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For-Profit Administrators and Teachers: Part Two

April 11, 2011, 2:26 pm

By [Frank Donoghue](#)

I had intended to move from a discussion of for-profit administrators and teachers to the students at those institutions, but the volume of comments all but compels me to respond, if only by asking a set of questions. First, a few observations.

I value the informative responses by people who have had experience in the for-profit system either as instructors or as students, and I fully respect the comments by people who divulge their employment status at for-profit universities. Representatives from Kaplan College have been especially professional.

As for the people who report that their offspring think I'm a "moron," rest assured, I'm not taking you seriously. Do you really think that family testimonials carry any credibility—with me, with *The Chronicle*, with the rest of rational society?

I think the collective commentary obliges me to raise an assortment of questions about faculty credentials and qualifications, the requirements necessary to teach at any college, for-profit or not.

First, my complaint was never with accreditation: I have no doubt that all the for-profit colleges and universities are legitimately accredited, either nationally or regionally. And I would hope that those who fail to measure up to accreditation agencies are punished (though I can't help noting that the GAO report of November 10, 2010 notes that at a for-profit Associate's program in Florida, an "undercover applicant was falsely told that the college was accredited by the same organization that accredits Harvard and the University of Florida").

My real point was about the nuances of faculty credentials, the place of faculty on for-profit college Web sites, and their educational affiliations. I admit that my search was limited, some might even say impressionistic. I just looked at the homepages of half a dozen for-profits to get a general sense of how prominent a place faculty have. This is not a reference work; it's just a blog. Again, as I said, I was disappointed. If you look at the homepage of any traditional college or university, the faculty—their credentials, academic affiliations, scholarly accomplishments—are prominently showcased. I did not find that to be true for any of the for-profits I looked at, aside from the University of Phoenix, where that information is right on the front page.

So here are my questions: Are most for-profits uncomfortable about their faculty and thus make information about them difficult to find? And if so, why? If I were a prospective student, I would want to know where my future teachers received their M.A.s, M.S.'s, MBAs, Ph.D.s because that would allow me to assess the rigor of their academic training and to estimate the quality of training I'd likely receive from them.

I'd raise that question based on an assumption that some would call elitist: It matters where someone earned his or her degree. Let's face it, that's an open secret in American educational discourse. A Ph.D. from Yale, earned in an intense interactive environment is not the same as a Ph.D. earned online from the for-profit Walden University. I would go a step farther: One can earn a Master's degree in Marketing and Communication at Columbus' own Franklin University either by attending class in person or by taking classes exclusively online. I would argue that the differences between the two are night and day, and that the former is a far more meaningful credential. It's a matter of opinion, to be sure, but I cannot imagine a graduate education without face-to-face interaction.

I admit, I'm the product of an exclusively traditional educational system which some might argue has turned me into a snob (B.A. from Brandeis, Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins, jobs as a professor at Stanford and Ohio State), but I value educational rigor. And markers of educational rigor are all over the Web pages of traditional colleges and universities. I honestly don't see it on the homepages of most of the for-profits I've looked at. I don't see evidence that those institutions are proud of the rigorous training that their faculty have undergone or the educational affiliations that they possess. That evidence is apparently available at a lot of for-profits, and I'm grateful for those of you who have guided me to it, but if you look at the homepages of universities such as Stanford or Ohio State you can immediately see that their faculty is their greatest source of pride.

So I still want to know: Why aren't the qualifications, credentials and institutional affiliations of the faculty at for-profits showcased on their webpages? Are these pieces of information a source of embarrassment to the institutions? Is the faculty turnover at for-profits so rapid-fire that keeping that information current would be impossible? If for-profits want the same legitimacy as traditional universities, they have to be able to answer those questions.

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sthen 1 day ago

In our case, we admittedly have a high turn around for adjuncts. We also do not host our own website. Therefore, the amount of changes needed semester by semester to the web hosts and designers would end up costing us more money than spendable.

I do appreciate you telling us you were thankful of the professional responses, and do take us seriously.

Honestly, none of us are ashamed of our credibility. We do have strict standards that must be met with the accreditation body as to who can teach what.

As I said, I am not about others, but frequently contacting the outsourced web person is not where we want our money spent. We never even considered it an issue.

1 person liked this.



director19 1 day ago

I work at a non profit college and have worked at for profits as well. We run on a thin line administratively as opposed to the many admin people I have seen on many college and university staffs. In my current college, we give a listing of all faculty credentials to every student that enrolls --it's part of our enrollment agreement. My schools have always monitored the educational requirements imposed by each accreditation agency very closely in order to stay in compliance. Some colleges I've been associated with were obsessive about the standard--as they all should be.

