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Findings Summary for Walden

Although marketing expenditures and revenue dedicated to profits were higher than industry average, and six employee comments did mention a sales-oriented role as enrollment advisors, there are no indications that Walden managers pushed or overly incentivized recruiters for higher numbers. Walden has an exemplary performance on measures of student withdrawal and federal loan default rates. The DOE did reprove Walden for illegally giving over \$300,000 in student loans to non-citizens. Similar to UoP and Cappella, Walden also was found to be wrongly retaining student loan funds for students who had withdrawn. The class action lawsuit for prolonged dissertation process is likely due to two factors: (a) a conflict of interest between the faculty advisors payment for chairing (not contingent on student progress and with no real accountability) and the student progress, and (b) a natural result of the under-investment in faculty, both in numbers and quality. The great majority (reportedly around 90%) of faculty are part-time, and workload is considered to be excessive for the pay, according to the comments noted above.

Students were not regarded by these employee commenters as prepared or intelligent, and admission requirements were regarded as somewhat low. Walden student support (outside of enrollment duties) seems to be better compensated than reported for UoP. Professors rated their pay as very low or similar to other adjunct work, with professors having no funding support for supplies or computer expenses. Three comments on IT were positive, with none negative.

Background

Walden University was founded in 1970. It is a private, Public Benefit Corporation, not publically traded. According to numbers from Inside Higher Ed reports (Redden & Fain, 2013, sec. Stateside Story), in 2009 Walden spent per student approximately \$341 more in profit than it did on student instruction. The dataset from online sources is organized below in categories. See the Methods section for details. Comments are in chronological order within the category sections.

Higher Expenditure on Marketing

“One common critique of for-profits is that their holding companies spend heavily on student recruitment and marketing, and Laureate is not exempt from this critique. In 2009, the percentage of Walden’s revenues dedicated to marketing (27% and to profit (again, 27%) both exceeded the industry average. In 2009, Walden spent ...\$2,230 per student on marketing” (Redden & Fain, 2013, sec. Stateside Story).

Sales-orientation

Nov 16, 2010. Former Enrollment Advisor. Pros: flexible hours, good benefits - that is it. Cons: ...all they care about is numbers...management harps that it is a numbers game and a sales job, which is a title violation of title iv....Pick a side, either social change or a numbers game, it can't be both. Stop hiring individuals without degrees just to make more money by enrolling them - they are not fit to advise others on education!!!! (Glassdoor.com)

Feb 20, 2011. Current Enrollment Advisor... to much growth too fast. Enrollment positions are sales. (Glassdoor.com)

Mar 9, 2011...excessive outbound calls to people who are not always pleased...government regulation is pending (Glassdoor.com)

Sep 29, 2012. Former Enrollment Advisor full-time (More than a year). Cons: It can be extremely challenging for someone who is not a good fit for a particular position; specifically, something in sales. A more aggressive interviewing system should be in place to insure a higher rate of retention. During my one year tenure my entire training team was either fired or left. Obviously the wrong people for the job were hired. (Glassdoor.com)

[*Note.* This was from an enrollment advisor, more sales than student support, so it may be an indication of retaining only staff who brought in high numbers of enrollment. The high turnover category, in contrast, is selected as an indicator of less experienced student support staff, so this turnover comment would be less fitting there.]

May 9, 2014. Current Enrollment Advisor full-time (More than a year). Pros: ...No individual pressure to meet numbers...The legitimacy of the school; sales itself to prospects / Don't have to swindle prospects into a degree (Glassdoor.com)

Aug 28, 2015. Former Anonymous Employee full-time (More than 3 years). Cons: ...only care about student experience in so far as it might impact enrollment and retention (basically their bottom line). (Glassdoor.com)

Predatory Lending (disregard readiness)

“Harkin singled out Walden’s performance, as measured by student withdrawal and federal loan default rates, as ‘perhaps the best of any company examined’ Roughly 78% of Walden’s revenue came from federal financial aid in 2011....The percentage of Walden students who default on their loans within three years of entering repayment ranged from 1.7 to 3 percent from 2005 to 2008, a rate that was dramatically lower than the average not only for for-profit universities (17.1-22.6 percent) but also for all U.S. colleges (8.4 to 12.3 percent)” (Redden & Fain, 2013, sec. Stateside Story).

Government Reprobation on Finances

“An audit by the Department of Education (DOE) shows that online Walden University gave over \$300,000 in student loans to non-citizens (which is against the law) from 2005 to 2008...handling of student loan funds for students who had withdrawn” (Lee, 2016, para. 3).

Above-average Tuition & Fees Total Cost

An EdD will cost \$44,840 in tuition, \$925 for a one-time residency, and \$125 tech fee per quarter (see <https://www.waldenu.edu/doctoral/doctor-of-education/tuition-fees>).

