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ABSTRACT

Proprietary schools represent a growing segment of the total educational effort of this country and one which often has been misunderstood by the public education community. While greater cooperation is desirable between proprietary trade schools and non-proprietary schools providing similar job training, the prejudice of traditional educators toward vocational education for profit and the proprietor's desire to protect his investment are barriers to such cooperative efforts. Proprietary schools are currently in a growth period, primarily due to increasing enrollments and a growing reluctance on the part of states to increase funding for public postsecondary education. Although the tremendous growth of private trade schools in the early sixties brought with it certain abuses, the development of strong trade associations, including the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS), helped proprietary schools in the seventies build a solid reputation for ethically-run, quality programs which have a high rate of success in terms of job placement. The Medix School's success depends largely on an effective mix of student recruitment, the education process, job placement, and institution management. Few studies have been conducted of private career schools or their students: this appears to be an unmet need in vocational research and development. Perhaps there is a model or method that can combine the effective features of proprietary schools and the public sector which offer students a better learning opportunity. (Answers to questions from the audience of education research and development personnel are included.) (MEK)

Occasional Paper No. 53

THE ROLE OF PRIVATE TRADE AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS IN A COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

by

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- Developing educational programs and products
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- Conducting leadership development and training programs

PREFACE

Proprietary schools represent a growing segment of the total educational effort of this country and one which often has been misunderstood by the public education community. In an effort to support meaningful dialogue between these two groups and to gain insight into the implications for vocational education research, the National Center invited Mr. Jack F. Tolbert, president of the Medix Schools in Baltimore, Maryland, to address the topic of proprietary schools and their relationship to vocational education research and development.

In his speech, Mr. Tolbert advocated greater cooperation between the proprietary trade schools, such as the Medix Schools, and non-proprietary schools, especially state-supported community colleges providing similar job training. He suggested that the profit orientation of the private proprietary school can actually promote the interests of the students. He explained that the tremendous growth of private trade schools in the early '60s brought with it certain abuses of the system. However, through the development of strong trade associations, including the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS), proprietary schools of the 1970s are building a solid reputation for ethically-run quality programs which have a high rate of success in terms of job placement.

Mr. Tolbert holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Pittsburgh and a master's in journalism from the University of Oklahoma. He served in the U.S. Air Force for twelve years, primarily as a public affairs officer. At the time of his retirement from the military he was serving in the Pentagon on the staff of the Public Affairs Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense. He holds several military and civilian awards in the areas of public relations and community service. Active in several allied health education organizations, Mr. Tolbert is president of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS) and was the first proprietary school member selected to serve on the board of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). He is president of the Medix Schools, a chain of private proprietary schools with campuses in Towson and North Arundel County, Maryland.

The National Center for Research in Vocational Education and The Ohio State University are pleased to share with you Mr. Tolbert's speech entitled, "The Role of Private Trade and Technical Schools in a Comprehensive Human Development System: Implications for Research and Development."

Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

THE ROLE OF PRIVATE TRADE AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS IN A COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The incongruity of someone associated with a private trade and technical school being asked to speak about his relationship to a comprehensive human development system might appear amusing to some. Dirty fingernails to the contrary, the fact that the request was made indicates private career schools are now considered a viable part of postsecondary education's most vibrant sector — vocational or career education. The missive would represent not a referent relationship, but earned awareness to success-oriented programs of education.

The facts are that private trade and technical education on the postsecondary level is enjoying increasing student acceptance, employer acceptance, and investor acceptance while it is the least understood and least researched area of postsecondary education.

The assignment of relating private trade and technical schools to a comprehensive human development system is difficult because of the vastness of the subject area which requires a broad overview but also enough specifics to make the points meaningful. In an attempt to do this and then to suggest some areas of meaningful research and development, I will progress from the more general to the specific. First, I believe it will be necessary to place into context the difficulties associated with this discussion from both the perception of a trade school educator and the traditional educator. Next, I will attempt to give you a feeling of the broad scope of private career education, then relate that to the membership of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools—NATTS—which I was privileged to serve as president. My next point will be to relate to the specific nature of my own institution — the Medix School. Prior to discussing the implications for research and development, I would like to comment on the Federal Trade Commission and its trade rule governing the private career schools, as no discussion of this segment of postsecondary education would be complete without it.

