

May 27, 2014

The Honorable Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20006

Re: Docket ID ED-2014-OPE-0039

Dear Secretary Duncan:

Thank you for proposing regulations to require the worst-performing career education programs – whether at public, non-profit, or for-profit colleges – to improve. Most U.S. career college programs deliver good results, with a few exceptions that tend to be the source of most of the nation’s student loan default problems. We appreciate your effort to improve or, if they fail to improve, remove these programs from federal Title IV eligibility.

We urge you to carefully review the regulation from the point of view of “bad actors” who might try to game the rule by manipulating scholarships or other methods. We encourage you to take note of suggestions from the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the *New York Times* for closing unintended loopholes.

We also urge you to strengthen the ban on programs that lack proper accreditation. Programs should be required to meet generally accepted industry standards nationwide, not just the state government requirements of the state in which the college is incorporated. This is an important issue because students are unwittingly attending unaccredited programs and are finding out too late that they are ineligible for the careers, as lawsuits by the attorneys general in Colorado, Iowa, New York, and New Mexico have made clear. For example, Marine Specialist Bryan Babcock incurred \$70,000 in debt, in addition to using up his G.I. Bill benefits, when he was deceived by ITT Technical Institute about the accreditation of its criminal justice degree. Babcock says: “I specifically asked ITT Tech before signing up whether their degree was the same as any other public 4-year university and was told YES. I found out while applying at NYPD, LAPD, Seattle PD and 23 other police departments that NONE of them accepted ITT Tech credits. Once I found out that my time and money spent at ITT Tech was worthless, I tried to transfer my credits to a community college. I was told I have to start completely over as a freshman.”

We also suggest you to lengthen the timeline for disclosures, so that students have at least three days to understand disclosures before they enroll. Same-day enrollments leave students at a disadvantage because they often do not fully understand the small print on documents they sign.

Finally, we suggest you limit enrollment in the worst performing programs until those programs improve. Currently, your rule identifies the worst performing programs, but allows students to continue enrolling until the day the program loses Title IV eligibility.

Sincerely,

Association of the United States Navy

National Guard Association of the United States

Initiative to Protect Student Veterans, University of San Diego Veterans Legal Clinic

Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Veterans Education Success

Veterans for Common Sense

Veterans Student Loan Relief Fund

VetJobs

VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association

Vietnam Veterans of America