

March 3, 2006

Via Facsimile (314) 645-2665; Original by U.S. Mail

Dispute Resolution Department
The Better Business Bureau
15 Sunnen Drive, Suite 107
St. Louis, Missouri 63143

Re: **R -- Redacted by HELP Committee**

Dear Sirs or Madam:

As noted in our previous correspondence, the school would arrange to meet with **R -- Student** in attempt to resolve his complaint. We also had promised to apprise you of the results and to submit a formal written response to his concerns if our efforts proved unsuccessful.

Please be advised that the school attempted to meet with **R -- Student** on Tuesday, February 21, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. The only way he would agree to meet with us was if he could come in with three other former students: **R -- Redacted by HELP Committee**. The names of two of those students, **R -- Redacted by HELP Committee** may sound familiar as they also had filed complaints with your office. The school agreed to meet with them as a group. Upon their arrival, they advised that they had spoken with an attorney and asked to tape-record the meeting. We declined to be tape-recorded but stressed that we would be more than happy to speak with them as long as it was not on tape. When we attempted to open the discussion, they stormed out of the meeting claiming that we were refusing to speak with them.

It was readily apparent that the four students were working in concert. They are acting as a group and met with an attorney as a group. They also crafted their complaints as a group but submitted them separately to your office to increase their impact. It was clear that the foursome believe that by banding together they will coerce the school into acquiescing to their demands.

However, since the meeting proved fruitless, we will now address **R -- Student** complaint which sets out three basic concerns: 1) There was a pattern of unstructured training and lack of skilled instructors; 2) there was a lack of equipment in the lab and the equipment we did have either was broken beyond repair or there was no electricity run to that side of the lab; and 3) there were also 20 students in a classroom made for 12.

School Locations

Joplin, MO • Kansas City, MO • O'Fallon, MO • St. Ann, MO • St. Joseph, MO • Springfield, MO • Sunset Hills, MO
Quincy, IL • Des Moines, IA • Omaha, NE • Oklahoma City, OK • Tulsa, OK • Wichita, KS • Cleveland, OH • Memphis, TN
Austin Business College • L'École Culinaire • Court Reporting Institute of Dallas

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With reference to these concerns, suffice it to say that the curriculum and instructors must meet certain guidelines set out by our national accrediting commission, the Accrediting Commission for Career Schools and Colleges of Technology. This accrediting body is approved by the U.S. Department of Education and the State of Missouri. Classes consist of lectures, lab work, and individual projects and assignments. Our labs are designed to accommodate in excess of 20 students. The school also provided the education promised and the necessary equipment for hands-on experience. **R -- Student** received hands-on training on a variety of residential and commercial heating and air conditioning units. Lab exercises are set up to correlate with each 10-week course and are intended to provide the practical job-related exercises on units and models they likely will be encountering on future job assignments. At times, the labs may be reconfigured to accommodate various assignments or students and electrical power may be shut off for safety reasons but this is only a temporary situation and does not affect the training.

Our programs are reviewed twice a year by our advisory committees. These committees are made up of local employers and specialists in the fields we teach. Course content, equipment, and lab exercises are reviewed at these meetings and recommendations are implemented in order to help make our students more marketable. The school recently reorganized the HVAC program to better serve our students. After all, the main purpose of our programs is to help our students obtain entry level jobs in their chosen fields of study.

The school is so confident it provides quality training that the school catalog contains the following written guarantee:

Our Guarantee to Employers

Our Students at Vatterott College receive outstanding training. We have highly skilled and experienced instructors, industry-related equipment, and modern, spacious classrooms and workshops.

We emphasize "hands-on training" and employers can be confident that a Vatterott graduate is thoroughly qualified in both theory and practice. Hundreds of satisfied employers of Vatterott graduates since 1969 can attest to the quality training we provide.

*To all prospective employers, we provide this guarantee:
In the event you hire a Vatterott graduate and you find, during the first year after graduation, that he or she is lacking in any skills derived from the Vatterott training program, we guarantee that:*

The worker will be given additional training by Vatterott College, at no cost to you or the student, as needed to remedy the training deficiency.

We guarantee your satisfaction.

*John C. Vatterott
Founder*

VAT-02-05-00216

R -- Student graduated on October 6, 2005. It is significant that he is working in his field of study and is earning approximately \$26,000 a year. This annual income is within the salary range for entry level positions in area. Despite the fact that his training has allowed him to obtain this position, the school will allow **R -- Student** to retake, at no cost, any class that he feels did not measure up to his expectations.

Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,

R -- Redacted by HELP Committee
Campus Director

VAT-02-05-00217

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to file a complaint against Vatterott College, O'Fallon Missouri Campus. I attended the HVAC/R (Heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration) Program. This was to be a 60-week program consisting of 10, 6-week phases (960, Hours total). My class started August of 04 and finished October of 05. In this letter I will outline and show the difference between the education they promised and explained I would receive and the actual education I completed. I did not acquire the education I paid for. The tuition was approximately \$21,000 Dollars. There are several key areas where Vatterott fell very short on their end of my education experience. The following will outline Vatterott's promises and then I will provide examples supporting my complaints. The quotes in () are taken from the Vatterott college catalog.

1. **Vatterott promised QUALIFIED instructors.** ("We have highly skilled and experienced instructors." And "Provides a competent and adequate faculty with occupational experience.") The instructors I encountered were not very qualified.

- 1) The first phase began with brand new Teacher: R -- a "pipe fitter" attempting to teach basic electrical. He was fired a week into the phase after verbally attacking and threatening a student. **HE WAS NOT A QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR.**
- 2) We then had R -- a "Maintenance man from the St. Ann campus" He was just a substitute but **HE WAS NOT A QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR.**
- 3) We then had R -- "A 24 year old recent graduate of the St. Ann campus who was working for Vatterott in the tool crib @ the St. Ann campus." He had poor classroom management and lack of experience in the field for which he was teaching. He taught us the first 2 phase's Basic electrical and basic refrigeration. **HE WAS NOT A QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR.**
- 4) Phases 3 and 4 were taught by R -- . He did a good job and had actual field experience. These were the 2 best phases.
- 5) Phase 5 was taught by R -- . He was an older gentleman with lots of field experience. He did a fine job with what he had to work with. This phase was almost a complete waste of time, as I will explain later. He tried to keep us busy with Videos we had previously seen and going on field trips.

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6) Phase 6 began with another new teacher R -- who had experience from a military career. He was ok but did not seem to have very much real knowledge of HVAC. At this time Vatterott changed the rotation of classes and we had students straight out of the first 2 phases mixed in with us in the 6th phase. R -- kept saying "You 6th phasers help and show the new guys how to do the labs sense you have already done this stuff." Was this because he did not know how to do it him self? Why were we doing the same thing in lab we had done previously? HE WAS NOT A QULIFIED INSTRUCTOR.

7) One thing all of these instructors had in common was they were NOT TEACHERS. When Vatterott hires new teachers they do not seem to have much training to provide them with teaching skills. I never saw anyone come in to observe to see if they were doing an adequate job. It appears they just throw the teachers out to sink or swim and learn as they go. This is not my definition of a QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR. It is also apparent in the high turn over rate of instructors. R -- Redacted by both quit after about 1 year teaching. R -- quit after teaching 2 phases and I am not sure if R --, also hired during my attendance, is still teaching or not.

2. **Vatterott promised a COLLEGE EDUCATION.** In my interview it was stated: "What makes us a college and not just a tech school our accreditation." I was told they had this accreditation because they had a curriculum which required more hours to be taught compared to a typical Tech school. I checked a local tech school that has a curriculum that requires about 360 hours to be taught and cost about \$2,000 dollars {this does not include tools}. Vatterott's \$21,000 tuition did include about \$1,500 worth of tools. It turned out Vatterott was a TECH SCHOOL IN COLLEGE CLOTHING AND WITH A COLLEGE PRICE.

1) The class schedule was supposed to be Monday to Thursday from 6:00 pm till 10:30 pm with a 10 minute break each hour. In reality class rarely lasted past 9:00. Thursday night was "test night". The test rarely took more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete. We were never there past 7:00 on test night. There were also nights when we left much earlier than 9:00 especially in the first 2 phases (basic electrical and basic refrigeration) this happened near the end of each phase because they were out of material to teach. More than once I drove to school to be told by the instructor class had been canceled be cause he had nothing to teach us. I was

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paying for 16 hours a week and on a good week only received 10 hours at most and some weeks much less than that.

