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| 9 | | |
| 10 | BEFORE THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS | |
| 11 | | E POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION CALIFORNIA |
| 12 | | |
| 13 | In the Matter of the Statement of Issues | Case No. 1000396 |
| 14 | Against: | |
| 15 | MOLER BARBER COLLEGE, | STATEMENT OF ISSUES |
| 16 | KENO MODICA, OWNER | |
| 17 | Applicant for Renewal of Approval to Operate and Offer Educational Programs for Non-Accredited Institutions | |
| 18 | Institution Code: 3400961 | |
| 19 | Respondent. | |
| 20 | | |
| 21 | | |
| 22 | Joanne Wenzel ("Complainant") alleges: | |
| 23 | <u>PARTIES</u> | |
| 24 | 1. Complainant brings this Statement of Issues solely in her official capacity as the Chief | |
| 25 | of the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education ("Bureau"), Department of Consumer Affairs. | |
| 26 | 2. On or about June 27, 2012, the Bureau received an Application for Renewal of | |
| 27 | Approval to Operate and Offer Educational Programs for Non-Accredited Institutions ("Renewal | |
| 28 | Application ") from James Knauss, owner of Moler Barber College. On or about December 11, | |
| | | 1 |

2014, the Bureau granted a change of business/ownership to Keno Modica, owner of Moler Barber College ("Respondent¹").

- 3. On or about July 2, 2012, the Bureau issued a deficiency letter to Respondent explaining that the Bureau was unable to grant the Renewal Application at that time, and outlined the identified deficiencies pursuant to sections of the California Education Code and Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations.
- 4. On or about January 30, 2013, the Bureau issued an additional letter to Respondent explaining that the Bureau had not received a response to the deficiency letter dated July 2, 2012. Therefore, the Bureau was unable to grant the Renewal Application at that time, and the letter outlined the identified deficiencies pursuant to sections of the California Education Code and Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations.
- 5. On or about March 11, 2013, the Bureau received an addendum from Respondent with additional documents submitted for the Renewal Application. On an unknown date in 2013, the Bureau notified Respondent that the March 11, 2013 response was incomplete and would not be accepted.
- 6. On or about January 9, 2014, the Bureau sent a deficiency letter to Respondent, explaining that the Bureau was unable to grant the Renewal Application at that time, and outlined the identified deficiencies pursuant to sections of the California Education Code and Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations.
- 7. On or about January 30, 2015, the Bureau issued to Respondent a Notice of Denial of Application for Renewal of Approval to Operate. On or about March 25, 2015, the Bureau received a letter from Respondent requesting an administrative hearing.

¹ Although Modica did not take ownership of the institution until December 11, 2014, at all times relevant herein prior to that date, Modica was the institution's contact person, representative, and agent for service of process. Therefore, Moler Barber College is hereinafter referred as Respondent, regardless of when the change in ownership occurred.

JURISDICTION AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS

8. This Statement of Issues is brought before the Director of the Department of Consumer Affairs ("Director") for the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, under the authority of the following laws. All section references are to the California Education Code² ("Code") unless otherwise indicated.

9. Code section 94891 states:

- "(a) The bureau shall adopt by regulation the process and procedures whereby an institution may obtain a renewal of an approval to operate.
- (b) To be granted a renewal of an approval to operate, the institution shall demonstrate its continued capacity to meet the minimum operating standards.
- (c) (1) An institution that is denied renewal of an approval to operate may file an appeal in accordance with the procedures established by the bureau pursuant to Section 94888.
- (2) An institution that has filed an appeal of a denial of a renewal application may continue to operate during the appeal process, but must disclose in a written statement, approved by the bureau, to all current and prospective students, that the institution's application for renewal of approval to operate was denied by the bureau because the bureau determined the application did not satisfy the requirements to operate in California, that the institution is appealing the bureau's decision, and that the loss of the appeal may result in the institution's closure.
- (3) If the bureau determines that the continued operation of the institution during the appeal process poses a significant risk of harm to students, the bureau shall make an emergency decision pursuant to its authority provided in Section 94938."

10. Code section 94897 states, in pertinent part:

"An institution shall not do any of the following:

..

- "(p) Offer an associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degree without disclosing to prospective students prior to enrollment whether the institution or the degree program is unaccredited and any known limitation of the degree, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
- (1) Whether a graduate of the degree program will be eligible to sit for the applicable licensure exam in California and other states.

