

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Cliff Boyer, Director of Student Services
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Subject: SB 1544

February 4, 2020

Dear Senators,

I have been employed at the Institute of Technology (IOT) in Salem since September 2014. My background is in business management and education. I began as a night instructor in the Allied Health program and in April 2015 I was promoted to Director of Student Services. In that position, I provide assistance and support to students in need, both academically and personally.

I have the privilege to witness lives changing for the better on a daily basis.

Since 2016, IOT has had a total enrollment of students who were veterans of just 22 students. We average 250 or more students enrolled in our programs each month. Currently, we have 262 students enrolled and 5 student vets. That is unusually high for us but still only accounts for about 2% of our total student population.

Our demographic statistics reveal that our students are young women, many, if not most, are single mothers raising a family while working and attending school. We have 94% female students versus 6% male students. 46% of our students are 18-24 years of age and 35% are 25-34 years of age. 44% of our population is White/Non-Hispanic, 22% Hispanic/Latino, and 24% is Unknown/Two or more races.

Most of our students were unsuccessful in secondary and college-level public education. Many of our students come from a culture of poverty. Many of our students suffer mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, and PTSD. Many of our students experience food insecurity, and some have become homeless while they attended school, in most cases because of domestic violence. Many of our students have inadequate resources for childcare. These students come to IOT because they are running out of options. IOT fills a niche left empty by the public education system.

To address these needs, at IOT we work to provide services and resources in support of our students. One evening I was working late and received a call from the receptionist. One of our night nursing students was sitting at her desk crying. I responded to the call and found that this student had not eaten anything all day. She had no food and she was becoming weak and ill. Fortunately, we have a food pantry filled with snacks and food available to all students. We made sure she had something to eat and had plenty of food to take home as well.

IOT has made a big investment in services for our students, including providing me with the opportunity to attend a certification program at Portland State University covering Trauma-Informed Services. For

the past year, I have delivered training and resources to our instructors and staff to develop a culture on our campus that is “trauma-informed” and more sensitive to the needs of our students.

We aggressively respond to attendance issues and correspond closely with students who are not attending class regularly, especially if they are experiencing personal issues that we can address with resources and other support.

We also provide services that support our graduates throughout their careers, assisting with job placement and identifying opportunities for our successful graduates.

One of our Medical Office Administration Billing and Coding program graduates, who is also a veteran, now works at Corvallis Clinic in the neurology department. We have graduates who were veterans now working as practical nurses at Kaiser Permanente and Northwest Human Services. I can’t walk into Salem Clinic as a patient without running into several of our graduates who are now successfully employed in the clinic.

For the past four years, we have completed each year with an attrition rate of 3% or better. We completed 2019 with an attrition rate of 2.5%. We average 95-98% attendance each week. For many of the past several weeks we have had no student with less than 80% attendance. Our completion rates as of January 31, 2020 ranged from 75% to 87% depending on the program. Our placement rates over the same period averaged 77% depending on the program. Our placement rate for our Professional Medical Assistant program currently is 64.47% because we are still placing students who graduated at the end of 2019.

Many schools cannot approach this level of success, especially in attrition, attendance and completion. In 2019 IOT was granted Accreditation for the next five years by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET). SB 1544 would severely hinder our ability to serve students who have few options left. It would limit our opportunities to create the change our students are seeking.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Cliff Boyer
Director of Student Services
Institute of Technology