- 2) When students complained we were getting short changed on our education the school tried to make students stay till at least 10:00 on these days we just sat around talked, played video games or chess because there was not enough material to be taught. This mandatory "10:00 quit time" only lasted a few days. Then they had students sign a paper when they left to make it look like they were cutting class early when in reality class was over. Another thing was a lack of enough lab equipment. Some people finished lab while others had to wait. When you were done with your lab you could leave. This was not cutting class early it was a lack of class to be taught. I usually stayed and helped other students or just stood around and talked.
- 3) There was not a very clear curriculum for the teachers to follow. No lesson plans and labs which went together. A typical night consisted of the teacher giving a power point presentation and then we went into the lab. The amount of material to be covered was not very much. The note time took about 1 hour and the labs usually took at most 30 min. the rest of the time was spent waiting for lab equipment. Most of the time the lab was not related to the lecture of the same night.
- 4) There was also a lot of redundancy between phases. The 5th phase commercial refrigeration was almost the same as basic refrigeration. We spent a lot of time going over the same small amount of material. Then when the 6th phase began the curriculum was almost the same as the 5th phase. I do not know if they were mixed up on what phase they were on or what. We complained and they changed some of what we were taught that phase.
- 5) The tech school curriculum which took 360 hours to be taught is not much less than the time we spent in class. At the rate of 10 hours a week and not taking in consideration some weeks were less we spent 600 hours in class. And as I will show next some of this time was spent providing free labor to Vatterott. Vatterott inflated the amount of hours there program is so they could obtain an undeserved accreditation and charge an inflated price.

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3. **Vatterott promised** well equipped labs with supplies and equipment to provide hands on experience related to class room lectures. The lab ended up being under supplied and the equipment was poor, in disrepair, or nonexistent.

1) The labs were supposed to be hands on experience related to the class room lecture. Some of the lab time was actually used for the students to provide **FREE LABOR** for Vatterott. These were students from several classes and programs at Vatterott. HVACR, ELECTRICAL, and BUILDING MAINTENANCE.

- i. During the 1st phase (Basic Electricity) we set up labs with an AC unit and Furnace in a cubical. We ran black iron gas pipe to the lab area, and built walls around them. This did not bother me at first because this was a new campus and we would get to use the labs in later phases. The class ahead of us set up the commercial refrigeration lab area. Then someone from Vatterott wanted the labs set up differently and every thing was tore down and moved. **We moved and rebuilt the labs several times during my 60 weeks at Vatterott.** The school was so disorganized they did not know where to put the equipment. When my class was in the Commercial refrigeration phase the lab equipment could not be used because it was moved to another part of the building and there was not proper electricity to run the equipment. **The labs should have been professionally set up so we could use them as described.**
- ii. We built a tool crib and assembled shelving units. Then we moved all of the tools into the tool crib. Then a few weeks later someone from Vatterott decided it needed to be moved. We tore it down and built another tool crib in a different area.
- iii. We built a "smoke shack" so that the smokers could be warm in the winter and cool in the summer. We were supposed to get to at least install the HVAC equipment but the class after ours did that. Building walls and roofing is not related to HVAC.
- iv. We were told our Lab grade depended on our participation in labs. **We were extorted to provide FREE LABOR for Vatterott.** During our last phase they wanted the residential lab moved again I believe this was the 4th or 5th move for the lab. We reran the black iron. The next day some one from Vatterott decided they wanted it done differently. We

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were to tear it down and run it again. We had a sit down. They said we would not receive a lab grade if we did not help. After the director R -- R -- came down and we voiced our concerns and refused to move the lab again he agreed it would be done on a voluntary basis and our lab grade would not be affected. We should have had that sit down during the 1st phase instead of the 6th.

- 2) There was a lack of working equipment to be worked on during our labs.
 - i. We had to share equipment. By taking turns it made a lab which should only last 30 minutes take up to an hour and a half. The down time was spent talking or helping other students.
 - ii. During our 5th phase (commercial refrigeration) the equipment we had could not be used because there was not electricity ran to it. This equipment had been working earlier but was moved to the new area with out proper electricity.
 - iii. We did not have some commercial equipment we needed such as commercial ice makers, roof top units, or walk in coolers. The equipment we did have was old and a lot of it was not in working condition.
 - iv. The labs were much better equipped for the Residential phases.

My experience at Vatterott was very disappointing. I received less than half of the education I was led to believe I would receive. Out of the 6 phases only the residential phases, #3 and #4, were even close to what they described. We had unqualified instructors, a poorly organized & weak curriculum, labs that were poorly equipped, and Vatterott used extortion to force us to provide free labor. I would not recommend Vatterott to anyone. And feel I should receive some of my tuition reimbursed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,
R -- Redacted by HELP
Committee

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