² Effective January 1, 2015, in accordance with SB1247, the California Private Postsecondary Education Act of 2009 was amended. As the denial was issued on January 30, 2015, all citations are to the current version of the California Private Postsecondary Education Act of 2009.

| (2) A statement that reads: "A degree program that is unaccredited or a degree |
|--|
| from an unaccredited institution is not recognized for some employment positions |
| including, but not limited to, positions with the State of California." |
| |

- (3) That a student enrolled in an unaccredited institution is not eligible for federal
- "(a) Except as provided in subdivision (d), prior to enrollment, an institution shall provide a prospective student, either in writing or electronically, with a school
- (A) "Any questions a student may have regarding this catalog that have not been satisfactorily answered by the institution may be directed to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education at (address), Sacramento, CA (ZIP Code), (Internet Web site address), (telephone and fax numbers)."
- (C) "A student or any member of the public may file a complaint about this institution with the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education by calling (toll-free telephone number) or by completing a complaint form, which can be obtained on the bureau's Internet Web site (Internet Web site address)."
- "(14) A description of the student's rights and responsibilities with respect to the Student Tuition Recovery Fund. This statement shall specify that it is a state requirement that a student who pays his or her tuition is required to pay a stateimposed assessment for the Student Tuition Recovery Fund. This statement shall also describe the purpose and operation of the Student Tuition Recovery Fund and the requirements for filing a claim against the Student Tuition Recovery Fund."

"NOTICE CONCERNING TRANSFERABILITY OF CREDITS AND

The transferability of credits you earn at (name of institution) is at the complete discretion of an institution to which you may seek to transfer. Acceptance of the (degree, diploma, or certificate) you earn in (name of educational program) is also at the complete discretion of the institution to which you may seek to transfer. If the (credits or degree, diploma, or certificate) that you earn at this institution are not accepted at the institution to which you seek to transfer, you may be required to repeat some or all of your coursework at that institution. For this reason you should make certain that your attendance at this institution will meet your educational goals. This may include contacting an institution to which you may

seek to transfer after attending (name of institution) to determine if your (credits or degree, diploma, or certificate) will transfer."

- "(16) A statement specifying whether the institution, or any of its degree programs, are accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. If the institution is unaccredited and offers an associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degree, or is accredited and offers an unaccredited program for an associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degree, the statement shall disclose the known limitations of the degree program, including, but not limited to, all of the following:
- (A) Whether a graduate of the degree program will be eligible to sit for the applicable licensure exam in California and other states.
- (B) A degree program that is unaccredited or a degree from an unaccredited institution is not recognized for some employment positions, including, but not limited to, positions with the State of California.
- (C) That a student enrolled in an unaccredited institution is not eligible for federal financial aid programs."

12. Code section 94911 states:

"An enrollment agreement shall include, at a minimum, all of the following:

- (a) The name of the institution and the name of the educational program, including the total number of credit hours, clock hours, or other increment required to complete the educational program.
- (b) A schedule of total charges, including a list of any charges that are nonrefundable and the student's obligations to the Student Tuition Recovery Fund, clearly identified as nonrefundable charges.
- (c) In underlined capital letters on the same page of the enrollment agreement in which the student's signature is required, the total charges for the current period of attendance, the estimated total charges for the entire educational program, and the total charges the student is obligated to pay upon enrollment.
- (d) A clear and conspicuous statement that the enrollment agreement is legally binding when signed by the student and accepted by the institution.
- (e) (1) A disclosure with a clear and conspicuous caption, "STUDENT'S RIGHT TO CANCEL," under which it is explained that the student has the right to cancel the enrollment agreement and obtain a refund of charges paid through attendance at the first class session, or the seventh day after enrollment, whichever is later.
- (2) The disclosure shall contain the institution's refund policy and a statement that, if the student has received federal student financial aid funds, the student is entitled to a refund of moneys not paid from federal student financial aid program funds.

