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## NEWS RELEASE

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# Independent Audit Verifies NorthStar Education Service's Internal Controls and Processes

Madison, Wis.—NorthStar Education Services®, an affiliate of Ascendium Education Group®, today announced it completed its [SOC 2 audit](#), performed by KirkpatrickPrice. This attestation provides evidence that NorthStar has a strong commitment to security and to delivering high-quality services to its clients by demonstrating they have the necessary internal controls and processes in place.

The SOC 2 standard is a high bar to meet and demonstrates an organizational commitment to high standards of information security and governance.

“Just like the organizations that choose to outsource employee benefit administration, NorthStar takes information security practices seriously. That’s why we provide an annual SOC 2 audit report to customers using Co-Pay Partners® Student Loan Repayment Assistance benefit service. Employers and organizations should rest assured when using Co-Pay Partners and avoid working with a benefit provider who does not offer stringent information security protections,” said Taige Thornton, NorthStar’s president and chief executive officer.

A SOC 2 audit provides an independent, third-party validation that a service organization’s information security practices meet industry standards stipulated by the [American Institute of Certified Public Accountants](#). During the audit, a service organization’s non-financial reporting controls as they relate to security, availability, processing integrity, confidentiality and privacy of a system are tested. The SOC 2 report delivered by KirkpatrickPrice verifies the suitability of the design and operating effectiveness of NorthStar’s controls to meet the standards for these criteria.

“The SOC 2 audit is based on the Trust Services Criteria,” said Joseph Kirkpatrick, KirkpatrickPrice president. “NorthStar delivers trust-based services to their clients, and by communicating the results of this audit, their clients can be assured of their reliance on NorthStar’s controls.”

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### **About Attigo by Ascendium**

The Co-Pay Partner's solution is part of the Attigo® Suite, created to help people reach their full potential. Our products support academic achievement, long-term financial wellness and student loan repayment success. Attigo is provided by Ascendium Education Solutions®, an affiliate of Ascendium Education Group®. For over 50, years we've simplified the complex and provided expert insight and counseling. As the nation's largest student loan guarantor, our knowledge of federal student loan regulations, policies and servicing has helped millions of people achieve repayment success. We're a nonprofit organization whose philanthropic mission is to elevate opportunities and outcomes for learners from low-income backgrounds.

### **About NorthStar**

NorthStar Education Services is an affiliate of Ascendium Education Group and supports the Co-Pay Partners student loan paydown service within the Attigo Suite.

### **About KirkpatrickPrice**

KirkpatrickPrice is a licensed CPA firm, PCI QSA, and a HITRUST CSF Assessor, registered with the PCAOB, providing assurance services to over a thousand clients worldwide. The firm has more than a decade of experience in information security by performing assessments, audits and tests that strengthen information security practices and internal controls. KirkpatrickPrice most commonly performs assessments on SOC 1, SOC 2, PCI DSS, HIPAA, HITRUST CSF, GDPR, ISO 27001, FISMA, and FERPA frameworks, as well as advanced-level penetration testing.