Does every college, profit or non-profit keep the same standard? No, unfortunately!



cwinton 1 day ago

It should be pointed out that accreditation simply means an institution has met minimal standards, and in and of itself indicates nothing more than a minimal quality level. I don't consider it to be elitist to compare the relative worth of a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins and one from one of the lesser lights, for-profit or not for-profit. Odds are the degree from Johns Hopkins is the far greater indicator of quality. Too many for-profits emphasize quick and easy (never mind the expense), which hardly speaks to being seriously concerned about quality of outcomes.

6 people liked this.



tgraham13 1 day ago

The GAO report was largely fabricated. It has been discredited, and rightly so. Some of those who produced it have been fired, although I suspect they were scapegoats for the real culprits. Apparently it is highly unusual for the GAO to participate in political dirty work, but it is well documented that it happened in this case. I would be grateful if the author would stop referring to the report as if it is an unimpeachable source. They made most of it up. You can watch the tapes.

The author's first column on this subject suggested that for-profit schools don't publish faculty credentials and therefore they are bad. This follow-up column admits that they do publish faculty credentials but not on their home-pages. The column is the equivalent of a Seinfeld episode: it's a column about nothing.

For the real issue, I refer you to the most popular cartoon ever published in the Chronicle. It depicts a Venn diagram with (I'm paraphrasing) "the information colleges put on their websites" and "the information students are looking for on college websites" as the two data sets. They intersect only on the name of the college.

Students aren't looking for faculty credentials. They are looking for the right programs, locations, student life, outcomes, costs and sports events, roughly in that order. Faculty credentials don't make the list. Proprietary colleges and universities are simply more skilled than traditional institutions at putting the information that students actually want on their web-sites.

As my daughter says to me often, "Get with it, Pops!"

6 people liked this. [Like](#)



forprofited 1 day ago in reply to tgraham13

This sounds like a CES press release. The conclusions of the GAO report did not change. If the GAO secret shoppers had been submitting internet forms to lead aggregators and conducted the same investigation over the phone with representatives from online for-profit colleges and outsourced "lead qualifying"/warm call transfer reps, the results would have been far more damning.

The GAO made mistakes: they asked questions that immediately flagged them as compliance officers, the "prospective students" brought third parties into interviews who were seemingly well versed in Title IV and they chose ground campuses. It is not ground campus programs that make up the fastest growing and shadiest segment of for-profit education - it is the fully online programs.

6 people liked this. [Like](#)



tgraham13 1 day ago in reply to forprofited

Is this supposed to be a defense of the GAO report, that its conclusions didn't change? Nixon concluded that he was "not a crook", but the evidence led America to a different conclusion. The GAO report was a political hatchet job. Where is the outrage?

[Like](#)



haohtt 20 hours ago in reply to forprofited

Unfortunately, both you and Dr. Donoghue appear to be unaware of the fact that, according to the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the GAO had to make "major changes" to well over 1/2 of its report's "investigative scenarios." The result was that of the 65 anti-for-profit "findings," only 14 were supported by the actual audio evidence collected by the GAO. The fact that they had so many "findings" and that all 15 institutions were guilty, was precisely the justification for Harkin's declaration of war against private sector education. Then the GAO says "oops," and it turns out that the vast majority of the "findings" are false and that not all the colleges are guilty. If this investigation had been done against Ohio State, would Dr. Donoghue still try to justify falsified research?

2 people liked this. [Like](#)



forprofited 14 hours ago in reply to haohtt

Again, you are overlooking several important points. One being that many defenders of the for-profit colleges who have been lashing out at the GAO report, passing now defeated amendments attempting to block the Gainful Employment rule and alleging short-seller conspiracies have received large campaign contributions from the Career College Association and for-profit colleges:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg...>

<http://higheredwatch.newameric...>

Like



HeXt 23 hours ago in reply to tgraham13

PR Spin. Might as well have been written by Harris Miller.

2 people liked this.

Like



lizziec 1 day ago

Great questions on this issue. I have no deep understanding of any behind the scenes decision-making but I will offer some suggestions based on my observation.

