

Texas Workforce Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Westwood College Texas Campuses Fined and Placed on Probation

High-pressure recruitment practices and other violations result in unprecedented penalties

AUSTIN — The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has levied \$41,000 in fines and ordered probation for Westwood College Texas campuses owned by Denver-based Alta Colleges Inc. In response to the pending loss of licensure, Alta Colleges has agreed to pay the fines and to comply with probationary conditions placed on its license due to a pattern of noncompliance. The agreement cites marketing and recruiting-related violations, failure to comply with applicable Texas law, and failure to inform TWC of significant business developments such as legal action against the school and change of ownership. The schools will hold a Conditional Certificate of Approval (license) during the probation period.

As part of the agreement, Alta Colleges must pay all fines and commit to future compliance to all relevant Texas laws governing career schools and colleges. Alta College's two Colorado-based Westwood College campuses were placed on probation last week by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education for "unresolved problems with national accreditors regarding recruitment tactics and student achievement."

The \$41,000 in penalties include \$1,000 for coaching a prospective student at its Dallas campus to make false statements in order to qualify for financial aid, \$24,000 for failing to file changes of ownership with TWC, and \$16,000 for failing to notify TWC of four pending lawsuits against the school.

Other terms of the agreement include that Alta Colleges contract with a third party to perform "secret shopper testing" of college compliance for its Texas campuses; respond promptly to all TWC requests for information and documentation demonstrating compliance; and comply with all TWC provisions related to change in ownership, notification of legal action, advertising, and cancellation and refund policies.

In a separate action last December, TWC shut down operation in Texas of Westwood College Online, also owned by Alta Colleges, due to the school operating in Texas without a Certificate of Approval.

Alta Colleges' schools in Texas now hold Conditional Certificates of Approval during this probationary period, and will face revocation of licenses at any time should the schools fail to meet the terms of the agreement. TWC has the authority to arrange alternative educational programs or provide refunds to students in the event the agency is forced to revoke or deny a Certificate of Approval.

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The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) licenses and regulates about 500 career schools and colleges in Texas which provide vocational training to more than 150,000 students. TWC makes annual site visits to campuses and monitors the qualifications of faculty, quality of facilities, class size, student completion rates, student employment rates, and other criteria. In addition to monitoring by TWC, some curricula must be approved by other Texas governing bodies such as the Texas Board of Nursing or the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners.

TWC encourages anyone considering a career school to carefully consider all options including programs at both public and private colleges. Potential students should consider the type of program that will best help them find employment in the occupations they seek, the quality and reputation of the school, its student graduation and employment rates, as well as the cost. Students should visit and tour the school. Students should be aware that they have 72 hours after they enroll to withdraw their applications with no penalty.

Prospective career school students can access a list of schools with current Certificates of Approvals on the TWC Directory of Licensed Institutions on the Career Schools and Colleges website page at <http://csc.twc.state.tx.us> or by calling (512) 936-3100. Schools with valid exemptions from the requirement for licensure are not listed on the directory, but the exemption status of a school may be determined by contacting TWC. Students with complaints are encouraged to use their schools' grievance processes or may file complaints with TWC. Complaint forms are located at <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/propschools/propforms.html>.

For more information, call the TWC Career Schools Division at (512) 936-3100 or e-mail career.schools@twc.state.tx.us.

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The Texas Workforce Commission is a state agency dedicated to helping Texas employers, workers and communities prosper economically. For details on TWC and the services it offers in coordination with its network of local workforce development boards, call (512) 463-8556 or visit www.texasworkforce.org.