



Jason E. Mumpower, Comptroller of the Treasury

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Former TCAT Elizabethton Employees Misappropriated More Than \$1 Million

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office, working in conjunction with the Tennessee Board of Regents, has found that former Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Elizabethton employees John Lee and Mark DeHart misappropriated at least \$1,058,494 through several schemes involving their outside business and employment.

The investigation began after Tennessee Board of Regents internal auditors identified and reported questionable financial activity and potential misuse of state resources.



The largest portion of the misappropriation involved D&L Education Solutions, a private business established by Lee and DeHart. Investigators determined the two men used college equipment, facilities, employees, and business relationships to perform work for private companies and organizations through D&L without authorization from the college.

From 2019 through 2023, D&L received at least \$940,841 for curriculum development, industry training, travel, and certifications involving organizations including Kubota, Bobcat, Subaru, and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. Investigators determined Lee and DeHart used college resources and employees during college work hours to perform this work. D&L also used the college's address and represented its work in ways that created the impression that the private business was affiliated with the college.

Investigators also determined that Lee received at least \$82,726 in unearned wages and associated costs while performing outside work or engaging in personal activities during college work hours. DeHart similarly received at least \$15,514 in unearned wages and associated costs. Lee also misappropriated at least \$19,413 through improper travel reimbursements and misuse of college funds.

The investigation identified other concerns involving unauthorized access to proprietary systems, conflicts of interest, unauthorized outside employment, personal use of college vehicles and technology, and improper travel expenses. Lee and DeHart resigned from TCAT Elizabethton on January 26, 2023.

Based upon this investigation, in September 2026, the Carter County Grand Jury indicted John Lige Lee on two counts of theft over \$60,000, one count of conspiracy to commit theft over \$60,000, one count of computer offenses over \$10,000, and one count of theft over \$10,000. The Grand Jury also indicted Mark Allen DeHart on one count of theft over \$60,000, one count of conspiracy to commit theft over \$60,000, one count of computer offenses over \$10,000, and one count of theft over \$10,000.

"This investigation shows why strong oversight and clear separation between public employment and private business interests are so important," said Comptroller Jason Mumpower. "College resources, employees, and business relationships must be used to benefit the institution and its students, not private businesses. Effective management oversight could have helped identify these activities much sooner."

To view the investigative report, go to tncot.cc/doireports. To view a map depicting Comptroller investigations, go to tncot.cc/mappinginvestigations

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