- (3) The text shall also include a description of the procedures that a student is required to follow to cancel the enrollment agreement or withdraw from the institution and obtain a refund.
- (f) A statement specifying that, if the student obtains a loan to pay for an educational program, the student will have the responsibility to repay the full amount of the loan plus interest, less the amount of any refund.
- (g) A statement specifying that, if the student is eligible for a loan guaranteed by the federal or state government and the student defaults on the loan, both of the following may occur:
- (1) The federal or state government or a loan guarantee agency may take action against the student, including applying any income tax refund to which the person is entitled to reduce the balance owed on the loan.
- (2) The student may not be eligible for any other federal student financial aid at another institution or other government assistance until the loan is repaid.
- (h) The transferability disclosure that is required to be included in the school catalog, as specified in paragraph (15) of subdivision (a) of Section 94909.
- (i) (1) The following statement: "Prior to signing this enrollment agreement, you must be given a catalog or brochure and a School Performance Fact Sheet, which you are encouraged to review prior to signing this agreement. These documents contain important policies and performance data for this institution. This institution is required to have you sign and date the information included in the School Performance Fact Sheet relating to completion rates, placement rates, license examination passage rates, salaries or wages, and the most recent three-year cohort default rate, if applicable, prior to signing this agreement."
- (2) Immediately following the statement required by paragraph (1), a line for the student to initial, including the following statement: "I certify that I have received the catalog, School Performance Fact Sheet, and information regarding completion rates, placement rates, license examination passage rates, salary or wage information, and the most recent three-year cohort default rate, if applicable, included in the School Performance Fact sheet, and have signed, initialed, and dated the information provided in the School Performance Fact Sheet."
- (j) The following statements:
- (1) "Any questions a student may have regarding this enrollment agreement that have not been satisfactorily answered by the institution may be directed to the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education at (address), Sacramento, CA (ZIP Code), (Internet Web site address), (telephone and fax numbers)."
- (2) "A student or any member of the public may file a complaint about this institution with the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education by calling (toll-free telephone number) or by completing a complaint form, which can be obtained on the bureau's Internet Web site (Internet Web site address)."
- (k) The following statement above the space for the student's signature:

| 1 2 | "I understand that this is a legally binding contract. My signature below certifies that I have read, understood, and agreed to my rights and responsibilities, and that the institution's cancellation and refund policies have been clearly explained to me." | | |
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| 3 | REGULATORY PROVISIONS | | |
| 4 | 13. California Code of Regulations (Cal. Code Regs.), title 5, section 71700 states: | | |
| 5 | "The Bureau may request that an institution document compliance with the standards set forth in the Act and this Division to obtain and maintain an approval to operate." | | |
| 6 | | | |
| 7 | 14. Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, section 71475 states, in pertinent part: | | |
| 8 | ··· | | |
| 9 | "(b) An institution seeking to renew its Approval to Operate pursuant to section 94891 of the Code shall, prior to its expiration, complete and submit to the Bureau | | |
| 10 11 | the "Application for Renewal of Approval to Operate and Offer Educations Programs for Non-Accredited Institutions," Form Application 94891 (rev. 2/10)." | | |
| 12 | ••• | | |
| 13 | "(e) The institution shall submit at the time it applies for renewal current financial statements that meet the requirements of section 74115 as follows: (1) for an institution with annual gross revenues of \$500,000 and over, statements shall be audited; (2) for an institution with annual gross revenues less than \$500,000, | | |
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| 15 | statements shall be reviewed." | | |
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| 17 | "(kk) An incomplete application filed under this section will render the institution ineligible for renewal." | | |
| 18 | 15. Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, section 71750 states, in pertinent part: | | |
| 19 | ••• | | |
| 20 | "(b) An institution may not enforce any refund policy that is not specified in the catalog as required pursuant to section 94909(a)(8)(B) of the Code, and must | | |
| 21 | refund all institutional charges upon a student's withdrawal. Withdrawal policy procedures pursuant to section 94909(a)((8)(B) of the Code shall include, at a | | |
| 22 | minimum: the acceptable methods of delivery of a notice to withdraw; whether | | |
| 23 | withdrawal can be accomplished by conduct, and if so, how; the position or positions to whom the notice to withdraw must be delivered; and the date that the | | |
| 24 | notice to withdraw is considered effective, which shall be no later than the date received by the institution. | | |
| 25 | (c) A pro rata refund pursuant to section 94919(c) or 94920(d) or 94927 of the | | |
| 26 | Code shall be no less than the total amount owed by the student for the portion of | | |
| 27 | the educational program provided subtracted from the amount paid by the student, calculated as follows: | | |
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Fund (STRF) if all of the following applies to you:

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FIRST CAUSE FOR DENIAL OF APPLICATION

(Exemplars of Student Agreements)

