

# Accreditation To have or not to have

by Dave FEATHERLY

After being treated to an expense-paid trip overseas by the diploma mill she was sitting in judgment on, Democratic state senator Kathryn Sessions of Cheyenne returned enlightened. Accreditation, she then believed, was "not the end all or be all." Preston University had gotten to her.

Accreditation may not be the end all or be all but it is the truest measurement of worth that exists - in terms of education.

A driver's license is neither the end all or be all. But you need one to be allowed to drive on the public roadways legally. A marriage license certainly isn't an end all or be all. Maybe that's why so many now live together without benefit of one.

But, accreditation is the standard.

And without accreditation, the education paid for may be worth little. Credits earned at Preston cannot be applied toward a degree at the University of Wyoming.

This unaccredited business in Cheyenne uses its website to diminish the importance and value of accreditation. They say: "State governments have full authority to control academic institutions and to authorize schools to issue academic degrees and certificates." What they should say about Wyoming is that a license allows such "institutions" to SELL degrees. "This control is implemented through the state licensing process. The United States federal government does not authorize nor control degree-granting schools in any way." But they do. The U.S. Department of Education recognizes private firms which are in the accreditation business. If they are not recognized, their accreditation is without value.

The right hand columns on this page illustrate what one Wyoming-based degree selling business has done. American Central University claims accreditation from "The INTERNATIONAL Distance Education and Training Council." **IDETC.**

Nice try but no banana. The real - and recognized - accreditation agency is "The Distance Education and Training Council." **DETC.** No "International" in their name. The bogus accreditor was created to provide cover for degree sellers like ACU which cannot (or will not) gain legitimate accreditation. In some cases, the distance learning business itself creates the accreditation firm.

The IDETC even "borrowed" from the tag line of the legitimate DETC - they just changed "Global Leader in Distance Learning Accreditation" to "WORLD Leader in Distance Learning Accreditation." Presumably, humility prevented them claiming "INTERGALACTIC" leader.

"Preston University is officially authorized by the State of Wyoming to award all levels of post-secondary academic degrees," that website says. Wyoming is responsible for the sale of a degree which will have little or no value if that student travels from Pakistan to the United States in pursuit of a career? Wyoming is responsible for the deception? Contributory?

Are we proud? We should be ashamed.

Preston's website almost spits out: "In the United States, post-secondary academic institutions have established private associations with the intention to create organizational and procedural standards to ensure consistent delivery of academic programs. These private associations of members schools administer the 'accreditation' process in the U.S. All accredited institutions conform to the standards of the accrediting body, thus simplifying the evaluation and acceptance of credits among members."

Oh, yes, everyone else is out of step. Everyone, that is, except Preston University. "Consistent delivery ..." We wouldn't want any assurance that our doctors have been subjected to any "consistent delivery" of education now, would we? Accreditation in that paragraph is in quotes as though it is a fictional bestowal. As though anyone can buy it. Kind of like the degrees from these unaccredited degree selling businesses.

"The Preston University degree is valid and official." Valid and official to whom?

Remember, the message on these websites is intended for the overseas market. Wyoming high school graduates aren't apt to be taken in as easily as a Karachi kid.

"The State of Wyoming authorizes Preston to issue the degrees, and the state evaluators conduct periodic inspections of the university to ensure Preston adheres to all applicable state laws."

That's why Preston is here. We have no applicable state laws that are worth a damned. Beauty shops have to adhere to all applicable state laws but we wouldn't want them granting degrees to unsuspecting "students" in Pakistan.

"Aside from academic institutions, most U.S. businesses and many state and local governments will accept the academic credentials of Preston students and graduates." Maybe the mayor of Cheyenne and the city's police chief will but "most U.S. businesses?" If a welding shop wants to accept a degree earned from one of these peddlers, that is their business. If a retail store wants to hire sales clerks with degrees from Preston University, no harm done. But, "most U.S. businesses?"



Below is the legitimate (U.S. Department of Education recognized) accreditation.



There are some legislators who evidently believe that having these degree sellers operate from a second story office in Cheyenne is good. That somehow they provide economic development.

Finally - FINALLY - the University of Wyoming is taking a position in opposition to this form of post-secondary education. Why it has taken so long is hard to understand. Even the temporary head of the Wyoming Department of Education, Jim McBride, has weighed in with lukewarm opposition.

But what about the Governor?

Does the Governor know that the State, under his administration, supposedly reimburses for "education" provided by at least one of the degree sellers, Kennedy-Western University? Does he know that K-WU touts that on their website?

Know how many listings there are for places that will reimburse Kennedy-Western University "education" in the state of Oregon?

Zero. None. Nada. Zilch. Zip.

Why? Because unaccredited "institutions of higher learning" are as welcome in Oregon as are adult film producing businesses in most locales.

Whether the Legislature enacts tougher standards for these outfits to operate with Wyoming as a base or not, their days are numbered. If Pakistan throws out Preston University as has been reported, their base of operation in Cheyenne will have little purpose. Basement and second floor offices in downtown Cheyenne will be available for legitimate enterprises. "American" this and "American" names can be used on legitimate products.

