

Good afternoon, my name is Stephanie Pollay. I served in the United States Air Force from 2001-2003. After the service, I decided to go back to school. I was from a blue-collar family that was convinced college was for rich people, and trade schools were for poor people, like me. I recalled ITT Tech as a reputable trade school in the 1980s, and I thought I would get a good education there. That was a mistake.

I attended ITT in-person and online from 2006-2012. During my first year going to school in-person at ITT, I also worked there, and saw how the school operated. I slowly realized the school targeted low-income students like me, who were completely naive to the inner workings of the higher education system. For example, when I signed up for student loans, it was literally at night, in a back room; it was very cloak and dagger. We did not have the guardrails that most students have at normal colleges.

The education we received was laughable. Many of the professors were unqualified to be teaching. Though the school advertised placing 90% of its students in jobs of their chosen field, I was one of the only people in my program who got a job related to my degree. However, this had nothing to do with the school's efforts. A temp agency I found connected me with that job. Because I had not learned anything in my classes, I had to learn on the job. Later, in class, my teachers would direct my classmates to speak with me because I knew more about the subject matter than the teachers did.

By the end of my time there, it became evident that the school was just a diploma mill. For example, one of my classmates stopped attending school for the last several months and he was still able to graduate with our class. Once I graduated, I wanted to continue my education. But when I tried to transfer my credits, literally no other schools would take them.

Attending ITT was a complete waste of time and money. After speaking with friends who attended normal colleges, I found out that not only was I wrong about only rich people being able to attend normal college, but that I had been scammed because I was paying three times what they were. I knew then that there were many people who thought like I did, and that ITT knew that too, and they exploited it for all it was worth.

My credit was ruined, I can't get my GI Bill back, and I lost an entire decade of my life struggling with the damage this caused.

I still don't understand why there was a special accreditation process for ITT, and how such accreditors were able to receive federal funding in the first place.

Today, I am asking you to push for rules that require accreditors to exercise greater scrutiny in evaluating schools. I also request you more closely and regularly monitor such rules are maintained. If you don't care, why should they?

Thank you for your time.