

Warren National University (formerly Kennedy-Western University) to close.

Its Cheyenne presence will end March 31.

This news first appeared on the Cheyenne Herald website.

by Dave FEATHERLY

Thousands of words have been printed on the pages of the Cheyenne Herald over the past four years on the subject of unaccredited "institutions" that had set up shop in Wyoming over the past several years.

For years, Wyoming has been the target of national ridicule based on the State's willingness to allow businesses chased from other states to operate with impunity here. For some reason, there were those who had no qualms about welcoming illegitimate and undesirable businesses elsewhere to set up shop within our borders and ply their fraudulent business all over the United States and world, using a Wyoming address.

Instead of shutting the scoundrels down as the 2006 legislation accomplished, Wyoming first imposed the rather timid requirement of "having a presence" in Wyoming, with at least a single employee here. These outfits rake in hundreds of thousands to several million dollars a year - renting a \$350.00 a month office and hiring a minimum wage employee to meet that requirement was no problem.

Basement offices in the Downtown Mini Mall, the old J.C. Penney Building and the Mossholder's Building and second story offices in the Majestic Building and the Tivoli, in addition to office space at the former Aero Tech Building by the airport runway presented no challenge.

When some in the Legislature tired of being ridiculed nationally, they passed legislation requiring these unaccredited institutions to gain, or at least seek, accreditation or get out of Dodge. Like rats from a sinking ship, most immediately scurried. They were not going to become accredited. They couldn't. They weren't providing an education with merit or value - they were selling hope to the unsuspecting.

Kennedy-Western University has been in business for almost 25 years. "Kennedy." Just imagine how that resonated around the world. Our hero to the free world, John F. Kennedy, had his name usurped by a business that for the past several years could not peddle their product in the state they called home, California, until 2007.

Degrees from unaccredited universities aren't meant for citizens of the United States. They are designed to give false hope to those in foreign countries. To those who crave an "American" degree. They don't know Lacrosse University of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi - the notorious degree seller - from the University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse - a legitimate campus in the highly-respected University of Wisconsin system.

Many of the degree peddlers, more often referred to as diploma mills but I don't think that begins to cover the damage they've done, took grandiose names to fool the students who lived far away, most often overseas, into believing the peddler had a connection with something far better than just a bank account to deposit their ill-gotten gains. American Global University. American Capital University. American City University. American Central University. "American" in the title was golden.

Paramount University of Technology. Three exaggerations in three words. It is not paramount to anything. It is not a university and it does not teach technology.

Trusting foreign students and their parents didn't know these were scammers. But we did. Employees at the Wyoming Department of Education visited these basement and second floor offices. They knew they weren't conducting classes - they weren't providing an education - from these tiny offices. There were no "professors" there to grade papers or accept calls for assistance. But, our people tolerated this charade. This scam perpetrated on unknowing and trusting students far distant from Wyoming - in particular, from Cheyenne, was tolerated.

Junkets were provided legislators and WDOE employees. When you can go to the United Arab Emirates or London, are you going to blow the whistle on fakes and frauds? Does the reputation of Wyoming mean less to these public officials than travel to exotic destinations? Obviously, it meant far less. In one of the stories readers can link to with this story, I made a terrible mistake. I identified Jayne Mockler as one of those who traveled at Preston University expense. It should have been Kathryn Sessions. A career educator, Sessions went to bat for that scammer. Preston (See page 1.) was one of the first rats to abandon the sinking ship of unaccredited institutions - they fled to Montgomery, Alabama before the ink dried on the Governor's signature to the new legislation.

Perhaps the largest of the money takers has been Kennedy-Western University (KWU), lastly known as Warren National University. It was not enough to link itself to Kennedy, they grabbed the "Warren" name when they attempted to gain accreditation. Maybe there were less than honorable reasons to take another name after fleecing students for two decades. Maybe they thought input from students would be diminished if they didn't realize Warren National was one and the same as KWU.

