
HOUSE BILL 2756

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2016 Regular Session

By Representative Haler

Read first time 01/20/16. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to providing an exemption from the false academic
2 credential law for doctorate degrees awarded by a religious
3 institution; and amending RCW 9A.60.070.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 9A.60.070 and 2012 c 229 s 501 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 (1) A person is guilty of issuing a false academic credential if
8 the person knowingly:

9 (a) Grants or awards a false academic credential or offers to
10 grant or award a false academic credential in violation of this
11 section;

12 (b) Represents that a credit earned or granted by the person in
13 violation of this section can be applied toward a credential offered
14 by another person;

15 (c) Grants or offers to grant a credit for which a representation
16 as described in (b) of this subsection is made; or

17 (d) Solicits another person to seek a credential or to earn a
18 credit the person knows is offered in violation of this section.

19 (2) A person is guilty of knowingly using a false academic
20 credential if the person knowingly uses a false academic credential
21 or falsely claims to have a credential issued by an institution of

1 higher education that is accredited by an accrediting association
2 recognized as such by rule of the student achievement council:

3 (a) In a written or oral advertisement or other promotion of a
4 business; or

5 (b) With the intent to:

6 (i) Obtain employment;

7 (ii) Obtain a license or certificate to practice a trade,
8 profession, or occupation;

9 (iii) Obtain a promotion, compensation or other benefit, or an
10 increase in compensation or other benefit, in employment or in the
11 practice of a trade, profession, or occupation;

12 (iv) Obtain admission to an educational program in this state; or

13 (v) Gain a position in government with authority over another
14 person, regardless of whether the person receives compensation for
15 the position.

16 (3) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
17 section and RCW 28B.85.220.

18 (a) "False academic credential" means a document that provides
19 evidence or demonstrates completion of an academic or professional
20 course of instruction beyond the secondary level that results in the
21 attainment of an academic certificate, degree, or rank, and that is
22 not issued by a person or entity that: (i) Is an entity accredited by
23 an agency recognized as such by rule of the student achievement
24 council or has the international equivalents of such accreditation;
25 or (ii) is an entity authorized as a degree-granting institution by
26 the student achievement council; or (iii) is an entity exempt from
27 the requirements of authorization as a degree-granting institution by
28 the student achievement council; or (iv) is an entity that has been
29 granted a waiver by the student achievement council from the
30 requirements of authorization by the council. Such documents include,
31 but are not limited to, academic certificates, degrees, coursework,
32 degree credits, transcripts, or certification of completion of a
33 degree. Doctorate degrees issued by a religious seminary, institute,
34 college, or university whose certificate, diplomas, or degrees
35 clearly identify the religious character of the educational program
36 are not false academic credentials.

37 (b) "Grant" means award, bestow, confer, convey, sell, or give.

38 (c) "Offer," in addition to its usual meanings, means advertise,
39 publicize, or solicit.

40 (d) "Operate" includes but is not limited to the following:

1 (i) Offering courses in person, by correspondence, or by
2 electronic media at or to any Washington location for degree credit;
3 (ii) Granting or offering to grant degrees in Washington;
4 (iii) Maintaining or advertising a Washington location, mailing
5 address, computer server, or telephone number, for any purpose, other
6 than for contact with the institution's former students for any
7 legitimate purpose related to the students having attended the
8 institution.
9 (4) Issuing a false academic credential is a class C felony.
10 (5) Knowingly using a false academic credential is a gross
11 misdemeanor.

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