

**Testimony of Karla Hammer Carpenter
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Before the

**United States House of Representatives, Committee on Education and the Workforce,
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training
Joint Hearing with the
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs,
Stimulus Oversight and Government Spending**

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“The Gainful Employment Regulation: Limiting Job Growth and Student Choice”

Chairwoman Foxx and Ranking Member Hinojosa, Chairman Jordan and Ranking Member Kucinich, and other distinguished Subcommittee Members, thank you for holding this joint hearing and for the opportunity to share my educational story with you on the topic of “The Gainful Employment Regulation: Limiting Job Growth and Student Choice.”

My name is Karla Hammer Carpenter. I am a mother of boys ages 15 and 18. I am a 2007 graduate of Herzing University in Madison, Wisconsin. And now, thanks to my education, I am employed in my chosen field of work. I work as a Program Manager for [Quest Software](#), a California – based multinational company that develops, sells, and supports enterprise-level software for public and private sector businesses all across the globe. I have in the past four years worked on many globally distributed software product teams with members who reside in China, Russia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, Great Britain and both coasts of the United States. I have been employed at Quest Software since finishing my one and a half years’ studies to attain my Associate’s Degree in Computer Networking from Herzing University four years ago. Every day at Quest Software, I live the reality of working in a diverse and global economy. I am proud to state that I am an American worker who has successfully adapted to working in a global business environment by leveraging the technical skills I gained in college as an adult student.

Just as I am honored to have the opportunity to speak to all of you today, I am equally honored to work for a successful company such as Quest Software. I am here, of course, giving my personal testimony of my educational experience and its benefits to me and not as a representative of Quest Software. However, what I do want to make clear by mentioning Quest Software and its prominence in the software industry is that my education from Herzing University gave me the skills I needed to obtain and sustain my employment position, even as Quest Software unfortunately has had to lay off hundreds of workers over the past four years given the global recession. Quest Software is fortunate to recruit and hire employees from many educational institutions from literally all over the world. My associate's degree from Herzing University has proven to be of high value to me and my employer. My employment history with Quest Software is but one example that proves that fact.

Prior to starting my family and being out of the paid workforce for 14 years, I spent the ten years after high school working without a college degree. After high school and through my early twenties, I briefly attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, the University of Wisconsin Madison, UW Extension School – Baraboo, and Madison Area Technical College. After several shifts in my academic focus and with more personal interest at that time in working and making money than in completing a degree, I entered the workforce full time without a postsecondary degree. I was able to secure a great career-forward job at an emerging manufacturing company not far from Madison - Trek Bicycle Corporation. I gave that job up to stay home with my children. But, after 14 years at home with my children and removed from the rigors of formal academic study and technological changes in the workplace, I found myself forced to return to work to support my two boys after the end of my marriage. Even the most confident and intelligent woman would consider it a daunting task under such circumstances to return to college and start down a completely new career path, and I certainly did.

The last five and a half year journey from housewife duties to my current software management responsibilities has not been without great effort. Just like the pains of childbirth -- so quickly forgotten by a new mother -- so too are the fears and frustrations I felt upon deciding to return to school as a mature adult! But reflecting back now, I know that without the many foundational skills I learned at Herzing University, and without the availability of student loans, I would not

have been able to attend college nor meet the job requirements for the work I do today. It is hard to believe that less than six years ago, I was at home focused on rearing my children to be productive and happy members of society and dedicating myself solely to learning all that a mother needs to learn about child development. At that same time, many men and women of my same age group who remained in the business world were learning and adapting on the job to the rapid influx of technological advancements that radically changed “how everyone does business.” Given the nature of this technological shift timed against my particular absence from the workforce clearly necessitated that I return to college in order to be marketable.

When I decided to return to school, I knew I needed to select the correct college environment that I could afford and that would mesh well with my existing life as a mother of young children who depended on me daily, or I would not succeed in my educational endeavor. So, I investigated all possible educational opportunities in the Madison area. University of Wisconsin Madison could only accept me back in a BA program which I no longer had interest in completing. The local community colleges had considerable wait lists and could not guarantee me availability of my preferred programs or class times. Without question, Herzing University offered me: the best daily schedule via block programming, the best degree program options for viable employment with highly desirable skills in the local market, the best graduation timeline, incredible faculty accessibility and career services, and the best total value of any program or school in the area (taking into account the time I would not spend under-employed in the workforce and additional tuition paid for a longer program). Although I did meet the admissions requirements for every school in the area, I did not think these other schools met *my* requirements -- except for Herzing University.

As an adult student, the reality was that I was not alone. I am but one of many adults who need to meet the challenge of enhancing job skills by returning to college. It is laughable to think about this now, but during my years working as a Regional Inside Sales and Customer Service Manager at Trek Bicycle Corporation just a mere twenty years ago, Trek did not yet utilize personal computers for even their management staff. The business world *has* changed a lot in twenty years, and that velocity of change is just now gaining its full momentum in the workforce. Many American workers, whether they have been out of the workforce or not, are in need of re-

training and re-tooling to find their place in this ever-shifting economy. By participating in this hearing, I would like to give additional voice to many who are seeking educational options to better their lives and contribute more fully to our economy and society. I attended classes and partnered on projects with many students at Herzing University who had little to no family support financially or emotionally as first generation college attendees, many armed services veterans and enlisted soldiers on leave, and many various minority members of society who all felt that Herzing University was a special and caring environment where faculty and staff were invested in helping each and every student attain their educational goals. While enrolled, my fellow students and I often joked as we learned more about each other, shared our reasons for attending school, and disclosed our dreams for our futures that we seemed to be in the “Hallowed Halls of Second Starts”, as many of us had first thought we wanted to attend or had attended other postsecondary educational institutions but those had proved not to meet our needs. As you have heard from many people already, many for-profit career-focused colleges have excelled in offering quality educational opportunities of good value to millions of career-focused students who would otherwise not likely succeed or be turned away from larger, less personalized, less adaptable, overcrowded and sometimes over-rated traditional schools.

Just as business practices have changed over the years to accommodate global, more technologically advanced business operations, so too our schools must we adapt in equal measure on the educational front. But education policy changes should not impact student choice and I worry about the negative impact that the Gainful Employment rule will have on future students who are currently my sons’ ages and younger. My fear is that fewer, not more, students will fulfill our national educational vision of more Americans obtaining a higher level of postsecondary training.

As a final note, as a returning adult student, I represent an important and growing demographic of students that our educational institutions will need to serve in order to best fulfill our national goals for postsecondary education and workforce development for our nation. But even among students who are attending college for the first time just out of high school, Herzing University has proven to be a desirable educational option. I have a close school friend who is very satisfied, for example, with the bachelor degree he earned at Herzing University in Computer

Networking. He is still employed at his first hire location since his graduation and has been given a promotion whereby he has direct hires who report to him. His team is tasked with improving and running the computer network for the University of Wisconsin's Center for Dairy Research. He is often asked how it is he had obtained a systems administration position at a Big Ten school that has one of the best computer science programs in the nation and in a town that is so renowned for its technically skilled workforce -so much so that companies like Google and Microsoft and Quest Software have set up research and development labs in Madison within the last decade. He often merely smiles and says he is not sure – other than just assuming that he was the best trained and most qualified candidate for the job. I could not agree with him more!

Six years ago it was I who stood at a crossroads in my professional life as I contemplated going back to college. Many more prospective students will soon face this same crossroad. I only hope others have the opportunity to attend a college as fine as my alma mater. I hope they can attend a school of their true choice that meets their needs perfectly just as Herzing University did for me.

Thank you and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.