, districts and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a national Council (NC-SARA) and administered by four regional education compacts, for which Arizona is a W-SARA member. There is a yearly renewal for participating in NC-SARA and AZ-SARA, and institutions must agree to meet certain requirements to participate.

Some states that do not participate in SARA impose regulatory requirements on out-of-state educational institutions operating within their boundaries, such as those having a physical facility or conducting certain academic activities within the state. We currently enroll students in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Although we are currently licensed or authorized, in-process, or exempt in all non-SARA jurisdictions in which we operate, if we fail to comply with state licensing or authorization requirements for a state, or fail to obtain licenses or authorizations when required, we could lose our state licensure or authorization by that state or be subject to other sanctions, including restrictions on our activities in, and fines and penalties imposed by, that state, as well as fines, penalties, and sanctions imposed by the Department of Education. The loss of licensure or authorization in a state other than Arizona could prohibit us from recruiting prospective students or offering educational services to current students in that state, which could significantly reduce our enrollments.

State laws and regulations are not always precise or clear, and regulatory agencies may sometimes disagree with the way we have interpreted or applied these requirements. Any misinterpretation by us of these regulatory requirements or adverse changes in regulations or interpretations thereof by regulators could materially adversely affect us.

The inability of our graduates to obtain a professional license or certification in their chosen field of study could reduce our enrollments and revenues, and potentially lead to student claims against us that could be costly to us.

Many of our students, particularly those in our education and healthcare programs, seek a professional license or certification in their chosen fields following graduation. A student's ability to obtain a professional license or certification depends on several factors, including whether the institution and the student's program were accredited by a particular accrediting commission or approved by a professional association or by the state in which the student seeks employment. Additional factors are outside the control of the institution, such as the individual student's own background and qualifications. If one or more states refuse to recognize a significant number of our students for professional licensing or certification based on factors relating to our institution or programs, the potential growth of those programs would be negatively impacted and we could be exposed to claims or litigation by students or graduates based on their inability to obtain their desired professional license or certification, each of which could materially adversely affect us.

Government agencies, regulatory agencies, and third parties may conduct compliance reviews, bring claims, or initiate litigation against us based on alleged violations of the extensive regulatory requirements applicable to us, which could cause us to pay monetary damages, be sanctioned or limited in our operations, and expend significant resources to defend against those claims.

Because we operate in a highly regulated industry, we are subject to program reviews, audits, investigations, claims of non-compliance, and lawsuits by government agencies, regulatory agencies, students, employees, stockholders, and other third parties alleging non-compliance with applicable legal requirements, many of which are imprecise and subject to interpretation. If the result of any such proceeding is unfavorable to us, we may lose or have limitations imposed on our state licensing, accreditation, or Title IV program participation; be required to pay monetary damages (including triple damages in certain whistleblower suits); or be subject to fines, injunctions, or other penalties, any of

which could have a material adverse effect on our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations. Claims and lawsuits brought against us, even if they are without merit, may also result in adverse publicity, damage our reputation, negatively affect the market price of our stock, adversely affect our student enrollments, and reduce the willingness of third parties to do business with us. Even if we adequately address the issues raised by any such proceeding and successfully defend against it, we may have to devote significant financial and management resources to address these issues, which could harm our business.

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A decline in the overall growth of enrollment in postsecondary institutions, or in the number of students seeking degrees online or in our core disciplines, could cause us to experience lower enrollment, which could negatively impact our future growth.

Based on industry analyses, we believe that enrollment growth in degree-granting, postsecondary institutions is slowing and that the number of high school graduates that are eligible to enroll in degree-granting, postsecondary institutions is expected to decrease over the next few years. In order to maintain current growth rates, we will need to attract a larger percentage of students in existing markets and expand our markets by creating new academic programs. In addition, if job growth in the fields related to our core disciplines is weaker than expected, as a result of any regional or national economic downturn or otherwise, fewer students may seek the types of degrees that we offer. Our failure to attract new students, or the decisions by prospective students to seek degrees in other disciplines, would have an adverse impact on our future growth.

Proposed legislation, additional rulemaking or additional examinations from U.S. Congress may impact general public perception of the industry in a negative manner resulting in a material and adverse impact on our business.

Criticisms of the overall student lending and postsecondary education sectors may impact general public perceptions of educational institutions, including us, in a negative manner. Adverse media coverage regarding other educational institutions or regarding us directly could damage our reputation. The environment surrounding access to and the costs of student loans remains in a state of flux. The uncertainty surrounding these issues, and any resolution of these issues that increases loan costs or reduces students' access to Title IV loans or to student extended payment plans such as the ones we make available to our students, could reduce student demand for our programs, adversely impact our revenues and operating profit or result in increased regulatory scrutiny.

Our reputation and our stock price may be negatively affected by adverse publicity or by the actions of other postsecondary educational institutions.

In addition to the Congressional and regulatory activities focused on for-profit educational institutions beginning in 2010 and since, in recent years, regulatory proceedings and litigation have been commenced against various postsecondary educational institutions relating to, among other things, deceptive trade practices, false claims against the government, and non-compliance with Department of Education requirements, state education laws, and state consumer protection laws. These proceedings have been brought by the Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Justice, the SEC, and state governmental agencies, among others. These allegations have attracted adverse media coverage and have been the subject of legislative hearings and regulatory actions at both the federal and state levels, focusing not only on the individual schools but in some cases on the for-profit postsecondary education sector as a whole. Adverse media coverage regarding other for-profit education companies or other educational institutions could damage our reputation, result in lower enrollments, revenues, and operating profit, and have a negative impact on our stock price. Such coverage could also result in increased scrutiny and regulation by the Department of Education, Congress, accrediting commissions, state legislatures, state attorneys general, or other governmental authorities of all educational institutions, including us.

If the percentage of our revenue that is derived from the Title IV programs is too high, we may lose our eligibility to participate in those programs.

A requirement of the Higher Education Act, commonly referred to as the 90/10 Rule, that is applicable only to for-profit, postsecondary educational institutions like us provides that an institution loses its eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs if the institution derives more than 90% of its revenue for each of two consecutive fiscal years from Title IV program funds. For purposes of the 90/10 Rule, revenue is calculated under a complex regulatory

formula that requires cash basis accounting and other adjustments to the calculation of an institution's revenue under generally accepted accounting principles that appears in its consolidated financial statements. Under the 90/10 Rule, an institution becomes ineligible to participate in the Title IV programs as of the first day of the fiscal year following the second consecutive fiscal year in which it exceeds the 90% threshold, and its period of ineligibility extends for at least two consecutive fiscal years. If an institution exceeds the 90% threshold for two consecutive fiscal years and it and its students have received Title IV funds during the subsequent period of ineligibility, the institution will be required to return those Title IV funds to the applicable lender or the Department of Education. If an institution's rate exceeds 90% for any single fiscal year, it will be placed on provisional certification for at least two fiscal years.

Using the Department of Education's cash-basis, regulatory formula under the 90/10 Rule as currently in effect, for our 2015, 2014, and 2013 fiscal years, we derived approximately 74.8%, 76.5%, and 78.5%, respectively, of our 90/10 Rule revenue from Title IV program funds.

As a result of the continuing increase in the number of students attending our ground campus, who typically finance a greater percentage of their educational costs with non-Title IV sources of funds, we expect the percentage of our revenue that we receive from Title IV programs to remain stable or decrease in the future, although this may be impacted by recent changes in federal law that increased Title IV grant and loan limits, as well as the ongoing economic environment, which has adversely affected the employment circumstances of our students and their parents and increased their reliance on Title IV programs. If we were to exceed the 90% threshold for two consecutive years such that we lost our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs, or if Congress passed legislation changing how certain funds are counted under this rule, revising the percentage of income that proprietary schools must derive from non-federal sources, or both, it would have a material adverse effect on our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations.

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We may lose our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs if our student loan default rates are too high.

An institution may lose its eligibility to participate in some or all of the Title IV programs if, for three consecutive years, 30% or more of its students who were required to begin repayment on their student loans in one year default on their payment by the end of the second year. In addition, an institution may lose its eligibility to participate in some or all of the Title IV programs if the default rate of its students exceeds 40% for any single year. While our cohort default rates have historically been significantly below these levels, we cannot assure you that this will continue to be the case. For example, we believe our cohort default rates for the 2010 and 2011 federal fiscal year increased (although both remain below the Department of Education's thresholds) due primarily to the impact of current economic conditions on our students and former students and our transition to a borrower-based, non-term financial aid system in the Fall of 2010. Our cohort default rates for the 2012, 2011 and 2010 federal fiscal years were 10.3%, 15.7% and 19.0%, respectively. Increases in interest rates or declines in income or job losses for our students could contribute to higher default rates on student loans. Exceeding the student loan default rate thresholds and losing our eligibility to participate in the Title IV programs would have a material adverse effect on our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations. Any future changes in the formula for calculating student loan default rates, economic conditions, or other factors that cause our default rates to increase, could place us in danger of losing our eligibility to participate in some or all of the Title IV programs and materially adversely affect us.

We are subject to sanctions if we fail to correctly calculate and timely return Title IV program funds for students who withdraw before completing their educational program.