Aug 09 2011. Student. I have started work on my dissertation with Walden. I've been a student for 4 years. I must say, I felt "duped" by the recruiter when I was considering Walden as my school: The recruiter grossly underestimated the cost of school (he did not mention any of the hidden costs). (Studentsreview.com)

Aug 26 2013. Student. The tuition is MUCH more costly than the numbers they share on their website (Studentsreview.com)

Long & Costly Dissertation Process

See section below. Lawsuit centered on actual costs dramatically exceeding stated averages due to drawn-out dissertation process. The quotes below exemplify the concern.

Jun 25 2013. I had to fire my first committee members due to their stalling, run around, incompetence and forgetting what they even had me revise! All the while happily taking my money. The next committee was abusive, minimized my concerns when addressed, dismissive, and utterly unsupportive. This is the SAME committee that approved one of my colleagues all the way to IRB only to have IRB say "Walden doesn't allow that type of study"!!! Are you kidding me? Why didn't the faculty know? Why did they string her along for 2yrs? (Studentsreview.com)

Jan 13 2014. While I completed my coursework some time ago, I have been struggling for THREE years to pull together a committee for my dissertation. I have found that I am completely on my own during this process and each time I talk to an academic advisor I get conflicting information. ... I was told repeatedly by advisors on the phone that if I was unable to get a committee chair, then I just wasn't trying hard enough! ...I have spent more on this degree than I was led to believe in the initial contact with Walden University and now I feel like I just wasted \$100K because they refuse to help me get a committee chair so I can get this process going! I don't agree with the reviews that the courses were "easy". That was not my experience. I had great professors who I felt really challenged their students. The coursework was enlightening and I put a great deal of work into my learning experience, and quite possibly the reason I felt challenged. However, I am more than disappointed in the dissertation process. (Studentsreview.com)

Feb 23 2015. Where this school truly fails is in reference to the dissertation "courses". As part of your dissertation if you are pursuing a doctoral degree, you will be placed in a series of never-ending dissertation "classes" in which you are required to work towards your dissertation. Note, these "classes" are supposed to be monitored by an instructor however this is not the case. They market the program in such a manner as to tell students that you will work productively with a dissertation committee in an expeditious fashion towards your research. I am currently in my tenth "class" with no end in sight. The instructor is simply non-existent. Students continually post in the questions for instructor forum and in the discussion forums to no avail. The class as a whole has repeatedly complained regarding the lack of any guidance whatsoever but without any resolution. Walden will also charge you \$3,000.00 per each of these "classes." (Studentsreview.com)

Lawsuits Regarding Financial Issues

2014 class action lawsuit by students claiming “breach of contract and unjust enrichment...related to the students' doctoral dissertation and master's thesis processes” (Lee, 2016, para. 4).

Low Perception of Student Support

The following are comments from students who perceive a “sink-or-swim” attitude by faculty and staff. Only one of these was from glassdoor, but having seen many complaints on many sites, it did not seem equitable to present only one complaint for Walden based on glassdoor alone. This indicates that in comparison with Capella and UoP results, Walden may offer better student support.

Apr 13 2012. Education student. I am a really strong student. I am also a college professor myself. I did this program because at this point in my life, I wanted a program that I didn't have to drive to every night. I am also a strong researcher with a lot of experience. However, it is not acceptable for instructors to take up to three months to get back to students. Some instructors were great and some were just plain stupid and frauds in the field. The problem with Walden is that there is no recourse for these problems and the delays end up making the cost of the degree go up. (Studentsreview.com)

Nov 27, 2013. Student. ...What finally got me to leave the school was the fact that in my last class at Walden, my teacher waited until the last week to grade 5 assignments. This included my final paper which was 21 pages

long. The electronic classroom tracks when you submit assignments and when they are received, viewed, and graded by the instructor. These 5 assignments were all graded within a 2 minute time period. In other words, the teacher did not read them. (Studentsreview.com)

Mar 1, 2014. Education student. There is no help whatsoever with this University (staff or library or writing center or advising). The adviser left more than 8 months and I was never informed who my adviser was. (Studentsreview.com)

May 19, 2014. The academic advisers consist primarily of graduate students who moonlight in this role as a means to receive a tuition discount. This is reflected in the advice given (often incorrect). (Studentsreview.com)

Feb 9, 2015. Former Nurse Field Education Coordinator full-time (Less than a year)...They claim to care about students but really only care about the bottom line. (Glassdoor.com)

Jan 24 2016. There are multiple complaints on the student forum on the universities website in which student complain bitterly, are frustrated, receive very little or no help to resolve clinical site approval issues and frequently, are simply dropped from classes without their knowledge. While I feel that the didactic portion of my education is average, the support from the university, and their ability to perform their contractual obligations is abysmal. (Studentsreview.com)

Low Graduation Rate (student retention)

“Walden appeared to do well in the GAO report, with better rates of retention than other for-profit schools, and more investment in student services. Still, instructional spending was low, and the university had aggressive enrollment goals” (Government Accountability Office, n.d., sec. Walden University).