- 1) Turnover. As I have mentioned in previous posts, I observed the turnover to be fairly significant, and especially among the most credentialed faculty. Whether it is a matter of too much time/effort/money to dedicate resources on updating a revolving webpage of faculty, or some other motivation I believe that this is a factor.
- 2) Flexibility. If for-profits use a mixture of academics with great CVs as well as folks who came up through their ranks and did not much else, it would be (how can I say this without coming across as elitist?) hard for the credentialed faculty to interact on a level playing field with these "peers". (It would be hard for me, and I don't think I'm all that different from others from the traditional perspective)
- 3) Priorities. At traditional universities, the faculty ARE the institution. Although current economics, as well as bad behavior from within our ranks has threatened this power seat of late, the faculty are the cornerstone of the traditional community college or university. This is most definitely not the case at most for-profits that I have dealt with (2 different ones). This is not a judgment call here (though I do have a strong opinion, it's just not for this discussion), but a reality. Faculty at the for-profits are expendable and not looked at as much more than paid staff. They do NOT hold the stature or clout that we do at traditional institutions. Some may say "long overdue" and in many cases, I would agree. I have seen too many cases of pompous, tenured, lazy and useless faculty receiving bloated salaries at traditional institutions while "teaching" 1 or 2 classes and doing zero research while the underpaid non-TT faculty run their butts off. However, this treatment or lack of respect (in the traditional sense) comes at a price. My belief is that some of the best faculty eventually leave the for-profits for employment opportunities that provide more of what most people interested in academia are seeking, which includes some level of deference and respect. I also think that as one of the poster in a previous article noted, there are ample candidates waiting in the wings to teach, so there is no shortage of available warm bodies with the minimum requirements to fill the job.
- 4) Adjuncts are often not listed at many colleges - traditional or non-traditional. While there are always lists and BIODs and CVs for full-time faculty at the traditional institutions, the droves of adjuncts that are increasing in numbers across this nation in ALL forms of academe are usually not listed.

You state "if for-profits want the same legitimacy as traditional universities, they have to be able to answer those questions.". Is it possible that many of us are expecting that this is what the for-profits want, when in fact they could care less?

Lastly, your query "If I were a prospective student, I would want to know where my future teachers received their M.A.s, M.S.'s, MBAs, Ph.D.s because that would allow me to assess the rigor of their academic training and to estimate the quality of training I'd likely receive from them". I doubt that this question is prominent in the minds of the target audiences of the for-profits I have worked with - not meant as a perjorative, just the reality of the population. I believe that students who would ask that question would not be looking at attending a for profit.

6 people liked this.

Like



forprofited 1 day ago

Donoghue: *And I would hope that those who fail to measure up to accreditation agencies are punished (though I can't help noting that the GAO report of November 10, 2010 notes that at a for-profit Associate's program in Florida, an "undercover applicant was falsely told that the college was accredited by the same organization that accredits Harvard and the University of Florida").*

Regionally accredited for-profit colleges operating large online programs train their admissions representatives to drop names of Ivy league institutions like Harvard and Yale when explaining their regional accreditation to students during the psychologically manipulative sales pitch. These lines and accreditation comparisons are a part of the training for the "sales job".

Donoghue: *I would argue that the differences between the two are night and day, and that the former is a far more meaningful credential. It's a matter of opinion, to be sure, but I cannot imagine a graduate education without face-to-face interaction.*

It is appalling that for-profit colleges offer degrees in Health Care and "Crime Scene Investigation" without requiring student ever step foot into a classroom or clinical setting. As a Health Care consumer, would you want to be cared for by someone who has never set foot in a classroom? The saddest part of this is that you probably don't have to worry too much about this because many of those students are going to be saddled with debt and no job.

5 people liked this.



11274135 1 day ago

Historically, colleges and universities have had a three-fold responsibility as creators, conveyors, and stewards of knowledge. Most for-profit institutions only assume responsibilities as conveyors of knowledge, since that is the only one of the three traditional responsibilities that is profitable. The other two are cost centers. They are also the functions that require faculty with strong academic credentials. Thus you won't see for profit institutions touting their research, their libraries, their institutes, or degree programs that require solid historical knowledge. For-profits could not exist without the knowledge base created and preserved in the non-profit sector. The knowledge base of most for-profits is not much deeper than the textbooks they use.

The emerging model of higher education nowadays relies on the delivery of curriculum by people who could not design the course they are teaching. It's troubling and clearly unsustainable in the long term.

7 people liked this.



mathgrace 1 day ago

"A Ph.D. from Yale, earned in an intense interactive environment is not the same as a Ph.D earned online from the for-profit Walden University. "

I am a PhD student at Walden University. Why? Because no schools in my area offered the program (Education) I wanted. And that includes Yale (which is not local to me). So what exactly are you trying to compare here?

Also, the level of communication that occurs in our discussion boards, chat rooms, email, SKYPE, and residencies certainly offers an "intense interactive environment". But I wouldn't expect you to know that because you haven't been there, have you? Walden is an excellent school with excellent faculty...you can read all about their credentials here: <http://www.waldenu.edu/College...> - It didn't take me long to find that page...but I guess you didn't visit that either. Stop lumping all schools together if you haven't reviewed all of them. If you did that with people it would be called stereotyping.

Grace Cook

1 person liked this.



lizziec 1 day ago in reply to mathgrace

I've taught in both environments. I have to support Frank here - there is absolutely zero comparison between a discussion board discussion and an in-class discussion.

4 people liked this.



bcagreenfield 23 hours ago in reply to lizziec

There are a vast number of differences between F2F and asynch online discussion forums. In F2F the student has the option to participate or not. I suppose the occasional prod from an instructor can go a long way to getting great participation. In F2F discussions thoughts are formulated very quickly to respond real time to questions posed by instructors or in a group setting, a good thing if you ask me. At times all students participate, at other times conversation is dominated by the noisy few.