A school participating in the Title IV programs must calculate the amount of unearned Title IV program funds that it has disbursed to students who withdraw from their educational programs before completing such programs and must return those unearned funds to the appropriate lender or the Department of Education in a timely manner, generally within 45 days of the date the school determines that the student has withdrawn. If the unearned funds are not properly calculated and timely returned for a sufficient percentage of students, we may have to post a letter of credit in favor of the Department of Education equal to 25% of the Title IV program funds that should have been returned for such students in the prior fiscal year, we may be liable for repayment of Title IV program funds and related interest and we could be fined or otherwise sanctioned by the Department of Education, which could increase our cost of regulatory compliance and materially adversely affect us. Further, a failure to comply with these regulatory requirements could result in termination of our ability to participate in the Title IV programs, which would materially affect us.

We cannot offer new programs, expand our operations into certain states, or acquire additional schools if such actions are not timely approved by the applicable regulatory agencies, and we may have to repay Title IV funds disbursed to students enrolled in any such programs, schools, or states if we do not obtain prior approval.

Our expansion efforts include offering new educational programs. In addition, we may increase our operations in additional states and seek to acquire existing schools from other companies. If we are unable to obtain the necessary approvals for such new programs, operations, or acquisitions from the Department of Education, the Higher Learning Commission, the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education, or any other applicable state education agency or accrediting commission, or if we are unable to obtain such approvals in a timely manner, our ability to consummate the planned actions and provide Title IV funds to any affected students would be impaired, which could have a material adverse effect on our expansion plans. In addition, if we were to determine erroneously that a new program did not need approval or that we had all required approvals, we could be liable for repayment of the Title IV program funds provided to students in that program or at that location.

Government regulations relating to the Internet could increase our cost of doing business, affect our ability to grow or otherwise have a material adverse effect on our business.

The popularity and use of the Internet and other online services has led and may lead to the adoption of new laws and regulatory practices in the United States or foreign countries and to new interpretations of existing laws and regulations. These new laws and interpretations may relate to issues such as online privacy, copyrights, trademarks and service marks, sales taxes, fair business practices, and the requirement that online education institutions qualify to do business as foreign corporations or be licensed in one or more jurisdictions where they have no physical location or other presence. New laws and regulations or interpretations thereof related to doing business over the Internet could increase our costs and adversely affect our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations.

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Risks Related to Our Business

Our success depends, in part, on the effectiveness of our marketing and advertising programs in recruiting new students.

Building awareness of Grand Canyon University and the programs we offer is critical to our ability to attract prospective students. It is also critical to our success that we convert prospective students to enrolled students in a cost-effective manner and that these enrolled students remain active in our programs. Some of the factors that could prevent us from successfully recruiting, enrolling, and retaining students in our programs include:

the reduced availability of, or higher interest rates and other costs associated with, Title IV loan funds or other sources of financial aid;

the emergence of more successful competitors;

factors related to our marketing, including the costs and effectiveness of Internet advertising and broad-based branding campaigns and recruiting efforts;

performance problems with our online systems;

failure to maintain institutional and specialized accreditations;

the requirements of the education agencies that regulate us which restrict schools' initiation of new programs and modification of existing programs;

the requirements of the education agencies that regulate us which restrict the ways schools can compensate their recruitment personnel;

increased regulation of online education, including in states in which we do not have a physical presence;

restrictions that may be imposed on graduates of online programs that seek certification or licensure in certain states;

student dissatisfaction with our services and programs;

damage to our reputation or other adverse effects as a result of negative publicity in the media, in industry or governmental reports, or otherwise, affecting us or other companies in the for-profit postsecondary education sector;

price reductions by competitors that we are unwilling or unable to match;

a decline in the acceptance of online education;

an adverse economic or other development that affects job prospects in our core disciplines; and

a decrease in the perceived or actual economic benefits that students derive from our programs.

If we are unable to continue to develop awareness of Grand Canyon University and the programs we offer, and to recruit, enroll, and retain students, our enrollments would suffer and our ability to increase revenues and maintain profitability would be significantly impaired.

We are subject to rules and regulations as a result of our membership with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and any violations of such rules or regulations could adversely affect our reputation and operations.

Strict observance of rules and regulations contribute to the success of our athletic program. It is the responsibility of the University administration and the Athletic Department to adhere to all regulations created for the governance of intercollegiate athletics as set forth by the Western Athletic Conference (WAC), NCAA, and Grand Canyon University. The move from Division II to Division I was effective July 1, 2013 and demonstrated our commitment to athletic excellence and has enhanced our visibility. Any violations of such rules and regulations could adversely affect our reputation and operations.

Our business may be adversely affected by economic conditions in the U.S. or abroad.

The U.S. and many other industrialized countries are experiencing challenging economic circumstances, including high unemployment, uncertainty about financial markets and, in many cases, economic malaise or recession. We believe the economic circumstances in the U.S., in particular the continued high unemployment rate, has contributed to a portion of our increased enrollment growth as an increasing number of working adults seek to continue to advance their education to improve job security or new employment prospects. This effect cannot be quantified. However, to the extent that the economic circumstances and high unemployment have increased demands for our programs, an improving economy and increased employment may negate this effect and reduce such demand as fewer students seek to advance their education in favor of participating in the workforce. This decline could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows. Alternatively, a worsening of economic and employment conditions may reduce the ability of employers to sponsor educational opportunities for their employees, which could adversely impact our enrollment. In addition, continued deterioration in our economy and employment opportunities could adversely affect the ability of our former students to repay student loans, which could increase our bad debt expense and our student loan cohort default rate, which would require increased focus and attention to manage these defaults, which could have a material adverse effect on our business.

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If students fail to pay their outstanding balances owed to us, our business may be harmed.

From time to time, students, including former students, may carry balances on portions of their education expense not covered by financial aid programs. These balances are unsecured and not guaranteed. We have historically been successful in collecting our accounts receivable, including those due from former students as a result of the return to Title IV requirement, because the amount owed by a particular student that is in excess of the amount of financial aid that the student earned and that we are entitled to retain is often quite small. Due primarily to the ongoing economic conditions, we believe that the level of motivation that former students have to pay off their balances due to us, based on such factors as being able to receive transcripts or protecting their credit, has lessened over time. If the United States continues to experience reduced economic activity and high unemployment, it could continue to have an adverse effect on the ability or willingness of our former students to repay amounts due to us. As a result, losses related to unpaid student balances in excess of our allowance for doubtful accounts, or the failure of students to repay their debt obligations, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We operate in a highly competitive industry, and competitors with greater resources could harm our business.

The postsecondary education market is highly fragmented and competitive. We compete for students primarily with traditional public and four-year degree-granting regionally accredited colleges and universities and other proprietary degree-granting regionally accredited schools. An increasing number of traditional colleges and universities and community colleges are offering distance learning and other online education programs, including programs that are geared toward the needs of working adult students. This trend has been accelerated by private companies that provide and/or manage online learning platforms for traditional colleges and universities. As the proportion of traditional colleges and universities providing alternative learning modalities increases, we will face increasing competition for students from such institutions, including those with well-established reputations for excellence. In addition, it is likely that we will begin to face competition from various emerging nontraditional, credit-bearing and noncredit-bearing education programs, provided by both proprietary and not-for-profit providers, including massive open online courses (MOOCs) offered worldwide without charge by traditional educational institutions and other direct-to-consumer education services. Each of these competitors may develop platforms or other technologies, including technologies that allow for greater levels of interactivity between faculty and students and that are superior to the platform and technology we use, and these differences may affect our ability to recruit and retain students. Public institutions receive substantial government subsidies, and public and private non-profit institutions have access to government and foundation grants, tax-deductible contributions, and other financial resources generally not available to for-profit schools. Accordingly, public and private non-profit institutions may have instructional and support resources superior to those in the for-profit sector, and public institutions may be able to offer substantially lower tuition prices. Some of our competitors in both the public and private sectors also have substantially greater financial and other resources than we do. We may not be able to compete successfully against current or future competitors, including with respect to our ability to acquire or compete with technologies being developed by our competitors, and may face competitive pressures that could adversely affect our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations. These competitive factors could cause our enrollments, revenues, and profitability to significantly decrease and could render our online delivery format less competitive or obsolete.

If we do not maintain existing, and develop additional, relationships with employers, our future growth may be impaired.

We currently have relationships with large school districts and healthcare systems, primarily in Arizona, and also have relationships with national and international employers, to provide their employees with the opportunity to obtain degrees through us while continuing their employment. These relationships are an important part of our strategy as

they provide us with a steady source of potential working adult students for particular programs and also serve to increase our reputation among high-profile employers. As a result of economic conditions, a number of employers we work with have reduced the extent to which they reimburse their employees for participating in our programs. If we are unable to develop new relationships, or if our existing relationships deteriorate or end as a result of current or future economic conditions affecting employers or otherwise, our efforts to seek these sources of potential working adult students will be impaired, and this could materially and adversely affect our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations.

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Our failure to effectively manage our growth could harm our business.