In my judgment, two things stand in the way of meaningful discussions between me as a private career school president and the traditional postsecondary educator. I refer to them as the two "Ps" — "prejudice" being the problem of the traditionalist, "proprietorship" being my bar to effective communication. Let me deal with my problem first. As a proprietor who has invested in a process, I am reluctant to discuss it in a great deal of depth since it is my property which has little protection. I'm not sure the Indians would have been so free in teaching the white settler how to grow corn if they had it to do all over again. Secondly, we don't deal with a common language. Getting jobs, sales and marketing, bottom line, and acid ratios get confused when discussed as outcomes, articulation, process, assessment, and tenure. Also, proprietorship suggests a certain degree of mistrust — mistrust of competitors, mistrust of the unknown, and particular mistrust of government regulation. Each pronouncement is weighed against these inescapable feelings.

The traditionalist's prejudice adds a further bar to effective communication. The profit motive in education has to be suspect. Academia has spent years insulating itself from the crass world of commercialism. It has set in place systems where academic freedom can flourish, and here are quasi-educators not only introducing profit into this setting, but making it a prime reason for being. Secondly, traditional educators are products of the system in which they now reside. Their association with private career schools is that of trained observers rather than participants. This certainly narrows, if not eliminates, their ability to relate. Then there are the horror stories — matchbook education, federal fund rip-offs, stock fraud — each, in the mind of the traditional educator, representative of career education and not an aberration of the current state of the art. Although it is only a small factor, there are the hundreds of thousands of students paying top dollar to private career schools who most certainly could be better served in the public or non-profit sector.

I truly believe that my two "Ps" are barriers to good discussion and most certainly would have to be overcome if effective research is to be done in this field, but I would suggest that these barriers are falling. Profit as an effective stimulant for good processes might not be bad. You might be able to trust traditional educators, as their very being represents an effective element of society. The regulator and bureaucrat have become common enemies. Outcomes have slipped into my vocabulary, and I am no longer startled when the traditional educator talks of marketing and sales. The fact that I am discussing comprehensive human value development systems with you must have some meaning.

Putting our two "Ps" aside, let me attempt to address the broad field of private career schools. First, I should be able to relate to you the numbers of institutions and students serviced by this segment of postsecondary education — unfortunately, I can't. To my knowledge there is no reliable statistic on the number of schools nor the number of students. The most reliable statistic comes from the Commission of the Financing of Postsecondary Education that completed its work in the early 1970s. It estimated that there were some 10,000 schools serving nearly 2 million students. The director of that study told me of the research methodology used in making that determination. It consisted of having a staff member research all existing yellow page directories. If I were to be asked today how to conduct the same sort of survey, I would suggest the same methodology.

The Federal Trade Commission in its purported study of private career schools estimates that there are 6,000-8,000 schools serving close to 2 million students. Since nothing else they have done in this area has any relationship to the truth, I am not sure how reliable their figures might be.

I've seen various compilations by NCES, and none seem to cover the field. I don't feel this is necessarily the fault of the statistics gatherers. A major problem is one of definition. We are not even sure what is being counted. There are certainly some very definable entities. Accredited institutions, of which there are approximately 2,300, are easy to identify. Obviously, private vocational schools with a definitive career objective can be searched out through state approving agencies, but then there is the grey area. Flight schools — how are they counted? Schools that might be avocational or vocational? Schools operated by private groups? Hospital-oriented programs? The list of questions goes on and on, but the fact remains: it is difficult to define, and that makes it difficult to count.

As at least a start in the definition process, allow me to suggest that a school must meet all of the following five characteristics to be defined as a private career school:

1. Students are beyond the compulsory age for education.
2. There is a vocational aim for the programs offered by the institution.

3. The courses are aimed at developing *new* job skills.
4. The institution is licensed by a state.
5. The institution charges tuition.

Having been unsuccessful in giving you either a statistical dimension or a good definition of private career schools, let me attempt to give you some description of this amorphous animal. First, the segment can be characterized as offering short-term career training. Subjects are totally related to job skills and preparation for work. Second, most schools are oriented to one vocational area. Few of these institutions offer a wide variety of course offerings but generally specialize within a vocational cluster, e.g., allied health, automotive, building trades, secretarial, etc. Third, the institution is totally dependent upon student tuition for funding. Fourth, the institution has minimum layering of responsibilities making it adaptable to quick decision making. Fifth, the faculty is non-tenured and non-credentialed, relying more on job skills than formal academic training. Sixth, there is generally a profit motive involved.