In an online forum all students have the opportunity to contribute in a way that allows them to respond quickly (same as F2F), or take time to reflect and respond in a very thoughtful manner (this does not discredit the quick responses in F2F as thoughtful, it just gives the different styles of learner preferences an additional outlet for contribution to conversation). Based on my experience, there is more classwide contribution in online forums versus F2F.

Both modalities have strengths and weaknesses. It is my belief that a good F2F instructor does not necessarily make a good online instructor. I also believe that a good F2F instructor isn't any better, more important, more credentialed, etc. than a good online teacher.

It is my belief that a traditional instructor that discredits the online instructor is likely a) threatened by the changing role of the instructor in higher ed in the online forum b) just isn't good at teaching online. The good news is that the traditional institution will not go away, so traditional instructors will only need to adapt to the degree that their traditional institutions adapt. There will always be ample opportunity for those that desire a traditional education. Online, or non traditional education will not go away because of the enormous demand from the non-traditional market seeking degrees to which traditional ed can not accommodate.

Like



lizziec 23 hours ago in reply to bcagreenfield

I "swing both ways" as both a F2F instructor and an online instructor as my institution has seen the value (or dollar\$) potential in offering online programming and I happen to have a lot of experience in it, being an advocate of it from as far back as 2002 when it was in its infancy as a potential delivery method.

I am not threatened by it in any way, shape or form, and in fact, I prefer to teach online for SOME classes. It affords ME the flexibility that is not a rigid office schedule Monday - Friday 8am - 5pm.

That being said, there is a trade-off that occurs and I still say that a discussion board is not the same as a F2F classroom discussion. It's not as rich, not as enlightening, and I cannot reach out and draw in a student who is reluctant to talk on a discussion board like I can in a traditional classroom ("tell me more about that - I can see that you're hesitating..." as an example, after reading the look on someone's face in class).

There is also the air of "let's just get this over with and move on" that I see in students in ALL sectors in online classes, whether they be non-profit or for-profit. This may be on their minds in the classroom, but at least for a couple hours during the day or in the evening, I can engage the minds of a roomful of students to ponder business ethics, or social justice and we all come away from those sessions changed. The "hit-n-miss", multi-tasking nature of online discussion boards does not allow the space to have these periods of reflection, argument and thought in the same manner, and I would argue, that something of the cultivation of intellectual discourse is lost because of it.

What implications this has for society, we will not know for some time, but I suspect that this push for quickie - online college will serve to exacerbate the divide between "elite intellectuals" and the "unwashed masses" as opposed to leveling the playing field by offering "college for all". I'm not happy about this, rather I see it as an unintended casualty of the trend in higher education.

My opinion - worth what you paid for it (smile)

4 people liked this. Like



mathgrace 21 hours ago in reply to lizziec

Hi Lizzie,

I just have to disagree (but thank you for the comment and further analysis). I have taught onsite and online, and taken classes onsite and online. Our online discussions at Walden are incredibly insightful. And I mentioned other tools than just discussion boards. SKYPE and chat rooms provide an interactive Face to Face environment as do residencies (attended in-person). With discussion boards, students have the options of researching topics and providing references which doesn't typically happen in class.

Also, with discussion boards, the conversation can go in many different directions because it's not limited to a 1 hour (or whatever time period) class time. Once your students leave the classroom, how many are still thinking about the discussion? Now, I'll have to say that at lower levels, discussion boards can be tedious processes (I teach developmental mathematics) of

drawing students out and getting them to respond with more than just an "I agree". But at the doctoral level our discussions are over 2-3 weeks and include multiple threads with references, video links, and other resources.

I don't think it's fair to lump everyone together. Are all schools like mine? No, I'm sure there are plenty of schools out there with bland and boring discussion boards, for-profits AND non-profits. But not ALL. And that's why I have a problem with this blog. It dismisses all for-profits with one wave of the hand based on casual research of several un-named schools.

Grace

2 people liked this. [Like](#)



lizziec 1 day ago

A spot in the NY Times that I wanted to share: "Burden of College Loans on Graduates Grows"

While this article and the issue are most certainly talking about ALL student loan debt, as tuition in every sector has passed reasonability for most working families, the paragraph at the end of the article is worth noting for the crowd that surfs these for-profits discussions.

"Students who borrow to attend for-profit colleges are especially likely to default. They make up about 12 percent of those enrolled in higher education, but almost half of those defaulting on student loans. According to the Department of Education, about a quarter of students at for-profit institutions defaulted on their student loans within three years of starting to repay them.