Our business continues to experience rapid growth. Growth and expansion of our operations place a significant strain on our resources and increase demands on our executive management team, management information and reporting systems, financial management controls and personnel, and regulatory compliance systems and personnel. We may not be able to maintain or accelerate our current growth rate, effectively manage our expanding operations, or achieve planned growth on a timely or profitable basis. If we are unable to manage our growth effectively, we may experience operating inefficiencies and our earnings may be materially adversely affected.

Our success depends upon our ability to recruit and retain key personnel.

Our success to date has largely depended on, and will continue to depend on, the skills, efforts, and motivation of our executive officers, who generally have significant experience with our University and within the education industry. Our success also largely depends on our ability to attract and retain highly qualified faculty, school administrators, and additional corporate management personnel. We may have difficulties in locating and hiring qualified personnel and in retaining such personnel once hired. In addition, because we operate in a highly competitive industry, our hiring of qualified executives or other personnel may cause us or such persons to be subject to lawsuits alleging misappropriation of trade secrets, improper solicitation of employees, or other claims. Other than non-compete agreements of limited duration that we have with certain executive officers, we have not historically sought non-compete agreements with key personnel and they may leave and subsequently compete against us. The loss of the services of any of our key personnel, many of whom are not party to employment agreements with us, or our failure to attract and retain other qualified and experienced personnel on acceptable terms, could cause our business to suffer.

The protection of our operations through exclusive proprietary rights and intellectual property is limited, and from time to time we encounter disputes relating to our use of intellectual property of third parties, any of which could harm our operations and prospects.

In the ordinary course of our business we develop intellectual property of many kinds that is or will be the subject of copyright, trademark, service mark, patent, trade secret, or other protections. This intellectual property includes but is not limited to courseware materials and business know-how and internal processes and procedures developed to respond to the requirements of operating our business and to comply with the rules and regulations of various education regulatory agencies. We rely on a combination of copyrights, trademarks, service marks, trade secrets, domain names, and agreements to protect our intellectual property. We rely on service mark and trademark protection in the United States to protect our rights to the mark Grand Canyon University, as well as distinctive logos and other marks associated with our services. We rely on agreements under which we obtain rights to use course content developed by faculty members and other third party content experts, as well as license agreements pursuant to which we license the right to brand certain of our program offerings. We cannot assure you that the measures that we take will be adequate or that we have secured, or will be able to secure, appropriate protections for all of our proprietary rights in the United States or select foreign jurisdictions, or that third parties will not infringe upon or violate our proprietary rights. Unauthorized third parties may attempt to duplicate or copy the proprietary aspects of our curricula, online resource material, and other content, and offer competing programs to ours.

In particular, we license the right to utilize the name of Jerry Colangelo in connection with our business school and our Colangelo School of Sports Business that we operate within our business school, and we have spent significant resources in related branding efforts. Nevertheless, these license agreements may terminate or expire, or otherwise may not necessarily be extended in the future. In addition, third parties may attempt to develop competing programs or copy aspects of our curriculum, online resource material, quality management, and other proprietary content. The termination of this license agreement, or attempts to compete with or duplicate our programs, if successful, could

adversely affect our business. Protecting these types of intellectual property rights can be difficult, particularly as it relates to the development by our competitors of competing courses and programs.

We may from time to time encounter disputes over rights and obligations concerning intellectual property, and we may not prevail in these disputes. In certain instances, we may not have obtained sufficient rights in the content of a course. Third parties may raise a claim against us alleging an infringement or violation of the intellectual property of that third party. Some third-party intellectual property rights may be extremely broad, and it may not be possible for us to conduct our operations in such a way as to avoid those intellectual property rights. Any such intellectual property claim could subject us to costly litigation and impose a significant strain on our financial resources and management personnel regardless of whether such claim has merit, and we may be required to alter the content of our classes or pay monetary damages, which may be significant.

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Our credit agreement may restrict our operations and our ability to complete certain transactions.

Our credit agreement, which we entered into in December 2012, imposes certain operating restrictions on us, including limitations on our ability to incur additional debt or make certain investments, and requires us to maintain compliance with certain applicable regulatory standards. In addition, the credit agreement requires us to maintain a maximum leverage ratio, a minimum fixed charge coverage ratio and a minimum tangible net worth, in each case as such terms are defined in the credit agreement. We cannot assure you that these covenants will not adversely affect our ability to finance our future operations or capital needs or to pursue available business opportunities. A breach of any of these covenants or our inability to maintain the required financial ratios could result in a default in respect of the related indebtedness. If a default occurs, the affected lenders could elect to declare the indebtedness, together with accrued interest and other fees, to be immediately due and payable.

Our failure to comply with environmental laws and regulations governing our activities could result in financial penalties and other costs.

We use hazardous materials at our ground campus and generate small quantities of waste, such as used oil, antifreeze, paint, car batteries, and laboratory materials. As a result, we are subject to a variety of environmental laws and regulations governing, among other things, the use, storage, and disposal of solid and hazardous substances and waste, and the clean-up of contamination at our facilities or off-site locations to which we send or have sent waste for disposal. In the event we do not maintain compliance with any of these laws and regulations, or are responsible for a spill or release of hazardous materials, we could incur significant costs for clean-up, damages, and fines, or penalties which could adversely impact our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations.

The actions, errors, or instances of regulatory noncompliance of third party vendors upon which our institutions rely may negatively impact our business.

We engage third party vendors to provide, among other services, marketing and recruiting activities. Although we require that the work done by such third parties maintains quality assurance and compliance with applicable regulations, we may be ultimately responsible for any errors on instances of regulatory noncompliance, some of which could adversely impact our reputation, business, prospects, financial condition, cash flows, and results of operations.

Our failure to keep pace with changing market needs and technology could harm our ability to attract students.

Our success depends to a large extent on the willingness of employers to employ, promote, or increase the pay of our graduates. Increasingly, employers demand that their new employees possess appropriate technical and analytical skills and also appropriate interpersonal skills, such as communication, and teamwork skills. These skills can evolve rapidly in a changing economic and technological environment. Accordingly, it is important that our educational programs evolve in response to those economic and technological changes. The expansion of existing academic programs and the development of new programs may not be accepted by current or prospective students or by the employers of our graduates. Even if we are able to develop acceptable new programs, we may not be able to begin offering those new programs in a timely fashion or as quickly as our competitors offer similar programs. If we are unable to adequately respond to changes in market requirements due to regulatory or financial constraints, unusually rapid technological changes, or other factors, the rates at which our graduates obtain jobs in their fields of study could suffer, our ability to attract and retain students could be impaired, and our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations could be adversely affected.

We have invested significant resources to develop and implement features that enhance the online classroom experience, such as delivering course content through streaming video, simulations, and other interactive

enhancements. Our information technology systems and tools could become impaired or obsolete due to our action or failure to act. For instance, we could install new information technology without accurately assessing its costs or benefits, or we could experience delayed or ineffective implementation of new information technology. We could fail to respond in a timely manner for future technological developments in our industry. Should our actions or failure to act impair or render our information technology less effective, this could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition, results of operations and cash flows.

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We may not be able to successfully implement our growth strategy if we are not able to improve the content of our existing academic programs or to develop new programs on a timely basis and in a cost-effective manner, or at all.

We continually seek to improve the content of our existing programs and develop new programs in order to meet changing market needs. The success of any of our programs and courses, both ground and online, depends in part on our ability to expand the content of our existing programs, develop new programs in a cost-effective manner, and meet the needs of existing and prospective students and employers in a timely manner, as well as on the acceptance of our actions by existing or prospective students and employers. Even if we are able to develop acceptable new programs, we may not be able to introduce these new programs in a timely fashion or as quickly as our competitors are able to introduce competing programs. If we do not respond adequately to changes in market conditions, our ability to attract and retain students could be impaired and our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations could suffer.

The development and approval of new programs and courses, both ground and online, are subject to requirements and limitations imposed by the Department of Education, state licensing agencies, and the relevant accrediting commissions, and in certain cases, such as with doctoral programs, involves a process that can take several years to complete. The imposition of restrictions on the initiation of new educational programs by any of our regulatory agencies, or delays in obtaining approvals of such programs, may delay our expansion plans. Establishing new academic programs or modifying existing academic programs may also require us to make investments in specialized personnel, increase marketing efforts, and reallocate resources. We may have limited experience with the subject matter of new programs.

If we are unable to expand our existing programs, offer new programs on a timely basis or in a cost-effective manner, or otherwise manage effectively the operations of newly established programs, our business, prospects, financial condition, and results of operations could be adversely affected.

Risks Related to Our Business Technology Infrastructure

Our current success and future growth depend on the continued growth in users seeking educational services on the Internet.

Our business relies in part on the Internet for its success. A number of factors could inhibit the continued acceptance of the Internet and adversely affect our profitability, including:

inadequate Internet infrastructure;

security and privacy concerns;

the unavailability of cost-effective Internet service and other technological factors; and

changes in government regulation of Internet use.

If the number of potential students seeking educational services on the Internet does not continue to increase, our business may not grow as planned.

We may incur liability for the unauthorized duplication or distribution of class materials posted online for class discussions.