In the long run, nothing they tried worked. They were not recommended for candidacy for accreditation and they will now pull the plug on their nefarious operation.

The subject of Warren National University has heated up considerably in recent weeks. The Cheyenne Herald has been contacted by students who were concerned about the future of WNU, including one who had been trying to get a refund. Further research uncovered even more disconcerting news about WNU. National forums found the Cheyenne Herald's front page story about former superintendent of public instruction Judy Catchpole serving on the boards of both WNU and its parent company, L3, Inc. Over 500 visits were made to our website on a single day last week.

Another e-mail came from a guy in Illinois. He was upset with my story about Judy Catchpole (front page, November 11 issue). He said he had a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering from WNU and had worked hard for it. He called my story "horrible." I informed him that it was illegal in Illinois to use a degree from an unaccredited "university" to obtain a job, advancement or higher pay. He didn't know that. Within days of that criticism, I was forwarded a copy of the letter sent by WNU to students, informing them of the accreditation rejection and ultimate shutdown. Ironically, while some were defending WNU, the degree seller was making plans to shut down - to end the charade. But they just couldn't do it with dignity and class. They took one last swipe at their "students," by referring them to a similar business of even lower reputation than their own - Preston University. They believed so little in accreditation that they referred students to yet another of their type.

So now that Warren National has failed in its bid to become legitimate and has announced its closing, what about its students? Those with "degrees" should know by now that they could have gotten a comparable degree from a Cracker Jack's box but those who were in the middle of their pursuit are up the creek. Will WNU refund unearned deposits? Probably not.

KWU continues to treat its students with disrespect. In its closing announcement (<http://www.wnu.edu.com/> or follow the prompt from the Cheyenne Herald Home Page), WNU told students they could continue their studies at Preston University. You remember Preston, don't you? Another unaccredited scammer that bolted from Wyoming. PU have no intention of becoming accredited. Did WNU make this transfer to avoid litigation for abandoning students in pursuit of a degree? Did they refer students to an equally reprehensible scammer to perpetrate one final injustice to students who trusted them? On February 6, 2009, Preston University was issued a "Cease and Desist" Order by the Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education. *Read it on our website.*

The Alabama Department of Postsecondary Education was contacted by the Cheyenne Herald on February 5th about that lapse in the license. We were told that a review of Preston's renewal application was underway and a decision would be made in the next two days. In the meantime, WNU was referring students to an unaccredited degree seller that does not even have a license to do business in Alabama at the time the students were being referred. Why aren't criminal charges brought against these guys? There is absolutely no concern or empathy for students who have invested thousands of dollars of borrowed money to gain a degree that has the same value as police chief Bob Fecht's from Lacrosse University in Mississippi - ZERO!

Contrast the attitude of the State of Alabama (which we love to needle as being so far behind in educational matters) with the State of Wyoming:

On the Warren National University website, after they ended their attempt at accreditation, the Wyoming Department of Education continued to be accommodating toward the rascal's sale of degrees. WNU wrote: **"The degree granting authority for WNU is preserved while the appeal is being heard by the Wyoming Department of Education."** How can that be allowed?

According to a published story, a spokeswoman of WDOE said the State would allow WNU to continue their unsavory operation during the appeal process so ongoing "students" could finish their degree pursuit, etc. The WDOE still does not get it - WNU, and Kennedy-Western University before them - was not and is not issuing legitimate degrees. Doesn't WDOE understand that the Higher Learning Council peer review committee did not recommend WNU for candidacy for accreditation because it did not meet the minimum required standards?

In Alabama, the Order to Preston University, after a review showed they did not meet standards, shut them down. As soon as Preston acknowledged receipt of the Order, they had to close. The Cheyenne Herald asked the State of Alabama if Preston could operate while an appeal was pending. The written response was: *"Preston does not have the authority to operate in Alabama during the appeal. The Department requires it to cease and desist immediately."* What's wrong with us?

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