Low Academic Rigor & Utility of the Degree

“Walden offers a masters degree in science education, and a review by the Education Department concludes that it does not measure up” (Lee, 2016, para. 4).

Feb 8, 2012. Current Enrollment Advisor. Admission requirements for students are low but better than some other online for profit schools... (Glassdoor.com)

Apr 19, 2013. Former Contributing Faculty Member part-time (More than a year). Pros: Ability to work from home. Cons: Low performing graduate students who believe that they are entitled to receive A's as opposed to earning them. (Glassdoor.com)

May 10, 2013. Former Anonymous Employee full-time. Not a good business model; not a good academic model. Pros: Care is taken in the development of courses; Good professors are hired. (Glassdoor.com)

Oct 24, 2013. Current Academic Advisor full-time (More than 3 years). Pros: Decent benefits and work hours. conveniently located...Cons: Huge disparity in work flow. Make sure that you dont get stuck advising undergrads; these students are accepted into the program no matter what, so you will be dealing with a lot of idiots. (Glassdoor.com)

Nov 27, 2013. Student. ...courses that are high school level. If you can read a book chapter or an article and summarize it in three paragraphs, and occasionally write a longer paper, you'll get A's. That's fine if that's the type of 'education' you want. But if you are really looking to be challenged to develop critical thinking skills and be able to analyze information and engage in the type of discussions with peers and coursework that fosters

the type of learning that should be taking place at the graduate level, you won't find it at this school. Mediocre work is acceptable, so you don't have to work very hard. Sure there is a lot of reading and weekly discussion post ... Many of the 'positive' comments mention that to succeed at Walden you need to be willing to "work hard" but that refers to being able to read a lot and summarize the information for weekly discussion posts in two classes over a 12 week period. In other words, this is 'busy work' that may take some people a lot of time to do... It is not the type of work that really allows you to think for yourself and engage in meaningful dialogue with the instructors and fellow students. ... And you pay \$2500 per class to do this! ... even the 5 credit 'advanced' courses are the same. (Studentsreview.com)

High Faculty & Student-support-staff Workload

Jan 30, 2011. Current Anonymous Employee. Great to help students and receive their appreciation, depressing to know how hard we are worked... It is an online university, but we can't work from home even a day or two per month? (Glassdoor.com)

Nov 27, 2013. Current Faculty full-time (More than 3 years). Great social mission but work overload is unrelenting... Every job is overloaded (Glassdoor.com)

Feb 9, 2015. Former Nurse Field Education Coordinator full-time (Less than a year). Employees are not valued except as a means to an end. Pros: The only good reason to work there is for the benefits and the occasional work from home day. Cons: There is no work life balance. Leadership is oblivious to the volume of work and the amount of time it takes to accomplish tasks. (Glassdoor.com)

Oct 31, 2015. Current Adjunct Faculty. "Turning into Phoenix" Cons: Classes are now huge to cut costs. Mine are twice as large. (Glassdoor.com)

Low Faculty & Student-support-staff Pay

About 90% of faculty are part-time at Walden and make \$2K to \$3K monthly, without assurance that courses will be offered. (Glassdoor.com)

Jul 13, 2010. Former Admissions Specialist. Pros: The pay is above average. Cons: They expect you to work overtime for free by classifying everyone except for Enrollment as "non-exempt". Admissions Specialists... can easily put in 10 or more hours of overtime for each of two weeks before every start date. (Glassdoor.com)

Feb 13, 2011. Current Online Professor. Long hours for low compensation. (Glassdoor.com)

Nov 12, 2012. Former Academic Advisor full-time. Pros: The people are great and the pay is well for the industry compared to other for-profit online institutions. The benefits are goods, medical, dental, vision, 401K. ... the work load is more then the 40 hours that one works in a week. The work load is not evenly distributed you are either in a hurricane of activity or in the doldrums. (Glassdoor.com)

Mar 14, 2013. Former Graduate Assistant part-time (Less than a year)... low pay and mostly unprepared students... increase compensation. (Glassdoor.com)

Apr 19, 2013. Former Contributing Faculty Member part-time (More than a year). Pros: Ability to work from home. Cons: ... Low pay yet high expectations. (Glassdoor.com)

Dec 11, 2014. Current Anonymous Employee. Pros: Decent benefits for part-time employment, though adjunct pay is similar to other adjunct faculty pay. (Glassdoor.com)