In some instances, our faculty members or our students may post various articles or other third-party content on class discussion boards. Third parties may raise claims against us for the unauthorized duplication of material posted online for class discussions. Any such claims could subject us to costly litigation and impose a significant strain on our financial resources and management personnel regardless of whether the claims have merit. Our general liability insurance may not cover potential claims of this type adequately or at all, and we may be required to alter the content of our courses or pay monetary damages, which may be significant.

We are subject to laws and regulations as a result of our collection and use of personal information, and any violations of such laws or regulations, or any breach, theft, or loss of such information, could adversely affect our reputation and operations.

Possession and use of personal information in our operations subjects us to risks and costs that could harm our business. We collect, use, and retain large amounts of personal information regarding our applicants, students, faculty, staff, and their families, including social security numbers, tax return information, personal and family financial data, and credit card numbers. We also collect and maintain personal information of our employees in the ordinary course of our business. Our services can be accessed globally through the Internet. Therefore, we may be subject to the application of national privacy laws in countries outside the U.S. from which applicants and students access our services. Such privacy laws could impose conditions that limit the way we market and provide our services.

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Our computer networks and the networks of certain of our vendors that hold and manage confidential information on our behalf may be vulnerable to unauthorized access, employee theft or misuse, computer hackers, computer viruses, and other security threats. Confidential information may also inadvertently become available to third parties when we integrate systems or migrate data to our servers following an acquisition of a school or in connection with periodic hardware or software upgrades.

Due to the sensitive nature of the personal information stored on our servers, our networks may be targeted by hackers seeking to access this data. A user who circumvents security measures could misappropriate sensitive information or cause interruptions or malfunctions in our operations. Although we use security and business controls to limit access and use of personal information, a third party may be able to circumvent those security and business controls, which could result in a breach of student or employee privacy. In addition, errors in the storage, use, or transmission of personal information could result in a breach of privacy for current or prospective students or employees. Possession and use of personal information in our operations also subjects us to legislative and regulatory burdens that could require us to implement certain policies and procedures, such as the procedures we adopted to comply with the Red Flags Rule that was promulgated by the Federal Trade Commission, or FTC, under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act and that requires the establishment of guidelines and policies regarding identity theft related to student credit accounts, and could require us to make certain notifications of data breaches and restrict our use of personal information. A violation of any laws or regulations relating to the collection or use of personal information could result in the imposition of fines against us. As a result, we may be required to expend significant resources to protect against the threat of these security breaches or to alleviate problems caused by these breaches. A major breach, theft, or loss of personal information regarding our students and their families or our employees that is held by us or our vendors, or a violation of laws or regulations relating to the same, could have a material adverse effect on our reputation and result in further regulation and oversight by federal and state authorities and increased costs of compliance.

Capacity constraints, system disruptions, or security breaches in our online computer networks and phone systems could have a material adverse effect on our ability to attract and retain students.

The performance and reliability of the infrastructure of our computer networks and phone systems, including our online programs, is critical to our operations, reputation and to our ability to attract and retain students. Any computer system disruption or failure, or a sudden and significant increase in traffic on the servers that host our online operations, may result in our online courses and programs being unavailable for a period of time. In addition, any significant failure of our computer networks or servers, whether as a result of third-party actions or in connection with planned upgrades and conversions, could disrupt our on-campus operations. Individual, sustained, or repeated occurrences could significantly damage the reputation of our online operations and result in a loss of potential or existing students. Additionally, our online operations are vulnerable to interruption or malfunction due to events beyond our control, including natural disasters and network and telecommunications failures. Our computer networks may also be vulnerable to unauthorized access, computer hackers, computer viruses, malicious code, organized cyber-attacks and other security problems. A user who circumvents security measures could misappropriate proprietary information or cause interruptions to or malfunctions in operations. As a result, we may be required to expend significant resources to protect against the threat of these security breaches or to alleviate problems caused by these incidents. Any interruption to our online operations could have a material adverse effect on our ability to attract students to our online programs and to retain those students.

A failure of our information systems to properly store, process and report relevant data may reduce our management's effectiveness, interfere with our regulatory compliance and increase our operating expenses.

We are dependent on the integrity of our data management systems. If these systems do not effectively collect, store and process relevant data for the operation of our business, whether due to equipment malfunctions or constraints, software deficiencies, or human error, our ability to effectively report, plan, forecast and execute our business plan and comply with applicable laws and regulations, including the Higher Education Act, as reauthorized, and the regulations thereunder, will be impaired, perhaps materially. Any such impairment could materially and adversely affect our financial condition, results of operations, and cash flows.

Risks Related to Owning our Common Stock

Your percentage ownership in us may be diluted by future issuances of capital stock, which could reduce your influence over matters on which stockholders vote.

Our Board of Directors has the authority, without action or vote of our stockholders, to issue all or any part of our authorized but unissued shares of common stock, including shares issuable upon the exercise of options or the grant of restricted stock, shares that may be issued to satisfy our payment obligations under our incentive plans, or shares of our authorized but unissued preferred stock. Issuances of common stock or voting preferred stock would reduce your influence over matters on which our stockholders vote, and, in the case of issuances of preferred stock, likely would result in your interest in us being subject to the prior rights of holders of that preferred stock.

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Provisions in our charter documents and the Delaware General Corporation Law could make it more difficult for a third party to acquire us and could discourage a takeover and adversely affect existing stockholders.

Anti-takeover provisions of our certificate of incorporation, bylaws, the Delaware General Corporation Law, or DGCL, and regulations of state and federal education agencies could diminish the opportunity for stockholders to participate in acquisition proposals at a price above the then-current market price of our common stock. For example, while we have no present plans to issue any preferred stock, our Board of Directors, without further stockholder approval, may issue shares of undesignated preferred stock and fix the powers, preferences, rights, and limitations of such class or series, which could adversely affect the voting power of your shares. In addition, our bylaws provide for an advance notice procedure for nomination of candidates to our Board of Directors that could have the effect of delaying, deterring, or preventing a change in control. Further, as a Delaware corporation, we are subject to provisions of the DGCL regarding business combinations, which can deter attempted takeovers in certain situations. The approval requirements of the Department of Education, our regional accrediting commission, and state education agencies for a change in control transaction could also delay, deter, or prevent a transaction that would result in a change in control. We may, in the future, consider adopting additional anti-takeover measures. The authority of our Board of Directors to issue undesignated preferred or other capital stock and the anti-takeover provisions of the DGCL, as well as other current and any future anti-takeover measures adopted by us, may, in certain circumstances, delay, deter, or prevent takeover attempts and other changes in control of the company not approved by our Board of Directors.

The price of our common stock may fluctuate.

The market price of our common stock could fluctuate significantly for various reasons, which include:

our quarterly or annual earnings or earnings of other companies in our industry;

the public's reaction to our press releases, our other public announcements, and our filings with the SEC;

changes in earnings estimates or recommendations by research analysts who track our common stock or the stocks of other companies in our industry;

changes in our number of enrolled students;

new or proposed laws or regulations or new or proposed interpretations of laws or regulations applicable to our business;

seasonal variations in our student population;

damage to our reputation or other adverse effects as a result of negative publicity in the media, in industry or governmental reports, or otherwise, affecting us or other companies in the for-profit postsecondary education sector;

the availability and cost of Title IV funds, other student financial aid, and private loans;

the failure to maintain or keep in good standing our regulatory approvals and accreditations;

changes in accounting standards, policies, guidance, interpretations, or principles;

changes in general conditions in the U.S. and global economies or financial markets, including those resulting from war, incidents of terrorism, or responses to such events;

an adverse economic or other development that affects job prospects in our core disciplines;

litigation involving our University, or investigations or audits by regulators into the operations of our University or our competitors; and

sales of common stock by our directors, executive officers, and significant stockholders.

In addition, in recent years, the stock market has experienced extreme price and volume fluctuations. This volatility has had a significant impact on the market price of securities issued by many companies, including companies in our industry. The changes frequently appear to occur without regard to the operating performance of these companies. The price of our common stock could fluctuate based upon factors that have little or nothing to do with our University, and these fluctuations could materially reduce our stock price.

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In the past, following periods of volatility in the market price of a company's securities, securities class action litigation has often been brought against that company. Because of the potential volatility of our stock price, we may become the target of securities litigation in the future. Securities litigation could result in substantial costs and divert management's attention and resources from our business.

If securities analysts do not publish research or reports about our business or industry or if they downgrade their evaluations of our stock, the price of our stock could decline.

The trading market for our common stock depends in part on the research and reports that industry or financial analysts publish about us, our business and the for-profit education sector. In recent periods, a number of analysts have dropped coverage of the sector. If one or more of the analysts covering us downgrade their estimates or evaluations of our stock, the price of our stock could decline. If additional analysts cease coverage of us or our sector, we could lose visibility in the market for our stock, which in turn could cause our stock price to decline.

We currently do not intend to pay dividends on our common stock and, consequently, your only opportunity to achieve a return on your investment is if the price of our common stock appreciates.

We do not expect to pay dividends on shares of our common stock in the foreseeable future and intend to use cash to grow our business. The payment of cash dividends in the future, if any, will be at the discretion of our Board of Directors and will depend upon such factors as earnings levels, capital requirements, our overall financial condition, and any other factors deemed relevant by our Board of Directors. Consequently, your only opportunity to achieve a positive return on your investment in us will be if the market price of our common stock appreciates.

