

Submission for Higher Education Hearing

Johnathan Adorno

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Good Afternoon,

My name is Johnathan Adorno. I attended The Art Institute of New York from 2008 to 2009 studying Culinary Art. While my wife was researching schools, she came across The Art Institute. We had similar interests and were pursuing education in the same field. While she was signing up for school, I expressed my interest in the Culinary Arts program, which was a year long program for \$30,000.00. I was signed up by the same advisor as my wife at the same time. Together we experienced very similar situations.

The admissions advisor told me in my field I would be working with professional chefs, in industrial kitchens being able to use quality ingredients in our work. I was told they had connections with top restaurants in our area and that I would receive help in finding a job in my field. We went to an open house where they had a former student come in. The advisor told me that any credits I accrued in school could be transferred to other colleges. This was ideal for me if I wanted to continue my education. I was told I had to submit an essay in order for the school to consider my acceptance. Along with my wife, I submitted the essay. I was the first one in my family to go to college. My mom was so proud and excited for me.

I was accepted very quickly and was urged to enroll and then meet with the financial advisor. When I met with the financial advisor, I was hoping that I would be able to receive financial aid. My mother had been laid off due to the growing recession and there was no financial assistance from my family. I explained this to the advisor who told me I had to take out a loan to cover the entirety of the program. I was rushed through the process, told where and what to click on their computers, what to sign and before I knew it I had just taken out a private and a federal loan. To cover my costs.

About a month into classes, the admissions advisor came by and informed us that the program was shutting down. We were told the rent was too expensive in the building and they had to shut down. I asked what would happen and I was told that everything would be the same. This was not true. Not even a month later, more than half of the staff was gone. During one instance I was cooking, I learned I was highly allergic to raw shrimp and the staff did not assist me. I found my wife in one of her classes and she assisted me. Various times while cooking I noticed there was a lot of repetition and we were not using any ingredients of quality.

It was always the same proteins, like chicken and pork. While we were tasked with re-creating the recipes from the class, I would see the chefs grabbing ingredients from the pantry and making things that were not what we were working on. Our tuition covered the costs of the food that were in the pantry and we were unable to use 90% of what was actually there.

After a very underwhelming education experience and graduating without ever being given my diploma no matter how many times I called and asked I had to find my own work because the promise of job placement assistance in the field I studied was false. I began working in a restaurant months later and instead of starting in a position cooking I was only ever offered positions making salads at the very bottom of the workplace totem pole while making around minimum wage. Every job I applied to would offer me the same types of positions even after assuring them I went to culinary school and was certified by the Art Institute of New York, I was only ever met with laughs and the industry's view of the Art Institute and of how it wasn't credible or was a joke of a culinary program.

After attempting as best I possibly could for a few years to maintain work in the industry, I had to give up on my dream of working in culinary arts because I had been misinformed and misled the entire time by the Art Institute. No job placement assistance, no credibility, no future. Now I am married and have a child to look after, constantly living in fear and depression that I won't be able to do my job as a father and husband because of a debt that I cannot afford to pay to a group who misled me and put me down a path that has financially crippled me. This isn't just unethical, unprofessional and bordering illegal, it is fundamentally wrong. I do not want my son or any other child to ever be put in a position like this. There has to be a change in our educational system and how these schools are allowed to operate. Schools like the Art Institute should not exist or be allowed to enroll students. There are still campuses in our country that are still conducting open houses, luring unsuspecting students the way we were once misled. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I truly hope we can effect change and release victims of this school's and institutions like it's fraudulent practices.

Sincerely

Johnathan Adorno