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## **Unfair proposal would harm students**

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Article Text:

The U.S. Department of Education is considering a rule that would prevent hundreds of thousands of students from acquiring an education and the job skills in a field of their choice that they need to compete in today's marketplace.

The proposed rule would deny funding that provides access to programs and degrees for both popular and high-demand jobs at proprietary, career-focused institutions.

The department's ruling, called the **gainful employment** rule, would limit students from selecting the college or institution of their choice. The result is that entire programs now available under Title IV financial aid could be deemed ineligible if the Department of Education's "one-size-fits-all" debt-service-to-income test does not meet the rule's criteria.

This is especially concerning for students attending the Art Institute of California, Sacramento, where we provide students with a career-oriented education in areas such as culinary arts, graphic design, media arts, Web design and digital film and video production.

These are fields that our students are passionate about and are in demand in the Sacramento area. Graduates in these areas of study fill a niche role, supplying important skills, expertise and service to the area work force and local economy. Unfortunately these programs could be hurt by the rule under consideration.

Our campus is as deeply involved in our community as we are committed to our students. We work very hard to provide our students with every opportunity possible while in our institution and give them the skills necessary to be a successful member of the work force. With our state's unemployment rate at nearly 13 percent and the national rate hovering around 10 percent, it is obvious that we need to improve career preparedness and the job skills of our students and American workers

Our national economic recovery is dependent upon the higher education community to produce qualified graduates to fill jobs that create and fuel economic growth. Yet, under the **gainful employment** rule, such individuals who may secure positions with lower starting salaries would be barred from receiving the same federal aid as their classmates who choose careers with higher salaries.

The U.S. Department of Education is overstepping its authority in setting policy with a proposed rule that is not based on solid facts and research, and it should abandon a rule that is based on a simplistic, arbitrary formula that limits student choice.

Terry Marlink is president of the Art Institute of California, Sacramento.