



# MARYLAND PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

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## American Career Institutes Close

### THREE AMERICAN CAREER INSTITUTE LOCATIONS

precipitously closed in Maryland on January 9, 2013, leaving over 800 students in their unfinished training programs. This newsletter is devoted to "lessons learned" as a result.

**Lesson One** is that Maryland private career schools (PCS) take care of their own. All-State Career School volunteered one of their trucks and two hard-working individuals to help MHEC staff collect ACI student records. We filled and loaded scores of boxes along with filing cabinets from 3 locations, and then transported them to our rented storage facility. Institutions such as All-State, Everest, Fortis, Fortis-Towson, Medtech, and TESST have stepped forward to offer their programs for teach-outs of affected ACI students as applicable.

Unfortunately, not all of the ACI programs were offered similarly elsewhere in Maryland. MHEC staff have been unable to find teach-out options for the lengthy ACI computer certification programs other than a gracious opportunity with Boston University Center for Digital Imaging Arts (BUCDIA) in Washington, DC. Most computer certification students are left with only two options: individually finding another program into which they might choose to transfer a fraction of their training while continuing to carry their ACI debts, or applying for a full refund and giving up credit for whatever training they experienced over many months of classes.

**Lesson Two** is that school maintenance of hard-copy student records is essential. The collected ACI student records did not

contain very many of the required documents. (For a full listing of what must be maintained in every student's file, see [COMAR 13B.01.01.11.](#)) For purposes of providing students with records which will help them attend another school or receive a refund, MHEC staff must be able to provide them with, at a minimum, copies of their most current or complete (1) transcripts and records of attendance, and (2) student account cards. All PCS are required to maintain current hard-copy student records on-site as long as the school is in existence. What we have discovered with the last two precipitous closures is that MHEC staff cannot gain access to servers or computers.

**Lesson Three** will result in a return to regular on-site visits by MHEC staff. Over 10 years ago, this practice was put on hold as staff workload increased and staff size decreased. Based on the last two precipitous closures, it is in everyone's best interest to have staff visit, observe, review records, and interview students and faculty for the purpose of better advising schools. These visits are not intended as "gotchas" but as guidance. Issues of noncompliance, if found, will be discussed and noted, and staff will follow up on them in accordance with [COMAR](#). It is our hope that a follow-up all-staff visit will not be required.

**Lesson Four** is that *private career schools close*. It's one of those facts of life. However, the manner in which they close is a concern. The best we can hope for is that schools perform orderly teach-out closures exactly like three *other* PCS are currently doing so that students are not harmed.

## Words-to-the-Wise



### TAKE NOTE

MHEC staff request that you note the following:

1. With the ACI closures, the Guaranty Student Tuition Fund will be greatly diminished. With over 800 students, it is too soon to determine the extent, though, since fewer than one-third have contacted MHEC with their decision on whether to pursue a transfer, teach-out, or refund. Two of the ACI schools maintained partial financial guarantees.

2. For new school and new

program applications, MHEC is placing increasing importance on job and employer market research as well as business plans. It is essential that prospective and established schools provide application data that shows sufficient evidence that the proposed training program is in demand in their geographic area, and that there are enough job openings to support the number of yearly graduates. It is also important to take into account the number of graduates already being produced in the geographic area so that the market is not flooded. MHEC must see evidence that (1) the proposed training meets an employment need not already being met, (2)

that employers have reviewed the basic program, and (3) employers would hire program graduates.

3. The MHEC 2013 State Plan for Postsecondary Education is being written and will be finalized in upcoming months. PCS school members have been involved in this process. One Workforce recommendation is that all institutions have regularly meeting program advisory boards made up of members from the program's occupational industry. Such boards can be a professional development resource for instructors, and provide valuable insights into necessary program modifications to keep programs current.

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