



December 21, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

Over the last several months, the nation's career colleges and universities have endured withering criticism that stemmed from a report produced by the General Accountability Office (GAO). Recently, the GAO revised this report, softening many of its examples after reviewing more than 80 hours of audio from its investigation.

Career schools train the employees and employers that make the economy go, and we are writing to urge you to ask the GAO to withdraw its report in the wake of these revisions.

As you know, career colleges play an integral role in helping millions of Americans pursue advanced degrees. By allowing this report to remain on the record despite these revisions, the GAO is undermining its own credibility.

Career colleges and universities offer their students training for specialized professions, while providing a flexible learning environment. Most of their students enroll because they need accommodating schedules and convenient locations. They often come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, are adult learners and face the added challenge of balancing family life with education.

Students at career colleges complete their degrees at nearly three times the rate of their counterparts at community colleges and account for a disproportionate percentage of graduates in health care, computer-data processing and other fields that are expected to add 1.8 million new American jobs through 2016 despite the Great Recession. Moreover, career colleges are a good value for taxpayers, providing, on average, twice the return on investment for each dollar spent when compared with community colleges.

According to the GAO, it revised only twelve of the roughly 1,000 reports it issued in the last fiscal year. When viewed in this context, the decision to revise this report appears to be significant. Senator Mike Enzi of Wyoming has weighed in with the GAO to ask that it withdraw its testimony and explain why the report was revised.



In an era that is quickly becoming defined by unemployment and stagnant economic growth, it is vital that the government do all it can to promote and enhance the ability of institutions that are succeeding in arming citizens with the skills they need to secure a job. By asking the GAO to withdraw this report, you will be contributing to those efforts. Further, it is important to note that the signers of this letter include several members of the United States military who have found their educational success at America's career colleges and universities.

Sincerely,

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Senator Michael Enzi
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Senator Lamar Alexander
Senator Richard Burr
Senator Johnny Isakson
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Senator Lisa Murkowski
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