Since I have been less than definitive about what has been in the past, and I did not have much luck with what is now, let me try assessing where this segment might be going in the future. First, I feel the segment is in a growth mode; and while the number of schools will not increase, I believe these institutions will serve an ever-larger number of students. I make this assessment based on two facts. First, this past year the student population has grown while traditional education settings have seen a decline in enrollment. The factors that have caused this are not likely to change. Second, I believe there is a growing reluctance on the part of states to increase funding for public post-secondary education, and there will be a diminution of the competition from this sector.

I also believe that the private career schools have gone through a decade of severe change that allowed the survivors to be strong, committed institutions that are well positioned in their markets. The beginning of the 1970s saw numerous major corporations entering the field, franchising operations and fly-by-nights emerging on every corner. Today only a few major corporations remain with strong market shares, and I don't remember the last franchised school that I heard opening. Another major contributor has been the growth of the private career school accrediting process and organizations of which the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS) is paramount.

NATTS currently has 535 accredited schools representing approximately 200,000 students. NATTS as an organization is the trade group for the trade and technical schools across the country. In this capacity, it provides the traditional membership services including workshops, newsletters, and other information exchange activities. It also represents its members' views in Washington to the bureaucracy. It supports an independent accrediting agency that is recognized by USOE and COPA as the specialized accrediting agency in the trade and technical school area. The accrediting agency was recently given a four-year renewal by USOE.

The accrediting process is a thorough one which includes a full on-site five-year renewal along with annual reports. Visiting teams include educators, administrators, and subject specialists in the area in which training is conducted. State officials are invited to participate as observers. The accrediting commission itself is comprised of eight members, four associated with private trade and technical schools and four from traditional higher education institutions. The chairman is an eminent and distinguished educator, Dr. Robert Allen of the University of Miami in Florida.

This leads us to one of NATTS' finest accredited schools – the Medix Schools of which I am president. I must admit that I relate the development of our institution to the private career school segment of postsecondary education. We started in the halcyon, free-wheeling days of the early seventies and have emerged as a dominant institution in allied health education in Maryland. Starting with six students in the fall of 1969, we will graduate over 800 students during this current year.

The factors that brought strength and growth to our institution are parallel to those that lead me to believe in the continued growth of this segment. Our enrollment increased by 17 percent last year with a corresponding increase in placement activity. The public sector added no new allied health offerings while closing down some of their marginal programs. The state of Maryland's legislature passed a student scholarship program for private career school students, and private career schools' program offerings were integrated into the state's master plan for higher education.

Our institution is a mix of four activities all of which are essential to its operation. How well we coordinate these four areas correlates directly to our success.

The first of these activities is student recruitment. As was indicated earlier, our institution is entirely dependent upon student tuition. Ergo, we must have students since we cannot go to the legislature, foundations, or our alumni for funding. We market our institution with a great deal of sophistication that includes market studies, demographics, media selection (both pre- and post-tested), active training programs for our admissions representatives, and an incentive program that rewards production. Our recruitment program is dynamic in that it is always changing to meet the needs of the marketplace. Some of our success can be traced to the fact that we recognized changes in the market before our colleagues in traditional education. As an example, we recognized the importance of the adult market six years ago and have developed ways to serve it. We also determined that students were seeking relevant education prior to the stress on career education making its appearance on the scene. We also depend upon our own marketing research and act on our own intelligence gathering as opposed to relying on national or local studies. This keeps us ahead of the pack instead of competing directly with them. It astounds me that traditional educators are just now recognizing the decline in high school students. We were aware of this six years ago.

Our next area of activity is the education process. This subject would make a paper in itself. The prime ingredients, however, are limited class size, frequent class starts, non-tenured faculty, and sophisticated evaluation systems of both the students and our process. We also have a well articulated educational philosophy of where we stand in the total educational landscape. Since we are preparing students for work, we attempt to position our educational process behind the leading edge of practice within the allied health community. We feel no obligation to lead, but we cannot fall behind. Therefore, we must have a strong feel for where the work community is and provide the training necessary to stay in this position.

