

Joining the fight

The Herald gets some help in the fight against degree-selling frauds

The press release at the right was sent by the Department of Education.

In light of members of the Wyoming Legislature traveling to far-off countries and returning in support of the very entities they went to scrutinize, it is gratifying to finally see those in positions of responsibility join the fight earlier supported only by Trent Blankenship. At least it seemed that up and down the ranks, officials elected or hired to support and improve public education were willing to look away as Wyoming became a safe haven for these bogus degree peddlers who found themselves unwelcome in other states.

Lacrosse University sold a degree to Cheyenne's police chief. They were so bad that they were unwelcome even in Louisiana. Even in Louisiana! So they moved to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

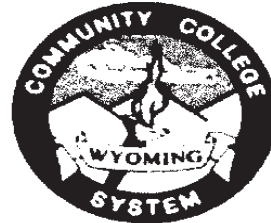
When the mayor had a chance to disavow the chief's action and require reimbursement from Fecht, he chose to endorse it. The University of Wyoming's interim president, Tom Buchanan, has gone to great lengths to criticize these worthless mail order degrees. What will it take for the City of Cheyenne to join the assault?

Only the Casper Star-Tribune, of other local media, has joined the Cheyenne Herald in condemning these unwelcome businesses. Why the State of Wyoming has believed it was beneficial to have them among our legitimate enterprises only they can explain.

Trent Blankenship left office with a strong belief that legislators like Tex Boggs would bring forward legislation to rid the state of these education pretenders. Unaccredited "universities" are no more real than faux degree sellers. At least the gag degrees are not presented as some sort of educational accomplishment. They are simply for conversation pieces - not to enable a police chief to wrap his arms around as a valuable sheepskin - which he had to pay extra for and which has absolutely no educational value to him.

There are states where it is illegal to use these mail order degrees on a resume and where no state or government job can be even sought with such a degree listed on the application or resume.

Accreditation is, as Blankenship said, a must. These degree sellers have played this State for saps for too long. Most will not pursue accreditation. Not because of cost but because they cannot gain it. They have no curriculum, they have no faculty, and they have no campus. They are worse than Miss Cleo - preying on the vulnerable. On the unwise and uninformed. The degrees have less worth than a 976 call. We've said it. Others now agree.



October 11, 2005

Senator Tex Boggs
 Chairman, Private School Licensing Task Force
 Wyoming Legislature
 State Capitol
 Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

Dear Senator Boggs:

We write as the representatives of Wyoming's education system, kindergarten through college, regarding Private School Licensing. We are deeply concerned about the current law, and the impact this has on our state's citizens. We are concerned about the damage that has been done to Wyoming's education system generally. We are appreciative of the work being done by your task force to address these concerns.

The bill drafted by your task force is a good product. After a joint review of the draft, we offer the following comments:

- The bill references licensing and registration. We would suggest using only one reference and prefer licensing. Licensing has a connotation of completing an application and receiving approval.
- Similarly, the State Board of Education and the Wyoming Department of Education are frequently used, possibly with some confusion. To clarify contact and responsibility requirements, we would suggest saying, "The State Board of Education through the Wyoming Department of Education will . . ." or "The Wyoming Department of Education in coordination with the Wyoming State Board of Education will . . ."
- Our final general statement deals with being accepted as a candidate for accreditation by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and accepted by the Wyoming Department of Education. We do not believe that making an application or sending a letter of interest is sufficient. Schools interested in being accredited send a letter of interest, receive instructions for an application, then compile all the required documents and data. The application, data and documents are then provided to the accrediting agency for review. Usually, a campus visit is scheduled and after the visit and documents are reviewed a school is either accepted or rejected as a candidate. In general if a school is accepted as a candidate, the accrediting agency believes they will likely be able to meet all accrediting requirements. We believe all schools should either be accredited, or be accepted as a candidate. Once accepted as a candidate the process takes one year to 18 months. We believe that three years is very generous and five years far exceeds reasonable expectations.

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We appreciate the task force time and consideration of our concerns. We believe it is critical to regain and protect the academic reputation of Wyoming's education programs.

Respectfully submitted,

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 University of Wyoming

Jim Rose, Ed.D.
 Executive Director
 Wyoming Community
 College Commission

Jim McBride, Ed.D.
 State Superintendent
 of Public Instruction