

Renee Seruntine

Public Testimony on the Education Department's 2019 Regulatory Agenda

US Education Department Hearing in New Orleans, LA

September 11, 2018

I went to Full Sail University in Winter Park, Florida from 2004-05 and received an associate's degree. Between living expenses and tuition, I left school with about \$95,000 dollars in student loan debt. Full Sail University made it seem like after attending their school, I would be able to earn a lucrative salary with the jobs their job placement service would help me find. I never would have spent over \$60,000 on tuition and over \$30,000 on living expenses, had I known that three years after I graduate I'd never use that education again.

Their career development program, which was featured prominently when I enrolled, turned out to be a joke. When I called their career development office they told me to go to the alumni section of their website at www.alumni.fullsail.edu. The website currently says that Full Sail's career development program "can provide you with industry resources and valuable information." Not that they do, or that they will, but that they 'can.'

I was not concerned about that at the time I graduated because New Orleans was the number three location in the country for film production. After living in Orlando for six more months because of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, I returned home to work in my chosen profession.

I quickly learned that I did not need a degree, especially the \$60,000 one that I got from Full Sail, to work in the jobs that were available. The pay was good, \$18 dollars an hour plus time and a half after 8 hours each day, a very demanding schedule of 15-16 hour shifts. But because of the nature of the industry the jobs only lasted for a few weeks or months at a time. I was constantly out of work, competing with other people to jump on to new projects. This was never discussed during my time at Full Sail.

Due to the physically demanding work of being a set lighting technician and grip, something that I should have learned prior to graduation if my training at Full Sail had been of adequate quality, three years after attending the school, and \$95,000 in debt, I joined the National Guard. Today I work in public affairs, doing photo journalism for the Louisiana National Guard. That debt hangs over me like an albatross.

When I went to school, I believed it was a quality school since the school was able to offer federal financial aid. That the government's approval of that school to use tax payer dollars was a stamp of approval on the type of education they offered. I would have never guessed I would be here 13 years later still dealing with the pressures of having such high student loan debt for a

worthless degree. I thought the Department of Education was looking out for and protecting students but instead, they approved a school that has done nothing but cause me heartache and stress as I struggle to pay down unnecessary student debt.

The Department of Education has a responsibility to protect students, like me, from schools that take advantage of unsuspecting students. We go to these schools to learn information that will enrich our lives, not to find out afterwards that our futures were sacrificed for short term profits.

I implore the Department to please consider the impact of their decisions on students like me and to please keep protections for students in place so others will not find themselves in the same situation I am currently in.

Thank you for your time and consideration.