Of equal importance to both recruitment and education is placement. Although we do not guarantee that students will be employed in the field for which they were trained, there is a strong implication that this will occur. Our continued success is dependent on our graduates getting jobs. Based on this pragmatic point, we concentrate heavily on job placement for our graduates. This is done in two ways. First, our educational process assures that the student is not only technically competent, but is prepared for the world of work. Second, we actively foster the job placement activity through an active series of events. We cannot be passive and wait for jobs to occur. We must apply the same sense of sophistication to this need that we do to recruitment. Our virtual 100 percent placement record indicates our success. Again, I am astounded when traditional institutions of higher education have one or two placement counselors serving several thousand students.

Our fourth area is management. This overlays the other three departments and attempts to insure their ability to accomplish and not impede their progress. The inventory of our enterprise is our people. Management is obligated to allow them to perform to the best of their ability and to be supportive of them. This rather simple philosophy has done much in making our organization both efficient and a happy place to work. Again, I feel this is a strong point of our organization as compared to traditional higher education where I sometimes feel that management exists for its own ends as opposed to supporting the organization.

As you can plainly see, I am extremely optimistic about the future of my own institution, NATTS member schools, and the private career school segment in general. There is, however, one large, dark cloud hanging over our future, and that is the Federal Trade Commission's trade rule due to go into effect on January 1, 1980. Aside from my own parochial concerns, I submit to you that this misadventure by the FTC bodes poorly for all of postsecondary education and is an open invitation to serious abuse of the tenth amendment rights of states to control education within their borders.

What is the status of the rule now? The rule was promulgated by the FTC in December 1978. NATTS immediately filed suit against the Federal Trade Commission in the U.S. Court of Appeals. Briefs from both sides have been filed, and the court heard oral arguments on the case on June 11, 1979. We anticipate a ruling by early fall. I was privileged to sit in during the oral arguments; and although our attorneys have repeatedly warned me that you can draw no implications from the questions of the judges, I was most impressed with the depth of understanding the judiciary displayed, and the inability of the attorneys for the Federal Trade Commission to respond to the basic issues raised. I frankly feel quite confident that the court system will overturn this grievous wrong being perpetrated by a Washington bureaucracy.

Our filing with the courts amounted to some 200 pages of arguments which would be impossible for me to summarize. In short, what the FTC is attempting to do with their rule is to preempt state law in the area of private career schools, force schools to provide prospective students with misleading information, change the economic structure of schools that would cause successful students to subsidize drop-outs, and muddle in an area – namely education – in which they have shown an astounding lack of understanding.

I will also submit to you that this is not happening to the other guys. The implications of this rule for public and non-profit education are severe. As you might be aware, the Federal Trade Commission has recently been made to release information concerning SAT preparatory courses and their ability to affect the students' scores on these tests. This brings the Federal Trade Commission into direct confrontation with an important non-profit sector of education. Coupled with the private career schools, an adverse opinion in the SAT case will bring the FTC directly into all of higher education. Equally onerous is the abridgment of tenth amendment rights of the states. Although aimed at the so-called "business practices" of the private career schools, the FTC staffer charged with the implementation of the rule, Mr. Walter Gross, has made statements to the media that this rule will improve the "quality of education" within this sector. As a citizen, I cannot abide the federal government's intrusion into this most important area of states' rights.

I cannot conceive of this rule being put into effect, as it will deny career training to hundreds of thousands of students, making a serious rent in the fabric of postsecondary education as we know it today.

An obvious area of research to suggest to you would be to assist any would-be regulators in Washington in making valid determinations concerning career education. The yawning gap in knowledge within the FTC concerning this field is so wide that it would take a truckload of scholarly studies to fill, so this might not be an appropriate agency with which to start.

To my knowledge, there have been few studies of private career schools or their students. The latest of these was conducted by Dr. Wellford Wilms of the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley. Doctor Wilms' study attempted to compare the effectiveness of proprietary education with that in the public sector. His research was conducted prior to 1975; and to his credit, he was quoted by both the FTC and NATTS in their respective comments concerning the proposed trade rule.

Another study was conducted by William Hyde and published in December, 1974, entitled *Metropolitan Proprietary Schools: A Study of Functions and Economic Responsiveness.* Prior to these studies, the American Institutes for Research, under contract to the U.S. Office of Education, published a study in 1972 entitled *A Comparative Study of Proprietary and Nonproprietary Vocational Training Programs.* As the name implies, this was also a comparative study between the effectiveness of the two.

