**SAN DIEGO FOR-PROFIT UNIVERSITY ACCUSED OF “BAIT-AND-SWITCH” TACTICS**

**IN LAWSUIT FILED ON BEHALF OF HUNDREDS OF DEBT-CRIPPLED STUDENTS**

*Northcentral University is 3rd Online-Only University to be Named in Class Action Lawsuits Filed by Peiffer Wolf Carr & Kane; NCU Accused of Luring in Students With False Promises of Quick, Low-Cost Doctorate Degrees.*

**SAN DIEGO, CA. – September 6, 2018 –** Hundreds and possibly thousands of doctoral students attending the online-only for-profit Northcentral University, Inc. (NCU) have been subjected to an abusive marketing scheme under which degrees are promised relatively quickly and at low cost, but then drag out for years longer and tens of thousands of dollars in additional student loan debt, according to a class-action complaint filed today by the law firm Peiffer Wolf Carr & Kane (PWCK) in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, San Diego Division. For more information on the lawsuit go to [www.ncuclassaction.com](http://www.ncuclassaction.com).

The class-action complaint was filed on behalf of Christina Torres, a Bronx, New York City resident who attended NCU from 2010-2017. Torres and other students seeking a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree from NCU were told that it would take “three and a half to five years” at a cost of $30,600. However, NCU’s own documents confirm that the Ed.D. program was in fact “designed” to take 83 months, or nearly seven years, resulting in a cost exceeding $50,000. NCU appears to have made such representations across its entire range of doctorate programs.

It also appears that NCU is still falsely advertising online as of today that it can deliver a degree quickly and at a low cost.

The NCU lawsuit is the third such lawsuit to be filed against an online-only, for-profit university by Peiffer Wolf Carr & Kane. PWCK also has filed such complaints against Walden University and Capella University, both of Minnesota. For-profit universities received extensive attention under the Obama Administration, which created the Gainful Employment disclosure requirement that exposed false marketing claims made by NCU and other for-profit universities. Trump Administration Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has taken steps to eliminate the vitally important public disclosure rule.

Joseph Peiffer, managing shareholder and attorney, PWCK, said: **“NCU is running what is essentially a bait-and-switch marketing scheme in its doctoral programs. The bait is displayed when NCU’s marketing materials and employees mislead prospective students by promising that doctoral degrees will cost less and take less time to complete than those programs would actually take. Prospective students take NCU’s bait when they commit to attend the university, pay substantial tuition and fees, and obtain hefty student loans. Because those students rely upon NCU’s misrepresentations and omissions, they are now saddled with crippling debt, bad credit, inability to obtain additional student loans, useless course credits that will not transfer to other institutions, and for many, no doctoral degree. It’s the dog that never catches its tail.”**

Christina Torres said: **“NCU never dealt with me on the level. If they had not misrepresented the timeline, costs, and hurdles to completing this doctoral program or if they had just honestly disclosed their scheme, I would not have enrolled at NCU. Period. I certainly would not have put myself on the hook for tens of thousands of dollars in student loans to finance my education. They wasted my time, sidelined my ambitions, created a huge delay in my life, and forced me into deep debt.”**

Paul Lesko, attorney, PWCK, said: “**As a for-profit corporation, NCU has clear incentives to mislead students about how long it will take to complete its doctoral programs. First, the longer it takes for a student to get a degree, the more tuition and fees (and profit) NCU receives. Second, because NCU knows that most of its students rely on loans to finance their education and will consider the expected total cost of a doctoral program before agreeing to enroll, NCU has every reason to make its programs appear as affordable as possible, even though they are not affordable. NCU also knows that once students have paid tens of thousands of dollars to partially complete their program, they will be compelled to continue enrolling for additional semesters (and taking out additional loans) for fear of having nothing to show for the time and resources that they have already committed.”**

NCU currently has approximately 10,000 students, 5,500 alumni and potentially thousands of former doctoral students who did not graduate, many presumably due to delayed degrees or mounting student debt. Nearly all (98 percent) of NCU’s current student body is composed of graduate students, 69 percent of whom are enrolled in doctoral degree programs.

As the class-action complaint notes: **“Once enrolled in the doctoral programs, problems began. While the students attempted to obtain their degree, they met an endless series of hurdles, delays, and tuition payments, resulting in students incurring unnecessary additional loans beyond those they expected to incur based on the timeframes promised by NCU. Students who believed that they were getting ever closer to their doctoral degree were repeatedly confronted with decreasing resources, high faculty turnover, disorganization, a lack of oversight, poorly trained instructors, a 21-day-turnaround time (with most instructors taking the full 21 days to respond their students), and little to no constructive feedback (or if feedback was given, inconsistent feedback), all of which extended the doctoral students’ enrollments at NCU. Frustrated, doctoral students eventually realized that, contrary to NCU’s promises, they did not control the time it would take to complete their degree — they were at the mercy of NCU.”**

While students did what they could to obtain their doctoral degrees, their programs stretched beyond the promised timeframes, and tuition payments (and student loans) continued to mount. As students’ enrollment at NCU dragged on for years past the expected timeframes, NCU’s promises of an affordable education became a nightmare of frustration and crushing debt. Many students’ debt would grow so large that they would have no choice but to un-enroll so they could stop accumulating more debt and dedicate themselves full-time to paying back their enormous student loans, all without degrees to show for their hard work.

Northcentral University is a private, for-profit, online-only university founded in Prescott, Arizona in 1996. NCU moved to San Diego in 2017. NCU offers online degree and certificate programs from the bachelor’s level through the doctoral degree level in its School of Education, School of Business and Technology Management, and School of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

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**ABOUT PWCK**

The law firm Peiffer Wolf Carr & Kane maintains offices in Los Angeles, New York, Cleveland, San Francisco, St. Louis, and New Orleans. PWCK is available on the web at [www.ncuclassaction.com](http://www.ncuclassaction.com).

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