



STATE OF WASHINGTON

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

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June 2, 2006

CRI Career Training
Aleen Janisch, President
929 North 130th Street Suite 2
Seattle WA 98133

RE: Complaint by [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Janisch:

In accordance with Chapter 28C.10.120 RCW, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (the Workforce Board) reviewed a complaint filed against CRI Career Training (CRI) by the student identified above. A summary of the student's complaints, the Board's Findings, Conclusions and Order are outlined below. Although Ms. Paresa complained about a number of the school's practices, this adjudication is limited to those issues over which the Workforce Board has jurisdiction.

(1) Summary of Complaint/Quality of Instruction/Standards of Progress

[REDACTED] stated that she spent several years in the high-speed class and never passed a test. She complained that in spite of her lack of progress, her instructors never questioned her progress or offered her advice on how to improve. She stated that once she left Theory, no one ever looked at her machine written notes to provide feedback on fingering or shadowing issues. She believed she was expected to solve her own problems and not bother the school. She further stated that Sandra Metz gave her suggestions on occasion but that Ms. Metz never followed up to see how she was doing.

School's Response

The school responded that [REDACTED] was counseled many times about her progress. The school also stated that [REDACTED] missed appointments that were set up for counseling purposes.

The school also submitted copies of responses it had made to previous complaints about this topic. The school's position is that its teaching methods are adequate as evidenced by the fact that students graduate and go on to jobs as court reporters.

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Workforce Board's Findings

The school's court reporting program is 3000 clock hours long. ~~Ms. Parson~~ began training in January 2000. She was an evening student. According to the school's catalog the evening program consisted of 15-twelve week quarters. There were four quarters per year; therefore, the total length of the program was 3.75 years, or 45 months. Based on that calculation, ~~Ms. Parson~~ projected graduation date would have been September 2003.

Nearly four years into the program (December 4, 2003) ~~Ms. Parson's~~ progress report indicated she was not maintaining satisfactory academic progress and that at the rate she was progressing she would complete the program in May 2006. Her instructor, Karl Beck, commented on her progress report that "this student is very good at this work...."

Nearly one year later, in October 2004, ~~Ms. Parson's~~ projected graduation date had moved to November 2007. Her instructor continued to comment favorably on her progress reports, indicating on October 24, 2004 that ~~Ms. Parson~~ worked hard and was "making progress steadily."

In June 2005, three months before ~~Ms. Parson~~ withdrew from CRI, her projected graduation date had moved to December 2008. Her instructor wrote, "~~Ms. Parson~~ is working very hard at improving and becoming inspired by her writing. She works drills from Fast Track and does dictation from Speed Plus. She transcribes almost every night and gives herself dictated tests at home."

Following an investigation in 2001, the Workforce Board instructed CRI to counsel students who were not expected to complete their program in a reasonable length of time. The school was directed to inform such students that it was unlikely they would graduate from the program and obtain employment as court reporters. The purpose of the Board's directive was to save students from taking on excessive debt for a program they would probably never finish.

Conclusion

By the time ~~Ms. Parson~~ dropped out of school she had completed more than 4000 clock hours in pursuit of a 3000 clock hour court reporting program certificate. ~~Ms. Parson~~ was nowhere near graduation when she withdrew, however, the Board found no evidence the school counseled her about her lack of progress or cautioned her about continuing to take out loans to finance a program she was unlikely to complete. It is unconscionable that her instructor continued to praise her progress when she was, in fact, not progressing at all. ~~Ms. Parson~~ was failing to maintain her satisfactory academic progress completion date for nearly two years before she

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withdrew. Had she been counseled to withdraw when it first became apparent she would not be successful, she would have saved several thousand dollars in tuition and associated costs.

The Board concludes the school failed to comply with the terms of ~~Ms. Paresa's~~ contract by failing to adhere to its own standards of progress which require a student to progress "at a pace leading to completion in a specified timeframe." Failure to comply with the terms of a student's contract or enrollment agreement is an unfair business practice under RCW28C.10.110(1).

(2) Summary of Complaint/Advertising/Claims Made by the School

~~Ms. Paresa~~ claimed that the school misled her with regard to the length of time it would take her to complete the program. She stated that Mike Girgus told her that "a few people had passed the course in just a year and many were able to graduate within two years." In the time she was there, she never knew anyone who finished in that short a time and the few students who did graduate were unable to pass the state test.

School's Response

The school did not address this aspect of Ms. Paresa's complaint.

Workforce Board's Findings

The Workforce Board investigated CRI in 1999 and 2001. The 2001 investigation was a follow-up to that conducted in 1999. The major purpose of both those investigations was to determine how long it took an average student to complete the court reporting program, and what students were being told about the amount of time it would take them to progress through the program. CRI was advertising a 2 ½ year program, however, the Workforce Board found that the few students who actually completed the program took an average of four years to get through the day program and more than five years to get through the evening program. Based on its findings in the 2001 investigation, the Workforce Board determined that CRI was misleading students with regard to the actual length of the program. The Board required CRI to disclose to prospective students, the likelihood that it would take them much longer than 2 ½ years to get through the Court Reporter program.