Item 1B. Unresolved Staff Comments

None.

Item 2. Properties

We own our ground campus, which is located on 200+ acres in the center of the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area, near downtown Phoenix. Our on-campus facilities currently consist of classroom buildings, lecture halls, a 300-seat theater, a 155,000-volume newly renovated library, a media arts complex that provides communications students with audio and video equipment, a 55,000 square foot recreation center for both student-athletes and on-campus students, a 140,000 square foot/ 7,500 seat basketball and entertainment arena, a gymnasium, an activity center that contains a food court, a bowling alley and other student services, a student union which was recently remodeled and expanded, dormitories, apartments, campus pools, athletic facilities and parking garages. Additionally, we have several office buildings used for administration. In order to accommodate the continued growth of our traditional ground population, we completed four additional dormitories, an additional classroom building for our College of Science, Engineering and Technology and a third parking structure prior to the 2015/2016 school year and has recently started construction on three more apartment style residence halls, a 170,000 square foot classroom building for its College of Science, Engineering and Technology, a student service center and a fourth parking structure.

We also lease three additional facilities for employees in Arizona, and four facilities in Arizona and one in New Mexico for classroom and labs for our nursing professional studies students. We lease apartments in an off-site apartment building in Phoenix, Arizona for traditional ground students. Additionally, we lease five office locations in California and one in Colorado. We may add additional space in Arizona and in other states in the southwest U.S. to

accommodate our growth plans in 2016 and beyond.

Item 3. *Legal Proceedings*

From time to time, we are subject to ordinary and routine litigation incidental to our business. While the outcomes of these matters are uncertain, management does not expect that the ultimate costs to resolve these matters will have a material adverse effect on our financial position, results of operations or cash flows.

Item 4. *Mine Safety Disclosures*

None.

Table of Contents**PART II****Item 5. *Market for Registrant's Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities*****Market Information**

Our common stock trades on the Nasdaq Global Market under the symbol LOPE. The holders of our common stock are entitled to one vote per share on any matter to be voted upon by stockholders. All shares of common stock rank equally as to voting and all other matters. The shares of common stock have no preemptive or conversion rights, no redemption or sinking fund provisions, are not liable for further call or assessment and are not entitled to cumulative voting rights.

The table below sets forth the high and low sales prices for our common stock, as reported by the Nasdaq Global Market.

	High	Low
2015		
First Quarter	\$ 48.29	\$ 42.63
Second Quarter	\$ 45.82	\$ 41.30
Third Quarter	\$ 45.17	\$ 35.38
Fourth Quarter	\$ 42.81	\$ 36.18
2014		
First Quarter	\$ 51.12	\$ 41.71
Second Quarter	\$ 47.89	\$ 41.63
Third Quarter	\$ 47.76	\$ 40.24
Fourth Quarter	\$ 51.99	\$ 36.95

Holders

As of December 31, 2015, there were approximately 207 registered holders of record of common stock. A substantially greater number of holders of common stock are street name or beneficial holders, whose shares are held of record by banks, brokers and other financial institutions.

Dividends

We currently intend to retain all future earnings for the operation and expansion of our business and do not anticipate paying cash dividends on our common stock in the foreseeable future.

Recent Sales of Unregistered Securities

None.

Securities Authorized for Issuance under Equity Compensation Plans

The information required by Item 201(d) of Regulation S-K is provided under Item 12, *Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management and Related Stockholder Matters*, Equity Compensation Plan Information, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Purchases of Equity Securities by the Issuer and Affiliated Purchasers

Our Board of Directors has authorized the University to repurchase up to \$75.0 million in aggregate of common stock, from time to time, depending on market conditions and other considerations. The current expiration date on the repurchase authorization by our Board of Directors is September 30, 2016. Repurchases occur at our discretion. Repurchases may be made in the open market or in privately negotiated transactions, pursuant to the applicable Securities and Exchange Commission rules. The amount and timing of future share repurchases, if any, will be made as market and business conditions warrant. Since the approval of our share repurchase plan, we have purchased 3.1 million shares of common stock at an aggregate cost of \$60.4 million, which are recorded at cost in the accompanying December 31, 2015 consolidated balance sheet and statement of stockholders' equity. At December 31, 2015, there remained \$14.6 million available under our current share repurchase authorization. During the fourth quarter and the year ended December 31, 2015, we repurchased 288,397 shares of common stock at an aggregate cost of \$11.3 million.

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The following table sets forth our share repurchases of common stock and our share repurchases in lieu of taxes, which are not included in the repurchase plan totals as they were effected in conjunction with the vesting of restricted share awards, during each period in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2015:

Period	Total Number of Shares Purchased	Average Price Paid Per Share	Total Number of Shares Purchased as Part of Publicly Announced Program	Maximum Dollar Value of Shares That May Yet Be Purchased Under the Program
Share Repurchases				
October 1, 2015 – October 31, 2015		\$		\$ 25,865,000
November 1, 2015				
November 30, 2015		\$		\$ 25,865,000
December 1, 2015				
December 31, 2015	288,397	\$ 39.11	288,397	\$ 14,586,000
Total	288,397	\$ 39.11	288,397	\$ 14,586,000
Tax Withholdings				
October 1, 2015 – October 31, 2015	1,320	\$		\$
November 1, 2015				
November 30, 2015		\$		\$
December 1, 2015				
December 31, 2015		\$		\$
Total	1,320	\$		\$

University Stock Performance

The following graph compares the cumulative total return of our common stock with the cumulative total returns of the S&P 500 Index and our selected peer group of five companies that includes: Capella Education Company, American Public Education, Inc., Apollo Education Group Inc., Strayer Education Inc. and Bridgepoint Education, Inc. This chart assumes that an investment of \$100 was made in our common stock, in the index, and in the peer group on December 31, 2010 and that all dividends paid by us and such companies were reinvested, and tracks the relative performance of such investments through December 31, 2015.

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	12/10	12/11	12/12	12/13	12/14	12/15
Grand Canyon Education, Inc.	100.00	81.47	119.81	222.56	238.18	204.80
S&P 500	100.00	102.11	118.45	156.82	178.29	180.75
Peer Group	100.00	111.17	52.57	69.63	80.95	33.59

The information contained in the performance graph shall not be deemed soliciting material or to be filed with the SEC nor shall such information be deemed incorporated by reference into any future filing under the Securities Act or the Exchange Act, except to the extent that we specifically incorporate it by reference into such filing.

The stock price performance included in this graph is not necessarily indicative of future stock price performance.

Table of Contents**Item 6. Selected Consolidated Financial and Other Data**

The following selected consolidated financial and other data should be read in conjunction with Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*, and Item 7, *Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations*, to fully understand the information presented below. The selected consolidated income statement data and other data, excluding period end enrollment, for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014, and 2013, and the selected consolidated balance sheet data as of December 31, 2015, and 2014, have been derived from our audited consolidated financial statements for such years, which are included herein. The selected consolidated income statement data and other data, excluding period end enrollment, for the years ended December 31, 2012 and 2011, and the selected consolidated balance sheet data as of December 31, 2013, 2012, and 2011, have been derived from our audited consolidated financial statements for such years, which are not included herein. Our historical results are not necessarily indicative of our results for any future period.

	Year Ended December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
	(In thousands, except per share data)				
Income Statement Data:					
Net revenue	\$ 778,200	\$ 691,055	\$ 598,335	\$ 511,257	\$ 426,741
Costs and expenses:					
Instructional costs and services	329,651	288,791	254,419	220,403	194,801
Admissions advisory and related ⁽¹⁾	112,572	108,567	97,077	85,917	70,758
Advertising ⁽¹⁾	76,229	65,808	60,985	51,023	45,587
Marketing and promotional ⁽¹⁾	7,287	7,439	5,644	4,360	3,610
General and administrative	42,100	39,635	36,934	35,502	29,043
Lease termination costs					782
Total costs and expenses	567,839	510,240	455,059	397,205	344,581
Operating income	210,361	180,815	143,276	114,052	82,160
Interest expense	(1,248)	(1,801)	(2,244)	(699)	(720)
Interest income and other	(106)	684	3,863	71	88
Income before income taxes	209,007	179,698	144,895	113,424	81,528
Income tax expense	77,596	68,232	56,184	43,977	30,982
Net income	\$ 131,411	\$ 111,466	\$ 88,711	\$ 69,447	\$ 50,546
Earnings per common share					
Basic	\$ 2.86	\$ 2.45	\$ 1.98	\$ 1.57	\$ 1.13
Diluted	\$ 2.78	\$ 2.37	\$ 1.92	\$ 1.53	\$ 1.12
Shares used in computing earnings per common share					
Basic	45,975	45,538	44,731	44,332	44,631
Diluted	47,281	47,006	46,131	45,251	45,105