"About two-thirds of the people I see attended for-profits; most did not complete their program; and no one I have worked with has ever gotten a job in the field they were supposedly trained for," Ms. Loonin said. (Deanne Loonin is a lawyer at the National Consumer Law Center).

"For them, the negative mark on their credit report is the No. 1 barrier to moving ahead in their lives," she added. "It doesn't just delay their ability to buy a house, it gets in the way of their employment prospects, their finding an apartment, almost anything they try to do."

This speaks again to the core issue that inflames my passions and the sentiments of others who post against the for-profits on this and other fora. She has articulated in her interview the major issue that a lot of us have seen when working for these companies, which is that for the most part, these students are not getting jobs in the field they were supposedly training to enter. This is due to poor preparation (they should have never been admitted to college and promised a new career), a lack of rigor (especially in the online schools), and a fast sales pitch that manipulates desperate people to mortgage their futures for a promise of a better life.

So, for those of you who bash the CHE and Professor Donaghue about bias coloring their reporting, are you now going to accuse the National Consumer Law Center and the NY Times of similar bias?

6 people liked this. [Like](#)



HeXt 23 hours ago

Sales people will always seem professional. Its their job.

[Like](#)



drj50 23 hours ago

My understanding is that, in some for-profits, courses are sometimes designed by one instructor and all other instructors teach the "same course" (same lecture outlines, same class activities, same exams). In this case, one could argue that the credentials of the faculty "designer" are more important than the credentials of the various instructors who happen to teach the course in a particular term. An analogy to "traditional" higher ed might be that the credentials of graduate students teaching sections of freshman comp or algebra probably aren't on the website either.

3 people liked this. [Like](#)



haoht 20 hours ago in reply to drj50

The scenario that you describe (same lecture outlines, class activities, exams) is also commonly found at non-profit private and state universities--both for face-to-face and online courses. In fact, having "master" online courses is commonly portrayed by accrediting bodies and professional associations as a "best practice."

Like



mikpap 22 hours ago

I attended Argosy/Sarasota. My professors had attended U of Florida, Pepperdine, Harvard, Temple, Penn State, Vanderbilt, Georgia Tech, U of Florida--- those are the ones I recall. They talked very freely about their alma maters and this information was listed freely in the course catalog and on the website. It could be that now, since there is more of a proliferation of adjuncts in academia (both for and non-profit) that this information is less accessible.

Like



lafi2050 22 hours ago

The Nov. 10 GAO report you cite is actually a substantial revision to the original report released in August. The revisions are so significant that they call into question the veracity of the entire report. The person at the GAO who led that report was reassigned. Does that tell you anything? The recruiter's comment is true...some for-profit institutions are regionally accredited, just like elitist Ivy League schools and other traditional institutions.

Like



pittsburghtec 20 hours ago

I think that you are missing the point. Most of the students who come to our intuitions are primarily concerned with a career. More important than the academic credentials of our faculty they are concerned with the potential employers we work with and the applicability of the training that receive to the requirements of the job to which they aspire. If they are interested in network security, they would much rather be instructed by someone with a masters from ABC University who has had 10-20 years of experience as security administrator for Master Card then they would a PHD in information science from Harvard who has never been responsible for network security in a real world environment. We take on the challenge of educating those who need a much higher degree of personal attention by faculty and student support services than those students who are successful at a traditional 4 year public or private not for profit. To reach the President's goal of a more educated work force there has to be a place for all forms of education to serve their niche. Come and visit most for profit institutions and I think you will be impressed with the quality and dedication of our faculty

3 people liked this. Like



11302531 17 hours ago in reply to pittsburghtec

Pittsburghtec is right on target ... thanks for the comment. Let me take you one step further regarding accessibility to, and value of, faculty credentials. Many for-profit institutions spend serious money putting teams together to create courses -- teams of subject matter experts, web designers, and experts in learning theory. Most of us who teach in the 'research universities' have to find the time to create a new course while carrying current, already demanding workloads for teaching, research and advising students --especially PhD students. Some of these for-profit courses are masterpieces ... gosh, give me the same money and a team, and I could create a course that could be taught by many, many experienced individuals. And, this is my second point. Many undergraduate courses, particularly introductory courses in economics, sociology, philosophy, religion, geography, biology, etc can be taught and taught well, by educated people without (WITHOUT) PhDs. In an article I wrote for the Educause Review, some years ago, "The Intellectual Supermarket", I argue that higher education should take a serious look at creating coursework for first and second year undergrads that can be taught by "others" -- accountants, clergy, journalists, etc. This would free up faculty to do the serious work of knowledge generation ... and engage experienced members of our community in

sharing their knowledge around a skeleton of well-designed course material. The institutional landscape of higher education needs all types of institutions ... and those who seek an education similarly need many different types of access. Let's not waste our time making the for-profits some sort of whipping-boy ... let's figure out how to deliver the best quality education to the widest variety of students out there!

