

Excelsior nursing program named in \$10 million suit

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Body

Students in the online nursing program at Excelsior College are seeking \$10 million in damages from the college, claiming the school misrepresented its associate degree program and the final exam was not objective.

The private, nonprofit college misrepresented and omitted facts about its nursing program and sold students an education program that was "devoid of any education," according to a federal lawsuit filed last week on behalf of 17 students in U.S. District Court in New York City. The students are from 11 states. None are from New York.

Representatives from the college and the attorney representing the plaintiffs declined to discuss the specifics of the ongoing suit.

William M. Stewart, an assistant vice president of the college, pointed to the achievements of the program.

"Our entire School of Nursing is one of 20 nationwide to have been designated an NLN [National League for Nursing] Center of Excellence and it is one of just six current designees that have received this honor three times," Stewart said.

The plaintiffs are being represented by the Hermina Law Group in Laurel, Maryland.

The complaint against the Albany-based online college said Excelsior did not disclose its graduation rates or provide details about the nature of the test or inform consumers about the lack of transfer credits to other institutions. The complaint also alleges Excelsior provided misleading

estimates for the cost of failing the school's Clinical Performance in Nursing Examination. The CPNE is the capstone exam for the associate degree nursing program.

"The actual exam was so subjective that the results of the test do not often reflect the knowledge of the consumer taking the exam," the complaint said. The complaint alleges that those who administered the test looked for areas to fail students so they'd have to pay and retake the exam.

Stewart, the Excelsior assistant vice president, said: "The College Credit Recommendation Service of the American Council on Education has evaluated the CPNE ... and found that it meets standards for reliability, content validity, and technical adequacy. And a 2012 report by the Council on Adult and Experiential Learning found that graduates of Excelsior's program pass the NCLEX, the national registered nurse licensing exam, at a rate comparable to that of students from other programs nationwide."

The associate degree in nursing has been accredited since 1975. More than 42,000 students have completed the associate degree program.

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