Perhaps the most definitive work was published in 1969 by Dr. Harvey Belitsky, for the Upjohn Institute. His book, *Private Vocational Schools and Their Students: Limited Objectives, Unlimited Opportunities,* is often the basis for other studies in this area.

The most descriptive work on private career schools, and "must" reading for anyone interested in this subject, is *Getting Skilled, A Guide To Private Trade and Technical Schools* by Tom Hebert and John Coyne, published by Dutton in 1976.

As can be noted for the list above, little research has been conducted in this area. Each of these studies has added to the information base of what private career schools are doing. The Hebert book served a broader purpose, as it was intended to provide prospective students with information about choosing a school.

It would appear to me that additional research of the type done in the past would continue to expand the knowledge base and update information concerning a dynamic sector of postsecondary education. This research could be interesting, informative, and important, but perhaps another tack can be taken that would broaden the impact of any intended study. Consider that prospective student bodies for career education are in a state of change, and there is a diminution of real dollars being put into postsecondary education. Is there a model, process, procedure, or method that can combine the effective features of private trade and technical schools with the public sector to offer students a better learning opportunity? This question opens wide opportunities for a research agenda including articulation, credit for experience, information exchange, evaluation, and a host of other possibilities.

In my judgment, private trade and technical schools deserve this type of attention since they have made and will continue to make a major contribution to the comprehensive human development system broadly titled career education.

Perhaps the best way to close this piece is to use the quote Tom Hebert used to open his book. It comes from H.L. Davis' *Honey in the Horn.*

He was an expert sack-sewer, and six dollars a day and board was the lowest wages he ever looked at. The way to get ahead of this short-stake labor game was to learn some kind of work that people were likeliest to be short of, and then instead of having to beg and kiss people's tails for a job, you made them beg you. The thing to do was to sell your work, not your complexion or politics or church membership or ability to do slight-of-hand tricks for the girls after working hours.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Whom do you recruit as placement personnel?

People who work for private employment agencies and people who have worked in personnel departments of large industries are all excellent candidates. They understand the process of personnel placement. We don't feel that it's necessary for them to have a thorough knowledge of particular job skills, but they must have an expertise in the process of job placement. Those are the people we use in our job placement and development activities. Our personnel placement counselors are absolutely outstanding in this area. They know how to *find* as well as how to *place* people in jobs.

Question: You mentioned that you have 800 graduates each year. What is your ratio of placement personnel to graduates?

Our graduates do not leave school in June like most traditional institutions – all entering the labor market at the same time. We have eighteen graduations a year. Essentially, we put out one and one-half classes a month. The labor demand isn't there just in June; it's there twelve months a year. Because of the number of graduating classes we have between our two campuses, our placement counselors are working with a relatively small number of students, and the placement process is spread out over the entire year. I think this is one of the real advantages of our placement program.

Question: Do you recruit students outside the Maryland area?

No, we don't. The Medix School is totally a commuter school. However, a great number of our NATTS member schools *do* recruit outside of their given geographical area, some even over multi-state areas. In some cases, particularly in the West, a whole region is the primary recruiting area. In the Medix School we concentrate on the local area because there is a practicum or externship associated with our particular program, and that has to be done and supervised locally. We know the labor market in Baltimore, and we know we can get our graduates jobs. We don't know if we can say this for Harrisburg or Philadelphia or Pittsburg or Columbus. Only in the Baltimore area can we be sure that we can give our graduates the proper job placement assistance. We don't feel our job is done until the students are placed in appropriate jobs.

Question: Since you're in the allied health field, do you get involved with licensing? Also, do you deal with prime sponsors and CETA programs?

Although licensing is a very interesting question, it's always been my feeling that our institution should stay out of fields requiring licensing. I think that too often licensing represents an attempt to bar entry into a particular field. It creates essential problems for certain people limiting their entry into the job market. Each of the fields that we train in is certifiable on the national level, and we feel this is adequate. We do deal with a prime CETA sponsor, and 2-3 percent of our student body is sponsored through CETA.

Question: Although you have shown us that proprietary schools such as yours are run ethically, the public still views these schools with skepticism and mistrust. What can be done to help the public image of these schools?

