

Testimony of Myrna Figueroa Lopez
U.S. Education Department's Negotiated Regulatory Rulemaking Panel
January 2022

Good afternoon, my name is Myrna Figueroa Lopez and I'm an Air Force veteran from Puyallup, Washington. I am also a single mom who suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and PTSD.

After a difficult divorce, I enrolled in the Information Systems Management PhD program at Walden University. I wanted to be more independent and create stability for my child. Instead, I wasted three years at this school and have nothing to show for it.

I wanted to share my story because schools like Walden target veterans. They work overtime to get us enrolled and take our money, and then turn their backs on us.

From the beginning of my PhD program, I was pretty much on my own. I was assigned a professor and mentor, but neither ever made themselves available. Walden agreed to refund me for that term, so I stuck with the program since none of the credits would transfer anywhere.

My next mentor was also a veteran, so I was hopeful. No such luck. When I informed her that a former professor hadn't even reviewed my work before submitting it to the review board, she went dark on me too. When I tried to track someone down, anyone, to help me, everyone was on vacation for the 4th of July. Soon after, I found out that the professors and mentors missteps meant I would have to enroll in yet another term, which I would have to pay for. When I tried to find someone to talk to, they were all, you guessed it, on vacation for the Labor Day holiday. I realized all of my tuition money was going toward the administration's and faculty's vacations instead of my education.

During this time, I lost my mother to cancer and my own health deteriorated. My doctor said I should not continue school for the sake of my health.

Walden took everything from me. In fact, I am worse off now than if I hadn't tried to go back to school. I don't want any other veteran to go through what I did. We are just trying to get ahead in a messed up, hard world while these schools just sit back and count their money.

I hope you will work to put some restrictions and rules on schools like Walden so they stop targeting us veterans. Thank you.