1 person liked this. Like



forprofited 14 hours ago in reply to pittsburghtec

One big problem, for-profit college graduates are often unable to find jobs and are unable to repay their loans.

Here is an article divulging how many employers feel about the students coming out of for-profit colleges: <http://www.infoworld.com/t/it-...>

Like



haohtt 19 hours ago

Although Dr. Donoghue based this article on the feedback that he received from his recent blog, the fact that he has merely restated the previous blog demonstrates that he either did not read the comments, did not understand them, or has chosen to act as if they did not exist. Dr. Donoghue stated that he looked at Strayer's website and could not find faculty credentials. I and others found them in seconds from where one would expect to find them (the college catalog) which, by the way, was access from the WEBSITE. So Dr. Donoghue's claim that they were not on the website (the entire premise of his blog) was proven false. Does he address this? Of course not. Also his comments regarding face-to-face versus online learning does nothing but manifest an ignorance of thousands of studies comparing "traditional" to mediated instruction, going back to the 1920s, showing no significant difference in learner achievement. In addition, the latest meta analyses on online versus traditional instruction show advantages to those who learn in online and hybrid environments. There is no body of empirical research demonstrating the inferiority of online learning--only the opinions (and opinion polls) of those who "cannot imagine" that people could learn online. With all due respect, Dr. Donoghue, your blog should be about Book-Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers, where you have demonstrated genuine expertise.

2 people liked this. Like



lizziec 19 hours ago

@mathgrace: I think that someone like yourself, obviously educated and capable of evaluating your options and making a choice that best meets your needs is a non-issue. Different institutions meet different needs, and the state college degree may fall short of the ivy league degree for seeking/attaining certain positions just as a for-profit degree may fall short as compared to a non-profit state college degree for other positions and circumstances. These are decisions that we make, each of us, based on what we want. Sometimes we just need the "M", or the "D" and it matters little WHERE we get it as long as it's a legitimate (accredited) institution with more good press than bad because our work history is solid and speaks for itself.

I mention good press vs. bad because right or wrong, the perception by a hiring committee that a degree is from a diploma mill-type school will not open any doors for you, whether it is an accurate perception or not. However, this is still a matter for the savvy consumer to weigh and evaluate based on their needs.

The problems in the for-profit sector that creates the "bad press" I mentioned above are those that talk unsavvy, clueless and incapable (illiterate) people into borrowing tens of thousands of dollars to enroll in a program through fast-talking promises of great jobs and good salaries, down-playing the amount of work required and the level of academic ability needed to be successful.

Someone, somewhere needs to start speaking truth to these victims. Whether this is in public-service announcements that run right after the "college in your pajamas" ads, or curricular supplements distributed to target school districts where the majority of students are going to graduate still functionally illiterate, and vulnerable to these scams schools.

I fully support - without much reservation - the for-profit sector that teaches mechanics, cosmetology, and other vocational skills. They are often better at this than other educational institutions.

I object heartily to the for-profits who promise ill-prepared, illiterate and clueless people a "degree". The degree - like home ownership - has become a status symbol. It represents making it into the middle class (what's left of it, anyway) and this is a powerful aphrodesiac to people who have been on the bottom rungs

of society for generations. This too often translates into untenable debt, more hopelessness, and no job on the other end of the nightmare.

Until the so-called "good actors" of the for-profit industry close ranks and clean out their own house, this perception, and the stench that follows it, will remain.

1 person liked this. [Like](#)



dpmccain 15 hours ago in reply to lizziec

Although I agree with a great deal of what you say regarding for-profit schools (I am an adjunct at one), I take issue with a few comments. Many of my graduate school professors were masters at "smoke and mirror" educational practices, and most of the activities to which I was exposed while earning my Master's degree were better suited to an elementary classroom. I accrued a great deal of financial aid debt...but most of my learning was done outside of the classroom...through reading, research, and collaboration with colleagues (who were not enrolled in the classes). I attended a Cal State for my teaching credentials and Master's degree.

Referring to the students who enroll in for-profit schools as victims is inaccurate. For the most part, many of these individuals do not read (or cannot) read the contract they sign. Many, however, do expect a 4.0 with very little effort, then are somehow surprised when they are unprepared for the workforce. When I was first hired, I taught composition classes. The number of students who cut and pasted directly from a web site was staggering. I spent most of my time documenting plagiarism, marking zeros, and then defending myself against charges of racism because students had failed composition...because I didn't "like" this or that ethnic group. When I moved to in class writing assignments, attendance fell...and yes, attendance at a for-profit is the golden rule (yuck). After a few quarters of this academic bile, I was removed from teaching composition classes. For those readers who are thinking, "why didn't she just teach them to write?" ...I did...Countless hours (need I mention uncompensated?) developing lessons, web sites, demonstration lessons, alternative readings, etc.

