

Good morning. My name is Damian Pearsall and I'm a Navy Veteran.

I graduated from the Art Institute of Indianapolis in their fashion design program. During recruitment, the school misrepresented the job prospects for its graduates. The admissions staff glorified a few alumni who have great careers and said Art Institute is better than state schools. I was told that graduates would be making \$40,000 per year. In reality, it was only \$20,000. They also made fashion design seem like a hot industry, but very few people who graduated from Art Institute's fashion design program actually found jobs in this field. In a Facebook group for former Art Institute students, others post about their struggles finding jobs related to what they studied. The promise of job assistance after graduation turned out to be a lie when I sought it out multiple times.

They also created a false urgency to enroll. When I told the recruiters I couldn't afford the fashion design program, they said they will offer a scholarship to me but only if I accept it the same day. They also said the school will provide financial support if needed, anything to convince me to enroll with them. As it turns out, they only gave me a scholarship for one quarter, which lasts about 11 weeks. For the rest of my five years at the Art Institute, I had to rely on student loans, which amount to \$72,000. I was also not aware of any additional fees for books and school supplies, which were \$500 per month.

Completion of an internship is required for graduation, but this wasn't communicated to students until my junior year. There're only a handful of relevant internship placements in Indianapolis, and the school does not provide support to obtain or finance this requirement.

The school touted "the best instructors," but most instructors lacked the necessary credentials. The teachers for my art classes had industry experience, but they didn't have teaching experience. One time the school even hired a student straight after graduation to teach a class on graphic design. Because the instructors lacked rigorous training, there was no formal curriculum. The teachers conducted the classes by telling us anecdotes. There was also no objective grading criteria. The grades for assignments were simply based on what the teachers personally preferred.

Despite graduating at the top of my class, I rarely heard back after applying to more than 100 jobs in the fashion design industry. During one interview, the employer even laughed at my Art Institute degree.

My experience at the Art Institute is just one of many stories of students defrauded by for-profit schools. We still deal with the financial impact years or even decades after enrollment. I hope

you consider experiences like mine in drafting new rules to protect students from predatory schools.