



For Art Institute Students

What to do now

We have seen that there's a great deal of confusion and chaos to the former Art Institute students. We have spoken with few of the culinary students from AI and they have many questions about what to expect. We'd like to offer as much help as we can.

First, a caveat. We offer the following information as correct to the best of our knowledge. Our hope is to

- 1) Direct you to helpful resources
- 2) Give you enough information to help you ask the right questions.

We're not lawyers. You must consult an attorney on matters of law. Do not consider any of the following to be a legal opinion.

We're not accountants. You may need tax or other financial advice, please seek out a professional for this as well.

As school operators, we are familiar with the Federal and State (of California) regulations that govern private post-secondary schools, like AI. We offer this information to the best of our ability, but we may be ignorant of circumstances with this particular school that may change the way the regs apply in this particular instance. When you contact government officials concerning your case, ask questions. Confirm whether what we say here is correct. Again, our purpose here is to help you learn what questions to ask.

What to do RIGHT NOW:

When we say "right now," we mean that an hour ago may have been too late. Do it now.

Get a copy of your transcripts and other important records, right now. You may not have another chance. On Thursday, March 7, staff members were handing out transcripts in the front lobby of the AI building. They may be available again today, but there's no way of knowing. This may be your last chance to get them and without a transcript, you have no way of proving what classes you have taken or grades you have received.

If you don't know how or where to get a copy of your transcript, this web site should provide you with information. As of this writing, information for AI students has not yet been posted. Keep checking the web site.

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/announcements/closed-school>

If you can't find what you need at the above web site, try here:

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/ca.html>

This site lists contact information for the California state agencies that regulate schools as recommended by the Department of Education. But for information about transcripts, I would start here:

<https://www.bppe.ca.gov/students/transcripts.shtml>

Find your enrollment agreement. This could be a critical piece of info. Put it with the rest of your documents in a safe place.

Get a course catalog. You will also need the description of your courses to transfer credits to another school. Other materials like your syllabus may also prove handy. When you apply to transfer credits to another institution, the new school must evaluate those materials to determine how similar the courses you have taken are to the courses offered by the new institution. More on this below.

Gather all of your receipts. You need a copy of your student ledger. This may be called a Statement of Account or something similar. It shows what you owe and what you've paid so far.

Copies of bills, checks, etc or any other document recording your financial dealings with the school could all come in handy. Your own bank records, credit card records, etc could all prove useful. You want to document every payment made to the school, all financial aid transactions, any rebates you received from the school, and every payment the school expected of you.

Keep these documents safe. You may need them for a few years.

If there is any kind of a settlement in the future, you may need such documents to get back some of your money. It's better to have too much information than not enough — however, the odds that you will ever recover what you are owed are few. You may, however be eligible to receive relief from the State of California STRF (Student Tuition Recovery Fund). See below for information on that.

Student Loans

Because AI has closed, you are likely eligible for a "Closed School Discharge." That means that you may not have to repay your Financial Aid loans since your school closed before you graduated.

Here's what to do:

Go to these web sites:

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/closed-school>

This web site gives very specific information about how to get your loans discharged. According to this web site, you are eligible for a discharge if you were on Leave of Absence at the time of the school closing or even if you withdrew within 120 days of the school closing. Check the web site for details.

You are not eligible if you complete a "comparable" program at another school. The rules about what "comparable" means are vague.

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/about/announcements/closed-school>

This site also outlines the steps you must take to get your loans discharged. Before you can get your loans discharged, your school must appear on the list of closed schools. As of this writing, AI does not appear on the list. Keep checking this web site until it does appear. There is a pretty good FAQ that should answer most or all of your questions.

One important piece of information: **you cannot get your loans discharged if you transfer to a “comparable program of study” at another school.** Especially because the Art Institute was an expensive place to study the culinary arts, it may be better for you to discharge your loans and start over from scratch. You may be able to complete an entire program of study for less than the cost of a couple of quarters at AI.

Our school, SDCI costs much less than AI. We do not offer a degree but it is an advantage to complete our professional diploma over the AI degree and our tuition is a fraction of AI’s. However, as much as we’d like to enroll you for classes today, it will likely make better sense to discharge your loans first.

The main regulator for Private Post-secondary schools in California is the Bureau for Private Post-secondary Education (BPPE — pronounced “bippy”)

Main contact page:

https://www.bppe.ca.gov/about_us/contact.shtml

BPPE information on school closures:

<https://www.bppe.ca.gov/students/guide.shtml>

https://osar.bppe.ca.gov/forms_pubs/csg_eng.pdf

Transferring Credits to Another School

To transfer credits to another school, you will need your transcripts and probably the AI catalog and/or your course syllabi. The new school must be able to see what courses you’ve taken and a description of what those courses entailed. They will compare them to their own courses and award you with credits based on how well they match up.

It is very unlikely that another school will transfer all your credits from AI. Be prepared to lose a lot of credits and be happy if you don’t. The new school is not obligated to any standards here but you may appeal their decision. You might increase the number of credits you can transfer on appeal (after all, they want to enroll you in their school). Take the time to appeal. It might save you a bunch of cash.

David Badagliacca

President, San Diego Culinary Institute

Check back to this site from time to time for more information. We will update it as we learn more.