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	As of December 31,				
	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
	(In thousands)				
Other Data:					
Capital expenditures	\$ 218,301	\$ 168,646	\$ 93,490	\$ 104,876	\$ 80,545
Depreciation and amortization	\$ 35,379	\$ 29,177	\$ 25,141	\$ 21,627	\$ 16,738
Adjusted EBITDA ⁽²⁾	\$ 263,125	\$ 227,812	\$ 185,086	\$ 149,593	\$ 107,428
Period end enrollment ⁽³⁾					
Online	59,311	55,060	49,580	44,690	38,918
Ground	15,195	12,746	10,078	7,602	4,999
Balance Sheet Data:					
Cash and cash equivalents, marketable securities and investments	\$ 106,400	\$ 166,022	\$ 164,244	\$ 105,111	\$ 21,189
Restricted cash, cash equivalents and investments	75,384	67,840	64,368	56,189	56,670
Total assets	898,430	755,713	616,100	494,923	317,847
Capital lease obligations (including short-term)	1,485	497	586	674	1,144
Notes payable (including short-term)	79,877	86,493	93,100	99,701	21,640
Total stockholders' equity	610,251	476,232	344,844	234,059	163,293

- (1) During the first quarter of 2013, the University made changes in its presentation of operating expenses and revised prior periods to conform to the current presentation. All years presented in the five year table were reclassified to conform to the current presentation.
- (2) Adjusted EBITDA is defined as net income plus interest expense net of interest income, plus income tax expense, plus depreciation and amortization (EBITDA), as adjusted for (i) the amortization of prepaid royalty payments recorded in conjunction with a settlement of a dispute with our former owner; (ii) contributions to Arizona school tuition organizations in lieu of the payment of state income taxes; (iii) share-based compensation; and (iv) one-time, unusual charges or gains, such as litigation and regulatory reserves, impairment charges and asset write-offs, exit or lease termination costs, contract termination fees, or the gain (loss) recognized on the settlement of a third party note receivable.
- (3) Enrollment represents individual students who attended a course during the last two months of the calendar quarter.

We present Adjusted EBITDA because we consider it to be an important supplemental measure of our operating performance. We also make certain compensation decisions based, in part, on our operating performance, as measured by Adjusted EBITDA, and our credit agreement requires us to comply with covenants that include performance metrics substantially similar to Adjusted EBITDA. All of the adjustments made in our calculation of Adjusted EBITDA are adjustments to items that management does not consider to be reflective of our core operating performance. Management considers our core operating performance to be that which can be affected by our managers in any particular period through their management of the resources that affect our underlying revenue and profit generating operations during that period. Royalty expenses paid to our former owner, contributions to Arizona school tuition organizations in lieu of the payment of state income taxes, share-based compensation, one time unusual charges or gains, such as estimated litigation and regulatory reserves, exit costs, contract and lease termination fees, and the gain recognized on the settlement of notes receivable are not considered reflective of our core performance. We believe Adjusted EBITDA allows us to compare our current operating results with corresponding historical periods and with the operational performance of other companies in our industry because it does not give effect to potential differences caused by variations in capital structures (affecting relative interest expense, including the impact of write-offs of deferred financing costs when companies refinance their indebtedness), tax positions (such as the impact on periods or companies of changes in effective tax rates or net operating losses), the book amortization of

intangibles (affecting relative amortization expense), and other items that we do not consider reflective of underlying operating performance. We also present Adjusted EBITDA because we believe it is frequently used by securities analysts, investors, and other interested parties as a measure of performance.

In evaluating Adjusted EBITDA, investors should be aware that in the future we may incur expenses similar to the adjustments described above. Our presentation of Adjusted EBITDA should not be construed as an inference that our future results will be unaffected by expenses that are unusual, non-routine, or non-recurring. Adjusted EBITDA has limitations as an analytical tool, and you should not consider it in isolation, or as a substitute for net income, operating income, or any other performance measure derived in accordance with and reported under GAAP or as an alternative to cash flow from operating activities or as a measure of our liquidity. Some of these limitations are that it does not reflect:

cash expenditures for capital expenditures or contractual commitments;

changes in, or cash requirements for, our working capital requirements;

interest expense, or the cash required to replace assets that are being depreciated or amortized; and

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the impact on our reported results of earnings or charges resulting from the items for which we make adjustments to our EBITDA, as described above and set forth in the table below.

In addition, other companies, including other companies in our industry, may calculate these measures differently than we do, limiting the usefulness of Adjusted EBITDA as a comparative measure. Because of these limitations, Adjusted EBITDA should not be considered as a substitute for net income, operating income, or any other performance measure derived in accordance with GAAP, or as an alternative to cash flow from operating activities or as a measure of our liquidity. We compensate for these limitations by relying primarily on our GAAP results and use Adjusted EBITDA only as a supplemental performance measure. For more information, see our consolidated financial statements and the notes to those statements included elsewhere in this Annual Report on Form 10-K.

The following table reconciles Adjusted EBITDA to net income for the periods indicated:

(In thousands)	Year Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
Net income	\$ 131,411	\$ 111,466	\$ 88,711
Plus: interest expense net of interest and other income	395	1,117	2,027
Plus: income tax expense	77,596	68,232	56,184
Plus: depreciation and amortization	35,379	29,177	25,141
EBITDA	244,781	209,992	172,063
Plus: royalty to former owner ^(a)	296	296	296
Plus: prepaid royalty impairment and other fixed asset impairments ^(b)	2,755	3,441	
Plus: contributions made in lieu of state income taxes ^(c)	2,750	2,750	2,500
Plus: estimated litigation and regulatory reserves ^(d)	328	870	3,937
Plus: lease termination costs ^(e)		518	
Plus: loss (gain) on note receivable ^(f)	958		(3,646)
Plus: share-based compensation ^(g)	11,257	9,945	9,936
Adjusted EBITDA	\$ 263,125	\$ 227,812	\$ 185,086

- (a) Represents the amortization of prepaid royalty payments, as discussed in Note 2 to our consolidated financial statements that are included in Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*.
- (b) Represents the prepaid royalty impairment and other fixed asset impairments. The 2015 amount represents the write-off of the remaining book value of on campus buildings removed to make way for new dormitories and a classroom building as well as an internal use software write off. The 2014 amount relates to the termination during 2014 of our use of the Ken Blanchard name for our College of Business, as discussed in Note 2 to our consolidated financial statements that are included in Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*.
- (c) Reflects contributions to various Arizona school tuition organizations to assist with funding for education. In connection with such contributions made we received a dollar-for-dollar state income tax credit, which resulted in a reduction in our effective income tax rate to 37.1%, 38.0% and 38.8% for the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively. Had these contributions not been made, our effective tax rate would have been

37.9%, 38.9% and 39.8%, for 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively. Such contributions are viewed by our management to be made in lieu of payments of state income taxes and are therefore excluded from evaluation of our core operating performance.

- (d) Reflects \$3.9 million for the program review reserve in 2013, and \$0.3 million and \$0.9 million for estimated litigation reserves in 2015 and 2014, respectively. See Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*.
- (e) Represents lease termination costs incurred related to the early termination of leased space. See Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*.
- (f) Represents loss (gain) on a note receivable purchased in December 2012. See Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*.
- (g) Reflects share-based compensation expense relating to restricted stock awards and option grants made to employees and directors.

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Item 7. *Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations*

The following discussion and analysis of our financial condition and results of operations for the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014 should be read in conjunction with our consolidated financial statements and related notes that appear in Item 8, *Consolidated Financial Statements and Supplementary Data*. In addition to historical information, the following discussion contains forward-looking statements that reflect our plans, estimates and beliefs. Our actual results could differ materially from those discussed in the forward-looking statements. Factors that could cause or contribute to these differences include those discussed below and elsewhere in this Annual Report on Form 10-K, particularly in Item 1A, *Risk Factors* and *Forward-Looking Statements*.

Executive Overview

We are a comprehensive regionally accredited university that offers approximately 200 graduate and undergraduate degree programs and certificates across eight colleges both online and on ground at our approximately 200+ acre campus in Phoenix, Arizona, and onsite at facilities we lease and at facilities owned by third party employers. Our undergraduate programs are designed to be innovative and meet the future needs of employers, while providing students with the needed critical thinking and effective communication skills developed through a Christian, liberal arts foundation. We offer master and doctoral degrees in contemporary fields that are designed to provide students with the capacity for transformational leadership in their chosen industry, emphasizing the immediate relevance of theory, application, and evaluation to promote personal and organizational change. At December 31, 2015, we had approximately 74,500 students. At December 31, 2015, 79.6% of our students were enrolled in our online programs, and, of our working adult students (online and professional studies students), 47.8% were pursuing masters or doctoral degrees.

Key Trends, Developments and Challenges

The following circumstances and trends present opportunities, challenges and risks.

