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## ITT Tech students explore their options in wake of shutdown

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A day after ITT Technical Institute [abruptly shut down all its schools](#), thousands of students are researching their options for what to do next.

The U.S. Education Department sponsored three webinars Wednesday morning to give students more information, with additional webinars in the works. More information can be found [on its website](#).

Other colleges are welcoming transfers.

Paul Feist, a spokesman for the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, said decisions about transfer of credits to community colleges are done on a "college-to-college basis."

Long Beach City College, for example, said it was "reaching out" to local students affected by the closure of the for-profit college chain. Because ITT was not regionally accredited, its units will not transfer, said John Pope, a college spokesman. However, the college is looking into the possibility of credit by exam, in which ITT students could take a test and get credit for that course. The student could then place into a higher level of the subject.

"We will do everything we can to accommodate the transition for affected students, but it will require a case-by-case analysis of their educational goals and courses taken at ITT," Long Beach City College Supt.-President Eloy Ortiz Oakley said in a statement. Coleman University, a not-for-profit, private college in San Diego, said it would waive its \$25 application fee and degree residency requirements for students transferring from ITT programs. Those students can also transfer ITT units to Coleman, depending on the degree program.

However, Coleman is accredited by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools, whose own fate is unclear. In June, an independent advisory board to the U.S. Education Department voted to end recognition of the accreditor. A senior department official has until Sept. 21 to decide whether to do so, and the accreditor can appeal.

If the official decides to end accreditation, the accredited schools will have 18 months to get approval from a different accrediting agency. If it cannot find another accreditor, students will not be able to use federal aid at those schools.

Coleman is also a candidate for accreditation by the WASC Senior College and University Commission.

Students can get more information about their options by calling (800) 433-3243 and through [a special website](#) set up by the Education Department to provide ITT updates.

ITT Educational Services Inc. said Tuesday that the shutdown resulted from a recent move by the Education Department to ban ITT from enrolling new students who use federal financial aid.

The nationwide campus closures will affect about 35,000 students who were preparing for the start of classes this month. It will also cost more than 8,000 employees their jobs. Two employees, including one who taught in California, filed a lawsuit Tuesday alleging that the company violated federal law by not giving 60 days' notice of the layoffs.

If students were enrolled at or withdrew from ITT within the last 120 days, they can apply to have their federal loans forgiven or try to transfer their credits to a new school, said Ted Mitchell, undersecretary of education. But if those credits are transferred to the same program of study at another school the loans for the ITT credits would not be eligible to be forgiven.

Students who feel they were defrauded can apply to have their federal student loans forgiven, Mitchell said.

Information on loan forgiveness is available at the Education Department's ITT website or by calling the loan servicer.

ITT students also could try to have private student loans forgiven and receive compensation for cash tuition payments through the state's Student Tuition Recovery Fund, said Robyn Smith, a senior attorney at the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.

The organization is planning a clinic Thursday to explain options to low-income ITT students, she said. The clinic will be held at the foundation's west office at 1102 Crenshaw Blvd. in Los Angeles. Students can call (213) 640-3906 to register.

Smith warned students not to rush into a "hasty decision." She said scammers will try to prey on those who are unsure of what to do next, such as companies that offer debt-relief packages that charge illegal upfront fees.

She also cautioned students against "high-pressure sales tactics" from other for-profit schools that may accept only some academic credits. If a school tells students they will accept a certain number of academic credits, they should get that in writing, she said.

"If they are facing immediate pressure to sign up, that should be a red flag to take a step back," Smith said. "They need to take their time making this decision. They need to make sure they are not being taken advantage of all over again."