

July 22, 2015

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

Thank you for your recent statements and actions to strengthen college accountability to better protect both students and taxpayers. In light of the Education Department's announcement that it is developing a new customizable, consumer-focused website to help students and families compare colleges, we write to urge that it alert consumers if a school is the subject of public federal or state investigations, lawsuits, or settlements. Students deserve to know when a college's practices are under heightened scrutiny from federal and state regulators, just as investors in publicly traded for-profit colleges are required to be notified of such events.

Last month, more than a dozen Senate and House members [wrote](#) the Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary urging the inclusion of information about investigations and legal actions in the VA's GI Bill College Comparison Tool. "While an investigation does not amount to a finding of guilt," they note, "it does indicate that there are serious concerns with a school that warrant law enforcement action." We believe all students have a right to this information and need it in order to make informed decisions about where to enroll.

We believe that the Department made the right decision last year when it [publicly committed](#) to "not approve a sale to another entity if that entity is currently under State and/or Federal investigation." Just as the Department would not approve the sale of a school to an entity under investigation, students may choose not to enroll in a school that is under investigation, is being sued by federal or state agencies, or that recently entered into a settlement as a result of such an investigation. Students should not be kept in the dark.

The Education Department has acknowledged the value of this type of consumer information, recently [stating](#) "Heightened Cash Monitoring is not necessarily a red flag to students and taxpayers, but it can serve as a caution light. It means we are watching these institutions more closely to ensure that institutions are using federal student aid in a way that is accountable to both students and taxpayers." However, for this type of information to "serve as a caution light," it must be communicated clearly to consumers, and a consumer-focused college comparison tool is the appropriate place to do so.

No doubt fewer students would have enrolled in Corinthian colleges if they had known of the many investigations and lawsuits against the school, resulting in fewer students being harmed and fewer students needing to have their loans discharged.

Thank you for considering our request and for your commitment to protecting students and taxpayers, and to ensuring that all Americans have access to an affordable, quality college education or training.

Sincerely,

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)  
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO  
Americans for Financial Reform  
Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)  
Bet Tzedek Legal Services  
Center for Public Interest Law  
Center for Responsible Lending  
Children's Advocacy Institute  
Consumer Action  
Consumer Federation of California  
Consumers Union  
Crittenton Women's Union  
Empire Justice Center  
Generation Progress  
Higher Ed, Not Debt  
The Institute for College Access & Success  
Institute for Higher Education Policy  
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)  
Mississippi Center for Justice  
NAACP  
National Association of Consumer Advocates  
National Association for College Admissions Counseling  
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)  
National Consumers League  
National Education Association (NEA)  
National Women Veterans Association of America  
National Women's Law Center  
New Economy Project  
New Jersey Citizen Action  
One Wisconsin Now  
Project on Predatory Student Lending of the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law  
Public Counsel  
Public Law Center  
Student Debt Crisis  
Student Veterans of America  
United States Student Association (USSA)

Veterans Education Success  
Veterans for Common Sense  
Veterans' Student Loan Relief Fund  
VetJobs  
VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Woodstock Institute  
Young Invincibles

cc:

Hon. Jason Furman, Chair, Council of Economic Advisors  
Hon. Cecilia Muñoz, Director, White House Domestic Policy Council  
Hon. Jeffrey Zients, Director, White House National Economic Council