Dec 3, 2014. Current Anonymous Employee. Excellent programs. Pros: Supportive team, effective onboarding/training protocols. Cons: Not consistent work for adjuncts. (Glassdoor.com)

Apr 8, 2015. Current Contributing Faculty part-time (More than 10 years). Pros: Well designed courses, good organized curriculum and schedules, great students to work with, for the most part. Cons: ... system for assigning classes is sketchy at best, certainly not based on seniority or even the most qualified, best track record with former students. ...you may be left without work regardless of whether you do a great job, or how long you have been working for them. (Glassdoor.com)

Aug 23, 2015. Current PT Faculty. Cons: Inability to get full time (Glassdoor.com)

High Faculty & Student-support-staff Turnover

Aug 28, 2015. Former Anonymous Employee full-time (More than 3 years). Cons: There is little to no stability within the company. Large turnover leads to inconsistency and a feeling of insecurity among the faculty and staff. Everyone is so concerned that they are going to be the next to disappear that there is not innovation and the biggest concern is not getting fired before you can find another job. (Glassdoor.com)

Inadequate IT & Other Resources

Feb 13, 2011. Current Online Professor. Virtual learning system is easy to navigate, reponsive, updated often (Glassdoor.com)

Jun 28, 2011. Current Anonymous Employee...in the field we eat the expense of phone bills, business cards, office supplies....Fortunately, most of us love what we do. Offering compensation for those of us who do not have company computer, phone allowances, office supplies, business cards would seem reasonable. May lead to high turnover for affected employees as we eat this expense. (Glassdoor.com)

Mar 5, 2014. Current Anonymous Employee. The teams are very close and try to work harmoniously together to solve student problems. The IT team is awesome and works hard to ensure the technology is working correctly and is constantly being upgraded. (Glassdoor.com)

Sep 8, 2014. Current Enrollment Advisor full-time (Less than a year). Pros: ...the job is pretty easy. Also, the computer system is fast so that is a definite plus and makes your job a lot easier. Someone is always willing to help you. If you do work hard there is definitely room for growth. (Glassdoor.com)

Oct 31, 2015. Current Adjunct Faculty... Classes are many years out of date and broken ones are not fixed. (Glassdoor.com)

Administrative Bloat (lower workload for management)

Mar 23, 2014. Former Anonymous Employee full-time (More than 8 years) ...too many managers not enough focus on student learning. (Glassdoor.com)

Top Administrative Salaries & Benefits

Undisclosed.

Corporatization in General

A collection of quotes that did not fit into the prior categories collectively show a picture of corporatization:

Feb 8, 2012. Current Enrollment Advisor... Student loans (as with any university) contributes to next bubble, the education bubble (just as we had a tech bubble... (Glassdoor.com)

Aug 3, 2012. Current Academic Advisor. Leadership is not great. Command and control all the way. Employees are treated like a commodity rather an asset.

Aug 22, 2013. Current Anonymous Employee. Pros: Highly educated and supportive colleagues with sincere devotion to learning and academic success. Cons: Executive leadership has become more business-oriented and uses corporate language not shared by all its staff. (Glassdoor.com)

Mar 23, 2014. Former Anonymous Employee full-time (More than 8 years). Poor focus, incompetent executives, too many managers not enough focus on student learning. Pros: Flexible schedule to a degree. Cons: Favoritism, lack of focus on scholarship (indeed, to some managers, scholarship is a hobby that interferes with "the business" of getting and retaining students, almost at any cost), hostile work environment, command and control structure. Bonus structure favors upper management and is not at all clear as to criteria for earning a bonus. Pay rate is entirely arbitrary. (Glassdoor.com)

Dec 11, 2014. Current Anonymous Employee. ...Cons: Little interaction with other faculty; no feedback on teaching except from student evaluations. Sense that the administration is very corporate does not fit with my academic background. (Glassdoor.com)

Jan 28, 2015. Current Contributing Faculty part-time (More than 3 years). Contributing faculty are small cogs in a big machine. Pros: Flexibility, relationships with students, varied opportunities to teach courses and mentor students. Some support from other parts of the institution. Cons: Impersonal. No one knows you and you know no one... (Glassdoor.com)

Sep 25, 2015. Current Anonymous Employee full-time. Cons: Competitive company where the student and/or employee is not always considered... If you keep your employees and students/clients as priority instead of your financial bottom line, you'd be more successful. (Glassdoor.com)

Oct 31, 2015. Current Adjunct Faculty. ... "Turning into Phoenix" Cons: Classes are now huge to cut costs. ... Senior management is protecting their bonuses by ripping off students and faculty. Faculty has no say in academic matters of substance. Advice to management: Suck up the costs to become a decent school to benefit long term. Act like a real academic institution instead of a diploma mill with real substance and concern for students beyond their loan money. (Glassdoor.com)

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