

**Statement for the Record from veteran Ryan Clark to  
Department of Education, July 12, 2017**

My name is Ryan Clark. I'm coming to speak today on behalf of myself and other veterans.

As a veteran with a distressed post-secondary experience, I have taken a particular interest in some of the rules at issue today.

My story begins upon entering the army after deciding that it would be more prudent following my family's footsteps rather than finishing my secondary education out of high school. The opportunities provided by the military were too much to pass up for a young 19 year old. So of course when I joined the army, they decided to send me to school. I attended the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California and later graduated from the institute's Arabic Studies program. After a brief stint learning my tradecraft, I was assigned to an NSA billet at Fort Gordon in Georgia. While I had learned Arabic, it came to light that I was also skilled with computers and quickly became an instructor for Network Intelligence.

During this period I felt that my duty to fellow soldiers who had deployed multiple times was failing, so I took it upon myself to volunteer for an intelligence position in Iraq. Thankfully I was selected and while I was deployed I routinely found myself with a few hours of spare time during my off hours given the nature of my deployment. After speaking with my fiancée about how to spend the downtime, it was suggested I should further my education. With this suggestion, I felt it best to simply pick up the same tracks I was walking when I last attended college.

I reenrolled with DeVry University and began classes again during November 2010 under a condensed schedule. I felt being able to isolate classes and take a condensed curriculum, which amounted to two classes per eight week schedule versus four classes for a full sixteen weeks, offered me the best opportunity to not lose focus, both on my mission foremost and on my education. The first offerings I was granted while using the student FAFSA and completed with above-average grades. I decided to continue my degree into a second semester by using my sponsored tuition-assistance. After providing all of the documentation and paperwork for the TA to be allotted, I proceeded to take additional courses from DeVry. Through this semester I returned back to Georgia and while proceeding to reenroll for follow-on courses, I hit a brick wall. Through a series of conversations and revelations, it came to light that the tuition assistance which covered the course rate for my previous classes was never allocated due to the fact that the institution had not converted my account to receive the payments. The only explanation I was given was provided by the DOD education department which stated that DeVry never filled out their paperwork to allow for the payment. DeVry consistently deferred my inquiries to another representative before finally stating that it was my own fault, no matter how much this explanation was belied by my papertrail. The cost of the contested classes was then conveyed onto me at a regular student rate rather than the active duty military tuition rate, thus almost doubling the cost that I was instructed to pay out of pocket.

Due to an amalgamation of horrid happenstance, I was unable to receive recourse from the DOD TA program due to the fact that a new fiscal year had begun, and while I was able to get DeVry to eventually change my financial obligation to reflect my active duty status and the subsequent rate that accompanied it, they refused to offer any further assistance in resolving my issue beyond advising the Yellow Ribbon program. This program did not address my frustration and as all obligation was placed upon me, I was left unable to further my education in light of this brick wall. On top of learning of my debt, it also came to light that DeVry had unceremoniously and without my knowledge changed my major, thus negating over half of my credit hours.

This was a chain on my life for the next few years until I moved to Denver to begin my post-military life. It was at this point I reconnected with a former friend and fellow veteran who advised a University within the Denver Metro area. Upon enrolling I quickly found out that the hysteria surrounding my past enrollment with DeVry was coming back to haunt me. A hold had been placed on my status with DeVry and after several conversations with admissions, it became clear that the institution would not provide my official transcripts until I paid the previously disputed financial obligation. Thankfully my counselors at Metro State University were incredible and proceeded to waive numerous prerequisites to allow me to take my more advanced curriculum, but every good thing must come to an end. Eventually I was advised that they could no longer continue that practice and I was again forced to withdrawal from a post-secondary institution. To date, I have still not been able to fully utilize my GI bill benefits without starting my education from scratch and scrapping over 60 credit hours from DeVry.

For my conclusion, I do not wish to rehash my story but convey that this is not an isolated incident. Through my distressed history with for-profit colleges I have listened to countless other veteran's tales with abject horror at how they were treated. In my own experience, I felt it was my vulnerability and ignorance that was exploited for further gain by the institution over my best interests. This would be my true conclusion, that too often our education institutions who operate for explicit profit are given the benefit-of-the-doubt that they're working in the best interests of the student who is in fact simply viewed as a number and invoice. I was an active-duty, deployed soldier and still felt exploited. If this is a situation where one does not call for the increased protections provided by these rules, I am unsure how much further an institution can fall before sufficient action would be taken.

Thank you