That's really a very fine question, and I'm forced to agree with the assumption on which the question is based. I think the image of the "rip-off" school and the image of the "dream merchant" are very real. The Federal Trade Commission, by the way, hasn't helped dispel these notions. I would submit to you that if traditional institutions of higher education keep putting out inaccurate recruiting material, this sector could have the same problem. I think it's absolutely incredible that a school like Boston University would resort to developing recruiting material that would imply to high school sophomores that they could earn $250,000 more in a lifetime if they attend Boston University. This is the same kind of thing that gave the proprietary schools their bad image. NATTS, on a national level, has a public relations firm on retainer, and it is attempting to establish and promote a true image for these institutions. States are also participating in these efforts. Ohio, as an example, does a good job in this area. They do this in two ways: (1) they make sure the shoddy operations don't exist by maintaining a very effective method of government regulation that keeps the shoddy operations out, and (2) they publicize the reputable schools. There are about 400 private career schools serving over 100,000 students in Ohio. This means that there are 100,000 residents of Ohio who have been disbelieving enough of the horror stories to select private career schools for their postsecondary education. The fact that our particular institution is enjoying a 17 percent rate of increase in enrollments is indicative of this as well. The reputation seems to be dissipating. It's going to require public information, and I think it's going to require public attention. The fact that I am able to speak to such an august group as this is an important step in this process.

Question: Are proprietary schools beginning to offer associate degree programs?

Yes, they are. Many states, Ohio and Pennsylvania among them, allow private career schools to offer degrees. There are a great number of our institutions now opting to offer the associate degree to their students. As an example, there are twenty-five schools in Ohio offering such degree programs. However, we at the Medix School would not consider offering a degree. We don't think it's appropriate for us, but I think the schools that have done it have done it for good educational, community, and ethical purposes. Personally, I think we're becoming an over-credentialed society. Our reputation at the Medix School isn't built on the fact that our graduates get a certificate or a degree when they graduate from our institution. What they get is what they contracted for, and that's a job. But I think for a lot of reasons private career schools are "paying their dues" to the credentialed society. It seems to me that if we are moving toward becoming a totally credential-oriented society, that we should do what we can to preserve traditional vocational education. We should see if there is a way of combining the best aspects of both these worlds into a viable system. I think it is important to develop the proper model, process, or activity to allow students to move from one system to the other. A student should be able to reach his or her ultimate career destination by a variety of routes. This would be a truly important contribution.

Question: Are proprietary schools using competency-based education materials, and would this be a way to improve articulation?

I think that's a very legitimate question. Our curriculum is totally competency-based, and we would be willing to use competency testing as the generally accepted measurement method. The problem is with the community colleges and their higher education mentality. They are just not willing to accept competency testing as a viable educational tool. What I would insist upon in any articulation

agreement is that a standard, measurable set of occupational tests be adopted. I'm not willing to rely on the judgment of the community colleges as to the credit worthiness of my particular program. If they're willing to say, "This is the measurement tool I'm going to lay next to your program," and it's the same one I lay against mine, then I'm willing to engage in an articulation discussion with them.

Question: What kind of information about your school do you provide to prospective students?

Because we participate in federal financial aid programs, we have to provide the type of consumer education that's required by the federal government. It includes such things as drop-out rate and placement. But even if we didn't have to provide this information, we would because we consider it one of our most effective marketing tools. It tells prospective students what their opportunities are for graduating from the program and also what their opportunities are for job placement. We believe in equipping the student with all the information that student is going to need to make appropriate choices. We're very, very high cost. We charge a lot of money for our program. But we think that if somebody is making a buying decision by choosing our training, that person deserves all the information we can provide. So we far exceed any of the consumer demands that are made; again, not because we're particularly good people, but because information is our most effective recruiting tool.

Question: How is your organization (NATTS) assisting in developing better articulation between private trade and technical schools and schools in the public sector?

