

August 26, 2016

Dear Member of Congress:

As the president of the nation's postsecondary career education association, I want to share with you some important information regarding the Department of Education's recent announcement regarding ITT Tech.

On Thursday, August 25, the Department notified ITT Tech that they are no longer to enroll students using any Title IV funds. Combined with other sanctions in that announcement, the impact on ITT Tech is substantial if not devastating.

First, you should know that ITT Tech is not a member of Career Education Colleges and Universities. We don't say that with pride, because any association seeks members in ways that enable us to work with them to enhance the quality of their educational delivery. Today, the majority of our members are multi-generation, family-owned schools. We do have non-profit members and publicly-traded members as well. What unites our current membership is their total commitment to postsecondary career education at the highest levels.

Second, the manner in which the Department is handling this action has the potential to destroy the dreams of 43,000 or more students on 139 campuses across 37 states. It does not need to happen like this! Our schools are deeply committed to providing occupational skills and career opportunities to their students. And without exception, our schools always stand ready to work with other schools to handle transitions in ways that do not interrupt or cost students their dream.

We have had many disagreements with the Department in recent years. Most of those disagreements are about strategies, not goals. We share the common goal of schools defined by the highest outcomes. All we ask is that the same outcomes are applied to all sectors of higher education. And we ask that the Department – as the powerful master it is – work with us to achieve these outcomes in ways that do the most good.

For example, our sector endorses holding all schools accountable for student employment in their area of learning, but the Gainful Employment Regulation does not do this. We support a clear and fair Borrower Defense to Repayment process to protect students against academic fraud. But the proposed regulation goes far beyond this important task. In addition, the Department opposes for-profit schools, yet prevents many of those trying to transition to non-profit status from doing so. If the Department concludes a school needs to close, then they must work with that school and our sector to develop a transition that least impacts the students we all seek to serve. We need to find ways to work together.

We now face the potential of dramatic dislocation of students as the fall semester begins. Speaking for every member of our association, I can promise you that if the Department were to work with us – in this situation or others – we stand ready to minimize the impact of dislocation on communities; on employers needing skilled workers; and on students seeking their occupational dream. But that cannot be done after an abrupt closure, should that be the outcome of the current decision.

We will do our best to protect those students seeking career opportunities now and in the future. Our fondest hope is that the government and those engaged in the delivery of such education might find ways to work together so we do not harm the students in this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Gunderson". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long horizontal flourish at the end of the name.

Steve Gunderson
President & CEO
Career Education Colleges and Universities