

Testimony of Lisa Houck
U.S. Education Department's Negotiated Regulatory Rulemaking Panel
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Good afternoon. My name is Lisa Houck, and I was employed in the admissions department at Hesser College, which was a for-profit school owned by Kaplan that is no longer open. I worked there from 2004 through 2012. I want to tell you what the school told admissions representatives to do to further the goal of recruiting as many students as possible.

The most important thing to the school were our numbers. The admissions department was completely numbers-driven, and the more students we convinced to enroll, the better we were graded.

We were told to pressure students to enroll on the same day that they came into the school to meet with us. If they wanted to go home and think about it, we were told to tell them that classes were starting right now and they would miss out if they did not enroll. The school did not want admissions reps to tell students that we had "rolling admissions" which means that classes were starting all the time and they would not miss anything if they took their time to decide.

When I first started, admissions reps were under pressure to promise students anything to get them enrolled, like promising that they would be able to get a job. But eventually the school got caught in a government investigation and did a retraining where we were told to be more careful about what we promised to students.

That lasted about a month and then the pressure from our superiors came back to recruit as many people as possible. For example, we still had to meet quotas for daily meetings, appointments, and student enrollments to keep our jobs. This never felt right to me because it forced admissions reps to pressure students to enroll because our jobs were on the line.

One way that we got students to enroll was when students would want to enroll in a program that we did not offer. The school did not want us to tell a potential student that they should go to another school that did offer the program they wanted. Instead, we were told to try to talk students into enrolling in a different program that Hesser did offer.

I also saw instances where the school would fill out financial aid forms for students, like the FAFSA, instead of letting the student take their time and do it themselves. The financial aid process was also very rushed, with the goal of getting the student signed up as quickly as possible.

I now work at a different school and it is much better. I see how bad Hesser was in comparison to a school where admissions reps are true counselors and are not salespeople in disguise. I hope that you write strong policies to protect students from being taken advantage of by schools like Kaplan's Hesser College.