

Good afternoon, my name is Matthew. I feel duty-bound to share my experience at Sonoran Desert Institute to help other veterans.

After I got out of the Army, I first attended a Community College near Dallas, but I had trouble commuting to the school and withdrew. I decided I should look at an online school.

From my time in the Army, I was interested in gunsmithing. While I searched for a new school, I came across Sonoran Desert Institute, which was entirely online. After reviewing the website, it looked to me like it had lots of students who were veterans. At the time, it seemed like a perfect fit, and I enrolled in the Associates of Applied Science in Firearm Technology in the fall of 2015.

However, after attending, I now don't think anyone can teach gunsmithing entirely online. It requires hands-on training and a machine shop of large tools, which I did not have, and they only provided me with some small hand tools.

The instruction entirely consisted of YouTube videos that I could have watched for free on my own. The only graded assignments were discussion posts. For tests, I had to teach myself everything, but that wasn't even a problem since all the tests were open-book. The teachers seemed practically non-existent to me. Every email I received was from a "no reply" email, and any time I submitted a question through the portal, I only received an automatic response. I tried calling the school, but the only number I could find for them was for their admissions office.

It seemed to me like the program was mostly low-level gun maintenance and not the kind of smithing I would need to be able to get a job. After only a handful of months, I left the school.

In my opinion, I don't think any accreditor who had actually taken a class at Sonoran would have approved the school. I hope hearing about my experience will help the committee in its work.

Thank you.