The National Association has long held as a tenet that articulation is appropriate. Through our state association components we also encourage its inclusion in the master planning process. We don't think that any state can plan its higher education or postsecondary education without including the private career school component. Private career schools have been written into the master plan for the state of Maryland for the past two years, and this trend is occurring across the country. If articulation is going to occur, a legitimate measuring tool must be developed. It can't be a subjective evaluative process assigned to a given professor or dean. It has to be a legitimate measurement tool. Under these conditions, the stance of those of us representing the private career schools would be to articulate, because it's vital. I think that our students and *all* students could be better served if that occurs. Now again, I don't mean to indict community colleges and the public sector. I recognize that their decision-making process is a little bit longer than the one I described in my talk. I think they probably have it under consideration, and I would encourage it. Our national association has met with the AACJC and talked about these matters. We're beginning to recognize each other and our mutual problems.

Question: Do you foresee a time when you can provide hard data relative to the labor market and your contributions which you can feed into the planning system at the local district level?

No, I don't, and let me tell you why. I won't share my labor market data with you: that's one of those proprietary things that I own. The fact of the matter is that we are two to three years ahead of our public sector competitors in evaluating the greater Baltimore labor market, and I'm just not going to tell them. Let them come along three years later. We've already moved on to something else.

Question: By charging a high tuition rate, you have in essence an admissions process based on self-selection. What do you feel is the impact of self-selection on placement?

I think it's a major advantage to the private career schools. You have to recognize that by law we have, in essence, an open admissions policy. As soon as the private career school becomes accredited and the students are eligible for federal financial aid which can, in terms of grants, cover their full tuition, self-selection doesn't really make as big a difference as you would suggest. Another controlling factor is the sponsorship of students by government agencies such as CETA, vocational rehabilitation programs, WIN, and others. I think to a degree we can control admissions more than, say, a two-year community college that has to accept anybody. What all this suggests is that any vocational school – private or public – should place the greatest emphasis and commitment on the placement process. Even if it requires remediation and other such activities, students in vocational programs should be prepared for work. All vocational programs have an obligation to put their primary emphasis on the placement effort to get their graduates jobs. They can't count graduation as a measure of success. The only true measure of success is the number of people who get jobs. Private career schools fund their placement departments as a necessary operating function of their schools. If we're willing to make this sort of commitment because it's so necessary to the process that we have, it seems to me that the public sector can get public monies and start getting this job done.

Question: Are any of your students sponsored by certain government funding agencies or scholarship organizations?

We have 2-3 percent who are government sponsored. Forty percent of our students get federal financial aid or state aid. Sixty percent pay their own tuition.

Question: Do you have a selection process for admitting students, and if so, doesn't this account in large measure for your excellent placement record?

Absolutely. But our selection process is one that measures motivation much more than it measures academic achievement, because we feel that a motivated student can be successful in the particular educational process that we have. Again, I recognize that as being one of our advantages. And I think the public institutions have an obligation to provide a remediation program to provide the basic ingredients necessary to get an individual through a vocational program. I still think that we as educators have to join together in assuring that any student who wants to participate in a vocational program should have the opportunity to do so. Proprietary institutions are just not going to be able to spend their money for the remediation; I think the taxpayers are going to have to take care of that.

Question: Do you guarantee in writing that your students will be placed in jobs?

Our contract very specifically says (and the student has to initial beside it, because I want to make it clearly understood) that our institution does not *guarantee* a job – *does not.* That's by contract. What we have is a performance contract with the student. The student agrees to pay us a certain amount of money and perform certain obligations, and in return we agree to provide an appropriate educational process and attempt to get him or her a job. There is an *implied* contract. That contract states that we will provide the student with an education. If the student invests in this process, there is going to be a job at the other end – that's *implied.* And if I don't live up to the implied contract,

I'm not going to have any students next year because we get most of our students through referrals. Each year there are 800 graduates out there working in the allied health field in the greater Baltimore area telling everybody that if you want to do what they do, there's only one place to go, and that's the Medix School. Now, if those 800 graduates couldn't get jobs, they'd be out there telling everybody, "What a rip-off!!" No matter how good my educational process is, or how sophisticated my recruitment is, or how well I manage my process, it's a rip-off to the student who can't get a job after completing the course. Now I also submit to you that the students attending public vocational schools are given that same implied contract: If they don't find jobs after completing the public program, they're also going out into the community and they're saying, "the place is a rip-off," even if it doesn't cost them any money. They still have made an investment in time and emotional interest. So *again,* I think that the obligation of vocational educators is to have the educational process end up in jobs. I think we in the private career schools do it very well, but I think *any* successful vocational education program, whether public or private, is going to be a good program if it gets its students jobs.

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