Evolving Postsecondary Education Market. We believe that there is a large number of traditional-aged students looking for a residential experience at an affordable, private, Christian university. As a result of state funding challenges, most state universities are receiving less state subsidies and therefore have been forced to increase tuition, decrease the number of students they can accept and/or make other changes that impact the student experience. Some private universities also are facing enrollment challenges as a result of their high tuition costs. We also believe the number of non-traditional students who work, are raising a family, or are doing both while trying to earn a college degree continues to grow. The continued economic environment in the U.S., however, has caused an increased number of potential students and/or their parents to consider the cost of education as a primary factor in choosing the school that they will attend. Given these trends, we believe that many individuals will be attracted to our high quality academic programs at affordable tuition rates. We also believe that competition for students continues to increase. We compete primarily with traditional public and four-year degree-granting regionally accredited colleges and universities and other proprietary degree-granting regionally accredited schools. An increasing number of traditional colleges, universities and community colleges are offering distance learning and other online education programs, including programs that are geared towards the needs of working adult students. This trend has been accelerated by private companies that provide and/or manage online learning platforms for traditional colleges and universities. As the proportion of traditional colleges and universities providing alternative learning modalities increases, we face increasing competition for students from such institutions, including those with well-established reputations for excellence.

Regulation and Oversight. We are subject to extensive regulation by federal and state governmental agencies and accrediting bodies. In particular, the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (the Higher Education Act), and the

regulations promulgated thereunder by the Department of Education subject us to significant regulatory scrutiny on the basis of numerous standards that schools must satisfy in order to participate in the various federal student financial assistance programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. See Item 1. Business Regulation. Recent regulations have imposed new reporting and disclosure requirements that have caused increased administrative burden and costs and may have a negative effect on our growth and enrollments. In addition, in recent years, there has been increased focus by Congress on the role that proprietary educational institutions play in higher education and various proposals to modify the laws to which proprietary educational institutions are subject. We cannot predict what legislation, if any, may result from these Congressional proposals or what impact any such legislation might have on the proprietary education sector generally or our business in particular. To the extent that any laws or regulations are adopted, or other administrative actions are taken, that limit our participation in Title IV programs or the amount of student financial aid for which the students at our institutions are eligible, our enrollments, revenues and results of operation could be materially and adversely affected.

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Fiscal Year 2015 Events

We experienced the following significant events in 2015:

Enrollment, Net Revenue, Operating Income Growth with No Increase in Ground Tuition Rates. We achieved enrollment growth of 9.9% during the fiscal year ended December 31, 2015, as ground enrollment increased 19.2% and online enrollment increased 7.7% over the prior year. We attribute the significant growth in our ground enrollment between years to our increasing brand recognition and the value proposition that our ground traditional campus affords to traditional-aged students and their parents. After scholarships, our ground traditional students pay tuition, room, board, and fees in an amount that is often half to a third of what it costs to attend a private, traditional university in another state and an amount comparable to what it costs to attend a public university. Our online students pay tuition and fees in an amount that is often less than the cost of other high service online programs such as ours. For example, our largest local competitor's undergraduate tuition for online programs ranges from \$490 to \$553 per credit hour and its graduate tuition for online programs ranges from \$492 to \$852 per credit hour while our online tuition per credit hour ranges from \$355 to \$470 for undergraduate programs and \$330 to \$640 for graduate programs. There are online programs that are less expensive than ours but those programs generally do not provide the full level of support services that we provide to our students. Although our online enrollment continues to grow, as the proportion of traditional colleges and universities providing alternative learning modalities increases, we will face increasing competition for working adult students from such institutions, including those with well-established reputations for excellence. We did not raise tuition in any of our programs for our 2014-2015 academic year. A tuition increase of approximately 1% was implemented for the majority of online programs for our 2015-2016 academic year. We have not raised our tuition for our traditional ground programs in seven years. Net revenues increased 12.6% over the prior year primarily due to the enrollment growth and due to an increase in ancillary revenues resulting from the increased traditional student enrollment (e.g. housing, food, etc.). Operating income was \$210.4 million for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2015, an increase of 16.3% over the \$180.8 million in operating income for 2014.

Continued Program Expansion. In the Fall of 2014, the University launched the College of Science, Engineering and Technology, rolling out programs in computer science and information technology. In the Fall of 2015, three engineering programs, Electrical Engineering, Bio-medical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering began. In total the University now offers approximately 200 graduate and undergraduate degree programs and certificates across eight colleges with over 30 new programs or emphases rolled out in 2015.

Capital Expenditures. Our capital expenditures in 2015 of \$204.7 million were primarily related to the expansion of our 200+ acre physical campus in Phoenix, Arizona and significant investments in technology innovation to support our students and staff. In order to accommodate the continued growth of the traditional ground population, the University completed four additional dormitories, an additional classroom building for the College of Science, Engineering and Technology and a third parking structure for the 2015/2016 school year and has recently started construction on three more apartment style residence halls, a 170,000 square foot classroom building for its College of Science, Engineering and Technology, a student service center and a fourth parking structure. In addition, the

University acquired approximately 25 acres of land adjacent to or near campus for future development. Included in off-site development during 2015 is \$10.0 million we spent to revitalize what was formerly known as the Maryvale Golf Course under a partnership agreement with the City of Phoenix. The golf course is now known as Grand Canyon University Championship golf course. Also, in late 2015, we commenced construction on an off-site office building and parking garage that is in close proximity to our ground traditional campus. Employees that work in two leased office buildings in the Phoenix area will be consolidated into this new building when it is expected to be completed in late 2016. Although the University is funding the construction of the building and parking garage, the University is marketing these, along with a recently refurbished office building in the same development, as part of a sale-leaseback transaction. These investments are intended to support our growing on-campus student population as well as enhance the brand of the University.

Community Involvement and the Public Good. In 2014, the University announced a five-point plan to restore west Phoenix through a) a unique partnership with Habitat for Humanity to repair hundreds of homes in the University's neighborhood; b) an ongoing initiative with the Phoenix Police Department to improve public safety; c) the creation of jobs and commerce on the main campus and along the Camelback Road corridor in West Phoenix; d) the development of a trained workforce in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and e) the continued support of K-12 students at neighborhood schools via our Outreach Program. Our students are serving as tutors and mentors to these high school students and the results thus far have been extremely positive. The University continues to be involved in more than 120 community events and projects throughout the year, helping organizations such as the Phoenix Dream Center, Feed My Starving Children, Hopefest, Arizona Foster Care, Phoenix Rescue Mission, Boy/Girl Scouts, Goodwill Arizona, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Young Life and Elevate Phoenix. The University also puts on popular gift drives at Christmas and Easter to help brighten those seasons for many underprivileged families. Our faculty, staff and students also go out into our surrounding neighborhoods to participate in University sponsored programs such as Serve the City, Canyon Kids, 12 Months of Service and the Run to Fight Children's Cancer.

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Net revenue consists principally of tuition, room and board charges attributable to students residing on our ground campus, application and graduation fees, and fees from educational resources such as access to online materials or commissions we earn from bookstore and publication sales, less scholarships. Factors affecting our net revenue include: (i) the number of students who are enrolled and who remain enrolled in our courses; (ii) the number of credit hours per student; (iii) our degree and program mix; (iv) changes in our tuition rates; (v) the timing of our ground traditional campus semesters; (vi) the amount of the scholarships that we offer; and (vii) the number of students housed in, and the rent charged for, our on-campus student apartments and dormitories.

We define enrollment as individual students who attended a course during the last two months of the calendar quarter. We offer three 15-week semesters in a calendar year with one start available per semester for our traditional ground students. Online and professional studies students have more frequent class starts in five, seven, eight and sixteen-week courses through the calendar year. Enrollments are a function of the number of continuing students at the beginning of each period and new enrollments during the period, which are offset by graduations, withdrawals, and inactive students during the period. Inactive students for a particular period include students who are not registered in a class and, therefore, are not generating net revenue for that period, but who have not withdrawn from Grand Canyon University.

We believe that the principal factors that affect our enrollments and net revenue are the number and breadth of the programs we offer; the attractiveness of our program offerings and learning experience, particularly for career-oriented adults who are seeking pay increases or job opportunities that are directly tied to higher educational attainment; the effectiveness of our marketing, recruiting and retention efforts, which is affected by our brand strength and price point; the quality of our academic programs and student services; the convenience and flexibility of our online delivery platform; the availability and cost of federal and other funding for student financial aid; the seasonality of our net revenue, which is enrollment driven and is typically lowest in our second fiscal quarter and highest in our fourth fiscal quarter; and general economic conditions, particularly as they might affect job prospects in our core disciplines.

The following is a summary of our student enrollment at December 31, 2015, 2014, and 2013 by degree type and by instructional delivery method:

	2015⁽¹⁾		December 31, 2014⁽¹⁾		2013⁽¹⁾	
	# of Students	% of Total	# of Students	% of Total	# of Students	% of Total
Graduate degree ⁽²⁾	29,237	39.2%	26,319	38.8%	22,476	37.7%
Undergraduate degree	45,269	60.8%	41,487	61.2%	37,182	62.3%
Total	74,506	100.0%	67,806	100.0%	59,658	100.0%

	2015⁽¹⁾		December 31, 2014⁽¹⁾		2013	
	# of Students	% of Total	# of Students	% of Total	# of Students	% of Total
Online ⁽³⁾	59,311	79.6%	55,060	81.2%	49,580	83.1%

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Ground ⁽⁴⁾	15,195	20.4%	12,746	18.8%	10,078	16.9%
Total	74,506	100.0%	67,806	100.0%	59,658	100.0%

- (1) Enrollment represents individual students who attended a course during the last two months of the calendar quarter. Included in enrollment at December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013 are students pursuing non-degree certificates of 679, 585, and 487, respectively.
- (2) Includes 6,302, 5,570 and 4,285 students pursuing doctoral degrees at December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, respectively.
- (3) As of December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, 47.8%, 46.0% and 43.5%, respectively, of our working adult students (online and professional studies students) were pursuing graduate or doctoral degrees.
- (4) Includes our traditional on-campus students, as well as our professional studies students.