The school changed its catalog and enrollment agreement to include statements informing students that it could take them longer than 2 ½ years to complete the program, however, the Workforce Board consistently receives information from CRI students that the statement is downplayed by admissions representatives. Students report that the school continues to sell a 2½ year program, further enticing prospective students with the anecdote that "a student even completed the program in one year."

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Conclusion

Although the Board found no direct evidence that Mike Girgus told ~~XXXX~~ she could complete her program in 2 1/2 years or less, her claim is consistent with those of other CRI students from as far back as 1999. The Board concludes it is likely Mike Girgus made statements about the length of the program that he knew, or reasonably should have known were false, substantially inaccurate, or misleading. Making such statements in connection with the offering of education is an unfair business practice under RCW28C.10.110(10).

(3) Student's Complaint/Equipment, Instructional Materials, Quality of Instruction

~~XXXX~~ complained that the Stenowave system was good in theory but totally ineffective as a teaching tool. She further stated that the Stenowave material was difficult, repetitive, and the sound quality was very poor. She also stated that the computer lab was deplorable. She said that there were times when at least a quarter of the computers and printers were out of order. The computers were infected with viruses causing students to lose their work and be forced to start over.

~~XXXX~~ also complained that the Computer Aided Transcription class taught by Sandra Metz was the most disorganized, poorly taught class she had ever taken. She stated that Ms. Metz read to the class from the book. She further stated that she took the class twice and still was not able to perform the functions needed for her software.

Lastly, ~~XXXX~~ complained that for an entire year, there was no instruction in four-voice dictation. She believes that four-voice instruction should have been covered more often because it is what a court reporter does everyday in a deposition setting or a courtroom.

School's Response

The school forwarded copies of its responses to previous complaints regarding the above issues.

Workforce Board's Findings

These complaints are not new; they have been brought to the Workforce Board's attention repeatedly by former CRI students. As have previous complainants, ~~XXXX~~ complained that:

- students basically teach themselves with very little instruction or feedback from instructors,
- the school employs unqualified instructors (i.e. current students),
- the Stenowave system is faulty, and

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- equipment is not of sufficient quantity for the number of students enrolled.

The school's responses to the complaints are, likewise, not new. As it has in the past, the school maintains that its methods of instruction, faculty qualifications, and equipment are effective, that its program adequately prepares students for entry level employment in the Court Reporting Field.

To determine the accuracy of the school's claim that its method of instruction, course content and equipment are effective and that "students do succeed, graduate from CRI, and are successful as court reporters," the Workforce Board examined student data reported annually to the Workforce Board by CRI. That data revealed that CRI's completion rate was 6 percent for the period July 1, 2000 through June 30, 2003; only 10 of the 179 students who left the program during that period actually completed the program. Of those 10 completers, three (3) were working in the field six to nine months after graduation.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the issues detailed in ~~the~~ complaints, the real issue is that relatively few CRI students ever graduate and obtain jobs as court reporters. Hundreds of students have paid thousands of dollars each for a program they will never complete.

The Workforce Board has given CRI numerous chances to improve the quality of its Court Reporting program. It is troubling that CRI students continue to file complaints about issues the Workforce Board believed it dealt with a number of years ago. There has been a recent rash of complaints which, coupled with the school's abysmal completion and placement rates, make it clear the school's court reporting program is simply not adequate to achieve the objective for which it is offered.

Based on the findings outlined above, the Workforce Board concludes that the school engaged in a significant number of unfair business practices by failing to comply with the terms of a student contract (which incorporates the school's catalog by reference) [RCW28C.10.110(1)], and making statements in connection with the offering of education that the school knew or reasonably should have known to be false, substantially inaccurate, or misleading [RCW28C.10.110(10)].

Determination

It is the Workforce Board's determination that ~~the~~ suffered a financial loss as a result of the school's unfair business practices. The amount of the loss is the total tuition, registration fees, lab fees and equipment rental fees paid to the school by ~~the~~. Based on the

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information available to the Workforce Board at the time of this determination, the amount due her is \$33,700. This includes \$100 registration fee, \$19,800 tuition, \$600 lab fee, and \$13,200 dictation fee for approximately 20 months she was in school beyond the 3000 clock hour program length (based on an average of 75 clock hours per month).

Order

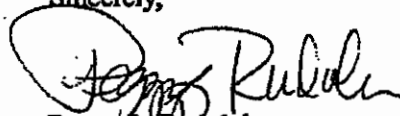
The school is ordered to provide the refund to ~~██████████~~ within thirty days of the school's receipt of this Order. The school is further ordered to cease and desist from engaging in the unfair business practices listed in the Conclusion section of this Order.

Appeal

You may appeal this decision by filing notice of appeal with the Workforce Board, postmarked within twenty (20) calendar days of receipt of this letter. If no appeal is filed within the 20 calendar days, you have waived your right to appeal and no further remedy is available under RCW 28C.10.

The appeal will be filed under the Administrative Procedure Act, chapter 34.05 RCW. Timely filing stays the Workforce Board's order during the appeal process. If the Workforce Board adjudication is affirmed in part or in its entirety in an administrative hearing, the school shall pay the costs of the hearing (RCW 28C.10.120(4)).

Sincerely,



Peggy L. Rudolph
Program Specialist
(360) 586-8682

cc: ~~██████████~~