

# Betsy DeVos Intentionally Misrepresents Findings So Students Will Lose Protections

by James Kosur — 3 days ago in News, Social Issues

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The Department of Education, led by billionaire Betsy DeVos, has proposed eliminating an Obama-era rule that protects students from predatory for-profit colleges. Now, a group of researchers is crying foul. They claim DeVos has intentionally misrepresented their findings to get her way.

Under Obama's gainful employment rule, if a college has a certain number of graduates with debt over a certain share of their income, they can be held accountable. The idea is to reign in wild claims about potential income opportunities most students will receive after graduation.

According to researcher Sandy Baum of the Urban Institute, DeVos misrepresented her research and "cites my work as evidence that the GE standard is based on an inappropriate metric, but the paper cited in fact presents evidence that would support making the GE rules stronger."

Baum goes a step further, noting that her 2008 paper actually asks that better standards be put in place in regards to how much money students could afford to spend while repaying loans.

The team at ThinkProgress spoke to another researcher cited in DeVos' proposal, Nicholas Hillman, an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Hillman whose research was also cited in the proposal said DeVos also misinterpreted his findings.

Hillman takes note with the following parts of the proposal:

"But they say it's not appropriate to eliminate basically a failing program simply because there is a lower cost option? That is a misinterpretation of my research findings. They later say that students should be able to select more expensive programs because of the convenience. That is also inconsistent with my research."

There have been enough misinterpretations of the study's cited that the National Student Legal Defense Network has submitted a petition to have the proposal corrected under the Information Quality Act.

Further complicating the issue was a National Bureau of Economic Research study which has found that "for profit" college graduates often end up experiencing a drop in their annual pay after completing a program.

The Atlantic highlighted a major issue faced by for-profit college students:

"The overwhelming number of students who don't complete their degrees account for most of this pattern. Six years after attending these programs, for-profit college attendees were not only earning less, but were often saddled with debt and often without new credentials."

Students who do graduate often only see a modest bump in pay between \$3,500 and \$4,000 while simultaneously becoming saddled with massive student loan debt.

Betsy DeVos' decision to rescind the rule seems to be focused on a money grab that will help for-profit centers while saddling students with billions of dollars in additional debt. Inside Higher Ed reveals that "Rescinding the rule will mean colleges — most of them for-profits — will keep \$5.3 billion in student aid that otherwise would have been cut off if the rule remained in place."

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