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For the 2014-15 academic year (the academic year begins in May), our prices per credit hour range from \$350 to \$465 for undergraduate online and professional studies courses, \$325 to \$600 for graduate online courses, \$630 for doctoral online programs, and \$688 for undergraduate courses for ground students. For our active duty and active reserve online and professional studies students, our prices per credit hour are \$250 for undergraduate, \$400 for graduate courses and \$599 for doctoral courses. The overall price of each course varies based upon the number of credit hours per course (with most courses representing four credit hours), the degree level of the program, and the discipline. In addition, we charge a fixed \$8,250 block tuition for undergraduate ground students taking between 12 and 18 credit hours per semester, with an additional \$688 per credit hour for credits in excess of 18. A traditional undergraduate degree typically requires a minimum of 120 credit hours. The minimum number of credit hours required for a master's degree and overall cost for such a degree varies by program, although such programs typically require approximately 36 credit hours. The doctoral program requires approximately 60 credit hours. A tuition increase of approximately 1% was implemented for the majority of online programs in September 2015. The University has not raised tuition for its traditional ground programs in seven years.

Based on current tuition rates, tuition for a full program would generally equate to between \$15,450 and \$37,000 for an online master's program, between \$42,600 and \$56,400 for a full four-year online bachelor's program, \$38,400 for a full doctoral program, and approximately \$66,000 for a full four-year bachelor's program taken on our ground campus. The tuition amounts referred to above assume no reductions for transfer credits or scholarships, which many of our students utilize to reduce their total program costs. For example, the average student on our ground traditional campus will pay approximately \$8,300 in tuition in the 2015-16 school year after scholarships. Thus, based on the number of transfer credits and the scholarships they receive it is likely that a student will pay less than \$34,000 in tuition for a bachelor's degree on our ground campus. For the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, our revenue was reduced by approximately \$163.9 million, \$140.0 million and \$111.8 million, respectively, as a result of scholarships that we offered to our students. The increase in scholarships reflects our increased revenues and our resulting increased use of scholarships (especially academic scholarships), to attract high performing students to our ground traditional campus.

Revenue per student for the year ended December 31, 2015 increased over 2014 primarily due to our residential traditional campus enrollment growing at a rate higher than our working adult enrollment. When factoring in room, board, and fees, the revenue per student is higher for these students than for our working adult students. We did not raise tuition in any of our programs for our 2014-2015 academic years and have not raised our tuition for our traditional ground program in seven years. A tuition increase of approximately 1% was implemented for the majority of online programs in September 2015. This reflects a concerted effort to control tuition pricing for students so that debt levels assumed by our students are reasonable. Tuition increases have not historically been, and may not in the future be, consistent across our programs due to market conditions and differences in operating costs of individual programs.

We derive a majority of our net revenues from tuition financed by the Title IV programs. For the years ended December 31, 2015, 2014 and 2013, we derived cash receipts equal to approximately 74.8%, 76.5%, and 78.5%, respectively, of our net revenues from Title IV programs. Our students also may rely on scholarships, personal savings, private loans, and employer tuition reimbursements to pay a portion of their tuition and related expenses.

Critical Accounting Policies and Estimates

The discussion of our financial condition and results of operations is based upon our consolidated financial statements, which have been prepared in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles, or GAAP. During the preparation of these consolidated financial statements, we are required to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets, liabilities, revenues, costs and expenses, and related disclosures. On an ongoing basis,

we evaluate our estimates and assumptions, including those discussed below. We base our estimates on historical experience and on various other assumptions that we believe are reasonable under the circumstances. The results of our analysis form the basis for making assumptions about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. Actual results may differ from these estimates under different assumptions or conditions, and the impact of such differences may be material to our consolidated financial statements.

We believe that the following critical accounting policies involve our more significant judgments and estimates used in the preparation of our consolidated financial statements:

Revenue recognition. Net revenues consist primarily of tuition and fees derived from courses taught by us online, at our approximately 200+ acre campus in Phoenix, Arizona, and at facilities we lease or those of employers, as well as from related educational resources such as access to online materials. Tuition revenue and most fees and related educational resources are recognized pro-rata over the applicable period of instruction, net of scholarships awarded by us. Generally, we will refund all or a portion of tuition already paid pursuant to our refund policy, dependent upon length of course and modality and subject to certain state specific refund requirements. If a student withdraws at a time when only a portion, or none of the tuition is refundable, then in accordance with its revenue recognition policy, the University continues to recognize the tuition that was not refunded pro-rata over the applicable period of instruction. However, for students that have taken out financial aid to pay their tuition and for which a return to Title IV is required as a result of his or her withdrawal, the University recognizes revenue after a student withdraws only at the time of cash collection. Sales tax collected from students is excluded from net revenues. We also charge online students an upfront learning management fee, which is deferred and recognized over the average expected term of a student. Costs that are direct and incremental to new online students are also deferred and recognized ratably over the average expected term of a student. Deferred revenue and student deposits in any period represent the excess of tuition, fees and other student payments received as compared to amounts recognized as revenue on the statement of operations and are reflected as current liabilities in the accompanying balance sheet. Our educational programs have starting and ending dates that differ from our quarters. Therefore, at the end of each fiscal quarter, a portion of revenue from these programs is not yet earned. Other revenues may be recognized as sales occur or services are performed.

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Allowance for doubtful accounts. We record an allowance for doubtful accounts for estimated losses resulting from the inability, failure or refusal of our students to make required payments, which includes the recovery of financial aid funds advanced to a student for amounts in excess of the student's cost of tuition and related fees that we may have to return under Title IV after a student drops. We determine the adequacy of our allowance for doubtful accounts based on an analysis of our historical bad debt experience, current economic trends, and the aging of the accounts receivable and student status. We apply a reserve to our receivables based upon an estimate of the risk presented by the age of the receivables and student status. We write off accounts receivable balances of active students at the earlier of the time the balance is deemed uncollectible, or one year after the revenue is generated. We reserve for receivables due from inactive students on a more accelerated basis than those due from active students and write off inactive student accounts at 150 days, as amounts due from inactive students are much more difficult to collect than amounts due from active students. We monitor our collections and write-off experience to assess whether adjustments to the estimated reserve are necessary.

Long-Lived Assets (other than goodwill). We evaluate the recoverability of our long-lived assets for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying amount of an asset may not be recoverable. Recoverability of assets to be held and used is measured by a comparison of the carrying amount of an asset to undiscounted future net cash flows expected to be generated by the assets. If such assets are considered to be impaired, the impairment to be recognized is measured by the amount by which the carrying amount of the assets exceeds the fair value of the assets.

Income taxes. We recognize the amount of taxes payable or refundable for the current year and deferred tax assets and liabilities for future tax consequences of events that have been recognized in our consolidated financial statements or tax returns. Deferred tax assets and liabilities are measured using enacted tax rates in effect for the year in which the temporary differences are expected to be realized. Our deferred tax assets are subject to periodic recoverability assessments. Valuation allowances are established, when necessary, to reduce deferred tax assets to the amount that more likely than not will be realized. Realization of the deferred tax assets is principally dependent upon achievement of projected future taxable income offset by deferred tax liabilities. We evaluate the realizability of the deferred tax assets annually. Since becoming a taxable corporation in August 2005, we have not recorded any valuation allowances to date on our deferred income tax assets. We evaluate and account for uncertain tax positions using a two-step approach. Recognition occurs when we conclude that a tax position based solely on its technical merits, is more-likely-than-not to be sustained upon examination. Measurement determines the amount of benefit that is greater than 50% likely to be realized upon the ultimate settlement with a taxing authority that has full knowledge of the facts. Derecognition of a tax position that was previously recognized occurs when we determine that a tax position no longer meets the more-likely-than-not threshold of being sustained upon examination. As of December 31, 2015 and 2014, the University has reserved approximately \$1,706 and \$0, respectively, for uncertain tax positions, including interest and penalties. The increase in the reserve in 2015 was attributable to apportionment positions taken on state income tax returns related to the sourcing of receipts from services.

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The following table sets forth statements of operations data as a percentage of net revenue for each of the periods indicated:

	Year Ended December 31,		
	2015	2014	2013
Net revenue	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Costs and expenses			
Instructional costs and services	42.4	41.8	42.5
Admissions advisory and related	14.5	15.7	16.2
Advertising	9.8	9.5	10.2
Marketing and promotional	0.9	1.1	0.9
General and administrative	5.4	5.7	6.2
Total costs and expenses	73.0	73.8	76.1
Operating income	27.0	26.2	23.9
Interest expense	(0.2)	(0.3)	(0.4)
Interest income and other	0.0	0.1	0.6
Income before income taxes	26.9	26.0	24.2
Income tax expense	10.0	9.9	9.4
Net income	16.9	16.1	14.8