

One Wisconsin Now: There he goes again, Walker budget proposes eliminating Educational Approval Board

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Walker Unsuccessful 2015 Effort to Nix State Authority Regulating For-Profit Colleges in Wisconsin Since 1944 Makes Return Appearance in 2017

MADISON, Wis. — For-profit colleges and other scam institutions modeled after Trump “University” continue to menace the higher education scene, using deceptive advertising and high pressure tactics to lure new students but in many cases leaving attendees deep in debt with worthless degrees. While some states and, prior to the election of Donald Trump, the federal government, have been cracking down on abuses, Gov. Scott Walker has a different idea – eliminate the state Educational Approval Board (EAB) that has been in charge of overseeing institutions like these and protecting consumers since 1944.

“For-profit colleges and scams like Trump University have earned every bit of scrutiny they’re getting, and then some,” commented One Wisconsin Now Program Director Analiese Eicher. “While other states are stepping up to protect students Gov. Walker has a different idea, eliminating the Educational Approval Board that has been working to protect Wisconsin consumers since the 1940s.”

Walker’s 2017 budget introduced on Wednesday proposes the elimination of the EAB, reminiscent of a similar scheme in his 2015 budget. Under that plan, subsequently rejected by the legislature, the EAB was to be eliminated, several state regulatory provisions would have been repealed outright and other oversight

functions were have been split among other state agencies.

According to information provided in a summary of Gov. Walker's 2017 budget by his administration, the EAB is slated to be eliminated by January 1, 2018. Institutions authorization to operate would instead come from the Department of Safety and Professional Services. A review of the language contained in the bill itself also reveals that Walker proposes to stop collection of a "student protection fee" levied on regulated institutions.

Scrutiny of the for-profit college industry has increased in recently, and what has been uncovered is unsavory. Federal government scrutiny has uncovered how the industry targets veterans, minorities and low income students, encourages them to take on large student debts and oftentimes leaves those who graduate with essentially worthless degrees. States are getting involved too with a coalition of over 30 state Attorneys General investigating deceptive marketing and pressure tactics that lead to students taking on large amounts of debt.

In Wisconsin there have been several high profile closures of for-profit college chains including ITT Tech and Globe University. Such closures have left hundreds of state students in limbo, without a way to continue their education or get credit at other institutions for classes they had already completed and paid for.

Eicher concluded, "We don't know what Gov. Walker was thinking or how he decided proposing to eliminate the EAB was a good idea. But what we do know is that more, not less, scrutiny of for-profit colleges is needed to protect Wisconsin consumers and make sure they get the best education or job training for their hard earned dollars."

One Wisconsin Now is a statewide communications network specializing in effective earned media and online organizing to advance progressive leadership and values.