- 19. Respondent's Renewal Application is subject to denial under Code sections 94891, subdivision (b), 94909, subdivision (a)(3)(A) and (C), 94909, subdivision (a)(15), 94911, subdivisions (b)-(k), and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, sections 71750, subdivisions (b)-(d), 71800 subdivisions (e) and (f), in that Respondent failed to meet the minimum operating standards by lacking the proper documentation as follows:
- a. <u>Code section 94909 subdivision (a)(3)(A) and (C):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes required statements directing students to the Bureau for unanswered questions and for filing a complaint with the Bureau.
- b. <u>Code section 94909 subdivision (a)(15):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes the transferability disclosure that is required to be included in the school catalog.
- c. <u>Code section 94911 subdivision (b):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes a schedule of total charges, including a list of nonrefundable charges and the student's obligation to the Student Tuition Recovery Fund, clearly identified as a nonrefundable charge.
- d. <u>Code section 94911 subdivision (c):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes in underlined capital letters on the same page as the student's signature:

 (1) total charges for the current period of attendance, (2) estimated total charges for the entire educational program, and (3) the total charges the student is obligated to pay upon enrollment.
- e. <u>Code section 94911 subdivision (d):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes a clear and conspicuous statement that the enrollment agreement is legally binding when signed by the student and accepted by the institution.
- f. <u>Code section 94911 subdivision (e)(1)-(3):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes the following disclosures: (1) A clear and conspicuous caption, "STUDENT'S RIGHT TO CANCEL," under which it is explained that the student has the right to cancel and obtain a refund of charges paid through attendance at the first class session,

or the seventh day after enrollment, whichever is later; (2) The institution's refund policy and statement that, if the student has received federal student aid funds, the student is entitled to a refund of moneys not paid from federal student financial aid program funds; and (3) a description of the procedures that a student is required to follow to cancel the enrollment agreement or withdraw from the institution and obtain a refund.

- g. <u>Code section 94911 subdivision (f)</u>: Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes a statement specifying that, if the student obtains a loan to pay for an educational program, the student will have the responsibility to repay the full amount of the loan plus interest, less the amount of any refund.
- h. <u>Code section 94911 subdivision (g)(1)-(2):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes a statement specifying that, if the student defaults on a federal or state loan, both the following may occur: (1) The federal or state government or a loan guarantee agency may take action against the student, including applying any income tax refund to which the person is entitled to reduce the balance owed on the loan, and (2) The student may not be eligible for any other federal student financial aid at another institution or other governmental financial assistance until the loan is repaid.
- i. <u>Code sections 94911, subdivision (h) and 94909, subdivision (a)(15):</u>

 Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes the transferability disclosure that is required to be included in the school catalog.
- j. <u>Code section 94911, subdivision (i)(1) and (2):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes required statements regarding information received by the student from the institution, and a line for the student to initial.
- k. Code sections 94911, subdivision (j)(1)-(2) and 94909, subdivision (a)(3)(A) and (C): Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes required statements directing students to the Bureau for unanswered questions and for filing a complaint with the Bureau.
- l. Code section 94911, subdivision (k): Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes the required statement: "I understand that this is a legally

binding contract. My signature below certifies that I have read, understood, and agreed to my rights and responsibilities, and that the institution's cancellation and refund policies have been clearly explained to me," and also failed to provide a line for the student's signature.

- m. Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, section 71750, subdivisions (b) (d): Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes the period covered by the enrollment agreement, the program start date and scheduled completion date, and the date by which the student must exercise his or her right to cancel or withdraw, and refund policy.
- n. <u>Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, section 71800, subdivisions (e) and (f):</u> Respondent failed to provide an enrollment agreement that includes the itemization of all institutional charges and fees.

SECOND CAUSE FOR DENIAL OF APPLICATION

(Financial Resources and Statements)

20. Respondent's Renewal Application is subject to denial under Code section 94891, subdivision (b), and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, sections 71475, subdivision (e) and 74115, subdivision (b)(1), in that Respondent failed to meet the minimum operating standards by lacking the proper documentation as follows: On or about March 11, 2013, Respondent provided a faxed copy of a letter from CPA firm Thompson Noble Company confirming the understanding of contractual services between Respondent and Thompson Noble. Respondent failed to submit the required audited or reviewed financial statements.

THIRD CAUSE FOR DENIAL OF APPLICATION (Catalog)

- 21. Respondent's Renewal Application is subject to denial under Code sections 94891, subdivision (b), 94897(p), 94909(a)(14) and (16), and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, sections 76215, subdivisions (a) and (b), in that Respondent failed to meet the minimum operating standards by lacking the proper documentation as follows:
- a. Code section 94909, subdivision (a)(16) and 94897, subdivision (p):

 Respondent failed to provide a catalog that includes a statement specifying whether the institution