There were students who clamored for my classes, but they were outnumbered by those who whimpered that the work was too much (150 words?)...and the full time instructor who now teaches all of the sections of composition sends the students on to upper division classes...; having handed out quarterly A's like running water; while rarely reading submitted assignments. She justifies her actions with comments like "you have to think of yourself."

As to the "promises"...yes...this is a practice (by recruiters) I detest...and it does happen. But sometimes, the people who have contributed the least to their education are those who complain of broken promises. They brag about the 4.0...until they receive rejection after rejection in the job market because they are unprepared. Most refuse to do any work outside of the classroom (does anyone really believe he/she can become marketable with 3 classes each quarter, that meet for 3 hours each, once a week? Yes, reading and writing skills are horrible (for the most part), but tutoring sessions go unattended, and support web sites untapped. I would like to see some programs go away, because they are peopled with the marginally literate "entitled". But...let's face it...it's a for-profit school. The cash cow moos loudly.

We have some incredible instructors, both full-time and adjunct on our campus, and they drive themselves with every class. But some students sit in class, shielding their cell phones with their backpacks (I am a former middle school teacher...and know all the tricks)...and then when a quiz is failed, blame the instructor. Most of us teach in a fish bowl (the classrooms have windows facing the hallway), so anyone walking by can see what is going on.

In reading the posts last night, someone mentioned that true students do not care what degree you have as long as you know what you are teaching and that students can learn, and this I have found to be true. Those who believe that a PhD in 16th century English Literature or Creative Writing and Poetry qualifies someone to teach expository writing is usually sadly mistaken.

As an advocate of vocational schools, and the trades, I wish we (in the technical for-profits) would do exactly what we are supposed to do...which is to support those students who need business and technical writing, and the skills that support the technical fields in our programs of study. Our students did not enroll so they could "write" about global warming, gay marriage, or abortion. Pretending to be something we are not, is sad...and the reputation we have earned is often richly deserved.

Darn...now I'm depressed...I need to review résumés of students who have "earned" 4.0s in their classes...but cannot write a Cover Letter or format a résumé.

[Like](#)



forprofited 15 hours ago in reply to dpmccain

dpmccain said: *For the most part, many of these individuals do not read (or cannot) read the contract they sign.*

In many cases, students type in their name and click a "sign electronically" radio button, **The Binding Arbitration Agreement** is often hidden or embedded within a link. They are on the phone with an Admissions Representative talking them through the entire process by using psychological sales techniques to overcome any potential objection. Admissions Reps guide them through the FAFSA as well, there is a reason for this. When the prospective students asks about the often horrible graduation/retention rates the Admissions Rep can "overcome their objections" often citing the flawed NCES reporting statistics, but leaving out the fact that if the statistics were accurate they would be far worse.

dpmccain said: *Many, however, do expect a 4.0 with very little effort, then are somehow surprised when they are unprepared for the workforce.*

For-profit colleges are graduating these students --- this is the core of the problem! Many are constantly dumbing down curriculum and pressuring instructors to pass students regardless of their ability, attendance or grasp of key concepts.

This, among many other things, is the problem!

2 people liked this. [Like](#)



lizziec 12 hours ago in reply to dpmccain

I actually agree with most of what you have written. My experiences with students was similar if not exact to what you have written, but from the perspective of a different discipline. I have a very thick file full of student emails complaining (in really poor grammar!) about me being the first teacher to give them anything less than an "A", which was downright scary.

They cheated, blatantly. Most could not read, write or speak in any manner close to what would have allowed them an INTERVIEW for an entry level job in the fields they believed they were studying to enter as professionals. They were lazy and believed that I was being too strict if I made them actually follow the instructions in the lame and rigor-lacking assignments. They had also very often been fed a continual line of crap by instructors who were either just as dumb (see my rants about these places hiring their own) or just plain lazy and had graded their work to that point as stellar (also frightening).

I still think, however, that although they expect a lot in exchange for very little work that they have been exploited and manipulated and sold a bill of goods that reinforces their ridiculous and uninformed beliefs. I take umbrage with a system that allows federal money to be used to trick people into signing on for tens of thousands of dollars that will result in no new career, and a lot of financial heart ache.

I know the students are dreadful, but they are not the villains entirely. They are victims of the neverending welfare state that encourages dependence instead of teaching independence; they are victims of poor K-12 education systems; they are victims of dysfunctional family structures where their parents had few tools to teach them what a lot of us posting on this forum learned around the dining room table; and as adults, they are victims of federally-subsidized scam artists selling them snake oil disguised as a college degree.

2 people liked this. [Like](#)



mathgrace 1 hour ago in reply to lizziec

I think we're agreeing here. The "bad-press" for-profits give a bad name to the schools that are accomplishing good things at the for-profit level. However, we never get to hear about the "good" non-profits. But I suppose we can blame this on the sensationalistic quality that news has taken on these days. Who wants to hear about the community service or service derived programs developed by students at my school? They're much more interested in default rates at schools with television commercials of students in their pjs.

