

U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
Defense Subcommittee
Room 128, The Capitol
Washington D.C.

Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Cochran,

My name is Vonn Helwig, I worked for DeVry University as an online admissions advisor from 2007-2010. I was terminated from my position after 3 years of service for not attaining the minimum number of enrolled students for two consecutive enrollment sessions (2 eight week recruiting cycles).

The purpose of my letter is to inform the Committee on the behavior and practices that I witnessed while working for DeVry University in Naperville, Illinois as an Admissions Advisor (recruiter). When I first began with the organization I was given the control whether a student would be qualified to attend DeVry University. All of this began to change as my tenure with the company continued. DeVry required students to pass basic Math and English skills. I found these tests helpful in determining a student's abilities before registering them for classes. I witnessed some of my colleagues had access to the answers and were distributing the information to their potential students so higher enrollment numbers could be attained. All of these actions of course were overlooked by management. This was troubling.

The only time DeVry University would be concerned about proper protocol was during audits from Title 4 funding. They made it crystal clear how important Title 4 funding was for the university. What made this even more disturbing was the facts that our "new" students did not have any idea where this money was coming from to pay for school. Standard protocol was to say "you are completely covered on tuition with grants and loans" we would not and could not elaborate any further as admissions advisors. The reason I say "could not" was our phone calls were being monitored by managers and anything that was said to jeopardize a potential sale was a reprimand behind closed doors.

DeVry University felt the enrollment attainment could move even higher with more aggressive sales tactics. In the fall of 2009 we were introduced to the world of "Spin Selling". Spin selling is having a new potential student make an emotional decision rather than one based on facts or best interest. A common tagline used at DeVry was "if they cry they will apply". No one was watching out for the best interest of the student. The only thing I was advising the student was how fast I could move them through the process to get enrolled. Flow charts were made and hung in our cubicles so we knew how fast our students needed to move through the process.

All of this rapid expansion brought out a "Boiler Room" mentality in the office, spearheaded from upper management. I recall Anton Weber saying "we need to find a way to stack cubes on top of each other" referencing that he wanted to pack as many Admissions Advisors in our building as possible.

The information I provided is not used to slander DeVry University. I want to provide insight on how for-profit-education needs to be improved, so everyone involved receives the best education possible. I hope this letter helps in a small part to rectify the issues facing this industry.

Regards,

Vonn Helwig