

# Laughingstock R Us!

The media is a great enabler for degree mills and a contributor to the inducements offered to Americans seeking a higher education with minimal effort.

After the last issue of the Cheyenne Herald disclosed that Cheyenne Police Chief Bob Fecht had bought a master's degree in criminal justice from a diploma mill in Mississippi, the Herald received a telephone call asking if we'd seen the current issue of the Reader's Digest.

**The address and so-called "location" for the advertiser, AHP Schools, is 1740H Dell Range Blvd., #510. That is the address for the UPS Store.**

When told that the Digest was subscribed to but often not read, the reader suggested we look at a feature called "THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS!" then after reading that offering to advance through that Reader's Digest a few pages and take a look at the ad running for "Work at Home."

Before leaving the phone, the Herald reader said that the business advertising "great careers" was using a Cheyenne, Wyoming, mailing address.

He had taken the time to travel to that address to see where the new business had set up in our fair city.

The address and so-called "location" for the advertiser, AHP Schools, is 1740H Dell Range Blvd., #510. That is the address for the UPS Store.

A website search for such an entity links to a McKinley College, which is shown in their promotional material to be "registered" in the state of Wyoming. Is it "licensed"?

It is not, according to the Wyoming Department of Education. AHP is, however, licensed as a non-degree granting school. Apparently, AHP has established McKinley as a degree granting school - AAS or AOS. But MU is operating illegally in Wyoming because it is not yet licensed and does not have a physical presence in the state. AHP is based in Fort Collins and may send someone to Cheyenne to retrieve mail.

Reader's Digest, May 2005

GET FREE FACTS ON ANY ONE OF TODAY'S MOST EXCITING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES!

## Work at Home or get a great paying office job!

- Train at home in your spare time!
- No previous experience needed.
- Be ready to start a great new career in as little as FOUR MONTHS!

Choose Any One of These Great Careers

<p><b>GET YOUR DEGREE</b></p> <p>Accounting... up to \$50,000                  Two Year AAS Degree in Accounting, Law, Management, Business, Computer, Marketing, Training, and much more. Complete your education in 2-4 years and earn a great salary!</p>	<p><b>GET YOUR DIPLOMA</b></p> <p>Medical Claims &amp; Billing... up to \$40,000                  Work at home or in a doctor's office. Handle all office billing and claims. Health care is growing fast! No previous experience necessary.</p>	<p>Administrative Assistant... up to \$40,000                  Learn to create spreadsheets, manage correspondence, manage databases, and more! Earn a great salary!</p>
<p>Wedding/Event Planning... up to \$35,000                  Organize and plan every aspect of your wedding, special events, and celebrations. Unlimited income potential. No previous experience necessary.</p>	<p><b>CALL TOLL-FREE 1-877-563-5072</b> Dept. RDD445 or mail this ad</p> <p>Name _____                  Address _____                  City _____ State _____ Zip _____</p> <p>Age _____ Sex _____</p> <p>Send FREE!</p>	

**THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS!**  
MICHAEL CROWLEY

## Pssst ... Need a Degree?

You won't believe who's holding a sham diploma

**C**ONGRATULATIONS, Colby Nolan! Last year Colby scored a 3.5 grade-point average in an MBA program, earning a degree that's sure to make his résumé shine.

His only problem will be trying not to meow in his job interviews. You see, Colby is not an eager young man with a golden future in business. He's a black house cat. In fact, Colby is the pet of a prosecutor in the Pennsylvania attorney general's office, who used Colby's name in a sting operation against Trinity Southern University.

Never heard of the school? No wonder. Officials say Texas-based Trinity Southern was one of hundreds of "diploma mills"—so-called institutions of higher learning that have little or no legitimate coursework. Their only real requirement appears to be a valid credit card. Colby's degree, on thick paper embossed with a gold seal, cost him just \$399. Another \$99 bought a realistic transcript showing he'd earned A's and B's in classes that included accounting and finance.

Colby's shoepskin shows how anything goes in the crooked—and wildly profitable—world of diploma mills. Author John Bear, who has studied diploma mills for years, once scanned résumés posted on the job-search site Monster.com.

Michael Crowley, a regular columnist for Reader's Digest, is also a senior editor at The New Republic magazine. Write to him at [outrages@rd.com](mailto:outrages@rd.com).

ILLUSTRATED BY SUTTON JAMES

Reader's Digest, May 2005

**AHP Schools / McKinley College**

The laxity of Wyoming laws regarding diploma mills may even be tempting legitimate distance learning operations to jump on the gravy train.

AHP Schools is a Fort Collins-based, nationally accredited, **NON-DEGREE** granting business of long standing. It is also unnecessarily licensed in the State of Wyoming. Accredited schools do not also have to be state licensed.

McKinley College is a start-up, unaccredited, **DEGREE-GRANTING** institution. It is not accredited, nor licensed by the State of Wyoming, according to Tim Lockwood of DOE on 4/28/05. The link between the two "schools" is established on their websites.

The ad above appears to be a merging of the two businesses. Nowhere on the AHP website are "degrees" mentioned as they are above and AHP is not accredited nor licensed to grant degrees. McKinley is not accredited or licensed to do anything. In Wyoming or anywhere else in the United States.

There are 4 national diploma mill experts: Alan Contreras of the Oregon Degree Authorization office; Dr. John B. Bear, whose books have identified several of the unaccredited diploma mills; George Gollin, a University of Illinois professor who has become an expert; and Allan Ezell, a retired FBI agent.

The things written about the state of Wyoming and its past cozy relationships with these unattractive "institutions" have been critical and very uncomplimentary.

Mr. Gollin wrote the following about Wyoming:

"People start to giggle if you say 'Wyoming-licensed school,' if you know about accreditation."

The executive director of one of the 6 regional accreditation agencies said about Wyoming: "Because of loose state requirements, more online schools are popping up in Wyoming than anywhere else," and, "most other states have enough rigor in how they determine who can operate as a college and grant degrees that it's not as easy for places to get started."

Is this where the Blank, the state legislature, the Governor and their predecessors take their collective bows?

Giggling about Wyoming having only one four-year institution of higher learning is one thing. Giggling about the crowds attracted during Frontier Days, with their knee-high socks, plaid Bermuda shorts, and straw cowboy hats, is another.

But giggling at Wyoming because the state is a haven for these fraudulent diploma sources is embarrassing.

Filling basement offices throughout the downtown with unaccredited diploma sellers is not economic development, in spite of what Tucker Fagan and Randy Bruns may believe. Wyoming is overdue in taking corrective actions.

Put a stop to the cover provided these bogus operations. The light isn't shining into those basements. It must.