[Like](#)



baklib1 14 hours ago

The author's assumption is so flawed:

I would want to know where my future teachers received their M.A.s, M.S.'s, MBAs, Ph.D.s because that would allow me to assess the rigor of their academic training and to estimate the quality of training I'd likely receive from them.

The ability to teach has nothing to do with the degree granting institution. Only if one was interested in working in a narrowly focused pursuit would it matter that the teacher had a great depth of knowledge.

Like



dpmccain 13 hours ago in reply to baklib1

While you may determine that my assumptions are flawed...I am not assuming anything,, my comments are based on experience. Academic environments are peopled with too many theorists, and not enough practitioners.

I can only speak for myself in my opinions and experience in both the public university and the for-profit sector; both are horribly flawed. The dumbing down of curricula occurs in many educational environments; not just in the for profit.

As to forprofit's comments, yes, the potential students often fall prey to hearing what they want to hear. Having spent many years in the public PK-12 environment, it's not that much different than a for profit environment (more is the pity). Each quarter I continue to be amazed by students who have signed binding contracts based upon verbal promises. I have charged my students with accessing an reading their contracts so they understand fully what they have committed to. Before week 4 of the quarter, students may drop without penalty or financial obligation; but few do. How much can we protect them from their own delusions? Do these students truly believe they will be successful as DNA forensic technicians with minimal math/reading/science skills?

My argument is not that the for-profit schools are blameless. I have been on the receiving end of some very unethical practices...but also, as a public middle school teacher, I was told that if I did not change the grade of the daughter of a Congressman, the district could not support my retention as a teacher. Yipes.

I am truly not sure from where an individual receives his/her degree relates directly to the rigor he/she experienced. Perhaps it is more prestige than anything. But having never experienced the halls of Harvard or Yale...I have no frame of reference. I did work with two teachers who earned degrees from Yale, and they were quickly advanced in the ranks;not for their expertise in the classroom, but more for the fact that the district enjoyed noting they had two administrators who graduated from Yale (with degrees totally unrelated to education). They earned their administrative credentials from a Cal State...but that was rarely mentioned.

Like



lizziec 12 hours ago in reply to dpmccain

Heaven help you on any discussion about for-profits if you actually report what you experience and call it what it is - a travesty. If you didn't do a double blind randomized trial of for-profit institutions with an $n > 500$ (like all the for-profit cheerleaders have done, no doubt) then my dear, you don't know squat.

Never mind that you saw repeated plagiarism, or illiterate people with 4.0 GPAs, or writing that would make your 4th grader cry.... that wasn't a valid experience and when you report it as being indicative of a serious problem in the for-profit arena, well then - you're just a hater, or stupid, or narrow and uninformed.

I believe you - I was there, and saw what you saw (or still see). We need to continue to speak out, all of us who have seen the dirty underbelly of higher education, and we need to stop this waste of federal monies and exploitation of vulnerable populations (even if it is sometimes easy to dislike them for their poor behaviors).

1 person liked this. Like



lizziec 12 hours ago in reply to dpmccain

...and yes there are also problems in traditional higher ed and K-12. I happen to think that the for-profits have elevated the bad behaviors to a high art form.

Like



dpmccain 8 hours ago in reply to lizziec

It infuriates me that people bow to the snake oil vender, but when I explain to students that having signed the contract, and not having taken the steps to drop in time, that perhaps the education (sometimes) to which they have committed could possibly be an excellent adventure (I cannot believe I somehow alluded to Bill and Ted). Many students remind me of the people who think they can buy a Chanel bag on the street corner for \$10.00...chrisssakes...do they not do the research indicating that \$40,000 dollars is too blasted much for an AS "degree".

Each quarter I am tempted to tell 3/4 of my students to run, not walk, to the Registrar's office and drop all of their classes...they have bought a bill of goods...they have succumbed to PT Barnum. However, I need my job to sustain my household. It has been determined that at my age, I am unemployable beyond the adjunct environment (I retired early to care for a seriously ill parent, then the doors of public education were locked tight when I attempted to return...even though guarantees were made) so I, too, succumbed to the unethical two-faced liars but in K-12...but now I am simply spewing venom; shame on me.

With extensive debt for credentials and a Master's degree that are no longer valuable, I am also angered by federal dollars thrown at institutions and students who value nothing that education has to offer. Students have told me (with a marked sneer) that when it comes time to repay their debt, they will simply vanish to their "home country". How foolish are we?

Yes, it is a dirty underbelly...but if we expose it...and make attempts to cleanse it...perhaps the 1/4 of my students who bring every ounce of energy they have to the classroom leave with a sense of accomplishment. But I am famous for tilting at windmills.

Like

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