

MEDIA ADVISORY -

Contact: Ana Cobian - 323.360.1827

ana.cobian@wardcirclestrategies.com

LOCAL ATLANTA, GA, STUDENT VETERAN & NATIONAL ADVOCATE APPLAUD CHANGES TO WEED OUT FAILING PROGRAMS & HELP PROTECT STUDENT VETERANS USING THEIR GI BILL BENEFITS

This Change By The U.S. Department of Education Helps Protect Students From Low-Quality & Failing Programs at For-Profit Colleges and Other Institutions

ATLANTA, GA - May 19, 2023: Available to share his story is Atlanta student veteran **Brian Whitehead**, an Army veteran who served from 2000 to 2005 and attended ITT, where he got a worthless education in computer and electrical engineering education and has never gotten a job in his field. Whitehead and other student veterans from Akron, Ohio; Detroit, Phoenix, and Jacksonville are also available to share their stories.

They want to **create awareness to spare fellow veterans from failing programs** that could rob them of their opportunity for generational change by saddling them with debt and wasting their G.I. Bill benefits.

“On a campus tour at ITT, they bragged about their job placement rates for graduates, saying that 90% of their graduates get a job right out of the gate, with average salaries starting around \$60-\$70,000 a year,” Whitehead said. “That was not true. The experience was nothing like what I had been promised. ITT may have been closed, but I had to live with the debt and frustration that they left behind for years; until recently, when my loans were forgiven as part of the Dept of Ed loan discharge program announced earlier this year.”

These student veterans previously testified before the U.S. Department of Education to advocate for federal policy changes. The student veterans’ appearances were organized by [Veterans Education Success](#), a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to advance higher education success for veterans. VES strongly supports the Gainful Employment framework and applauds the proposed rule, scheduled for July 1.

“The new regulations will significantly improve institutional accountability and create strong incentives for schools to reduce student debt and improve program quality. Schools that have been able to prey on our nation’s students, including student veterans, by saddling them with debt for programs that consistently fail to produce meaningful employment outcomes will have to begin delivering results or eliminate such programs,” said Barmak Nassirian, Vice President for Higher Education Policy of Veterans Education Success.

The new rule proposed on May 17, 2023, by the U.S. Department of Education would require that all programs at for-profit schools and all vocational non-degree programs at public and nonprofit institutions must meet modest post-enrollment debt-to-income and earnings tests to remain eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs.

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS

STUDENT VETERANS-

Student veterans who were saddled with debt and used up their GI Bill benefits are ready to share their stories. They include:

- **Nicole Wilson (Akron, Ohio), TESTIMONY**, from 2002-2020, served in the Navy, the Navy Reserves, and the Ohio Army National Guard; she attended Brown Mackie and Bryant & Stratton.
- **Quenton Ross (Detroit, Michigan), TESTIMONY**, a Navy veteran with disabilities, served from 2008 to 2012 and graduated from Full Sail University, where he studied Recording Arts; Entertainment Business. (*Note: Ross' federal loans have been discharged.*)
- **Brian Whitehead (Atlanta, Georgia), TESTIMONY**, is an Army veteran who served from 2000 to 2005 and attended ITT. He studied computer and electrical engineering, earning an associate degree. He has never gotten a job in his field. (*Note: Whitehead's loans were forgiven.*)
- **Mikael Swensen (Jacksonville, Florida), TESTIMONY**, served in the U.S. Army for 6½ years through 2014. He attended Full Sail to study music production.
- **Antonio Luna (Phoenix, Arizona) TESTIMONY**, Marine Corps veteran who served from 2011-2014. He attended DeVry University from 2014-2018 and graduated with a bachelor's degree in computer information systems, with a concentration in web game development.

HIGHER ED EXPERT-

Barmak Nassirian, Vice President for Higher Education Policy at [Veterans Education](#)

[Success](#), is a subject-matter expert on higher education policy, bringing three decades of policy expertise on higher education. He formerly served on the rulemaking committees in 2013 and 2022.

What Barmak Nassirian Can Speak To:

- **Scope of Problem:** Cash-cow programs that consistently fail to produce meaningful employment outcomes because of their abysmal quality, once concentrated almost exclusively within the for-profit sector, have also gradually spread to non-degree offerings at some public and nonprofit institutions.
- **Why This Rule Matters:** It will help protect all students, including veterans using their GI Bill benefits, by weeding out low-performing programs. The rule would also protect taxpayers by significantly reducing federal costs of student financial aid programs used to pay for worthless programs.
 - This rule addresses whether postsecondary educational programs prepare students for gainful employment and the conditions under which institutions and programs remain eligible for student financial assistance programs under Title IV of the HEA.
- **Upcoming Changes:** Nassirian can also provide background and context about forthcoming rules on Financial Responsibility, Administrative Capability, and Certification, which are expected to accompany the Gainful Employment rule.

BACKGROUND ON "Gainful Employment"

The term "gainful employment" has existed in federal law for decades but wasn't defined until the Obama Administration. Under the 2014 rule, a program was considered passing if its graduates' median annual loan payments were less than 20 percent of their discretionary income or 8 percent of their yearly median income. Under the rule, colleges whose graduates had too high of a debt-to-earnings ratio could be stripped of their federal financial aid funding. But that version of the gainful employment regulation was short-lived. The Trump administration repealed the rule in 2019 after delaying key parts from taking effect.

I am happy to connect you with any of these students and/or the policy experts at Veterans Education Success, who have been fighting for changes for years.

###