



ACTIONS AGAINST UNLICENSED COLLEGES AND PRIVATE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOOLS IN CONNECTICUT FALL 2001-SPRING 2003

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for addressing unlicensed colleges and other post-secondary institutions or organizations operating in Connecticut. This is an important “consumer protection” function because unauthorized colleges and private occupational schools do not uphold the minimal standards essential to maintaining educational quality.

Review and authorization of colleges and universities by the Board of Governors, and review and authorization of private occupational schools by the Commissioner of Higher Education, provide significant protections to Connecticut citizens, among them:

- ensuring that the “certifications” provided by colleges and private occupational schools reflect the content of education or training delivered,
- ensuring that students receive the training the schools promise them and for which they pay tuitions, and
- ensuring that the state’s employers are able to hire individuals with the knowledge and skills they need.

This is a matter of national concern as well. Recently, the U.S. General Accounting Office investigated the proliferation of “diploma mills” and other organizations that award academic degrees without regard for academic process or quality. The unethical use of such degrees for employment and advancement in the workplace is an unfortunate result of these practices and can lead to serious harm to the public, especially in professional fields.

Connecticut’s statutes and regulations, and Board of Governors’ policies, require any institution or organization wishing to provide post-secondary educational programs to the public to adhere to specific standards. Institutions and organizations that do not do so, and those that do not apply for licensure based on those standards, are not allowed to operate in Connecticut. They are issued cease and desist letters and, when necessary, are referred to the State Attorney General for appropriate legal action.

During the past year, the Department of Higher Education issued cease and desist orders to the colleges and private occupational schools listed on the following pages. The results of those orders are summarized as well.

A. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OPERATING ILLEGALLY IN CONNECTICUT

- **Almeda University, Cromwell.** October 2001 and June 2002.

For offering Associate's, Bachelor's, and Master's degrees in business, arts & sciences, and technical fields without authorization by the Board of Governors to operate as an institution of higher education in the state.

Result: In response to the first cease and desist letter, sent in October 2001, Almeda's attorney wrote to the Department that Almeda was no longer operating in Connecticut. Further investigation, in the spring of 2002, indicated that Almeda was continuing to advertise its programs in Connecticut and a second cease and desist letter was sent in June 2002. That letter was also sent to the Attorney General for legal action against Almeda.

- **Adam Smith University, Wilton.** March 2002.

For offering degree completion programs via distance learning "at various degree levels," without authorization by the Board of Governors to operate as an institution of higher education in the state.

Result: Adam Smith removed all references to Connecticut from its website. In addition, the Department worked with the Office of the Secretary of State to prevent authentication of Adam Smith degrees for several students from China requesting such state authentication.

- **Coastline Community College, Groton.** August 2002

For violating Connecticut's "physical presence" regulations by employing an agent in Connecticut.

Result: The agent has vacated the office and is no longer engaging in activities on behalf of Coastline.

- **Governors State University, Groton.** August 2002.

For violating Connecticut's "physical presence" regulations by employing an agent in Connecticut.

Result: The agent has vacated the office and is no longer engaging in activities on behalf of Governors State University.

- **Vision International University, Stamford, Stratford, and West Hartford.** October 2002.

For offering degrees and certificates in Bible Study without authorization by the Board of Governors to operate as an institution of higher education in the state.

Result: Vision International University withdrew its contracts with the three organizations in Connecticut (Ministry of Fire in West Hartford, Community Tabernacle School of Ministry in Stamford, and Ebenezer Gospel Assembly Foundation Bible Institute) that had been offering its programs.

- **University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.** November 2002.
For operating (1) a Doctor of Audiology program in Hartford and (2) a Doctor of Pharmacy program in Hartford and in New Haven without authorization by the Board of Governors to offer the programs.

Result: The University of Florida is in the process of seeking licensure to operate in Connecticut.

- **International College of Cosmetology, Wethersfield.** December 2002.
For using the designation “college” in its advertising and other references, information, and promotional materials.

Result: The institution changed its name to International Institute of Cosmetology, including amendments with the Secretary of State, and institutional changes including change of signs at their location, changed business cards, and changed advertising materials.

- **Academy di Cappelli College of Cosmetology, Wallingford.** December 2002.
For using the designation “college” in its advertising and other references, information, and promotional materials.

Result: The institution changed its name to Academy di Cappelli School of Cosmetology, including amendments with the Secretary of State, and institutional changes including change of signs at their location, changed business cards, and changed advertising materials.

- **United Christian Bible College, Bridgeport.** January 2003.
For operating Master’s and Doctoral programs without authorization by the Board of Governors to operate as an institution of higher education in the state.

Result: Changed name to United Christian Bible Institute and has stated that it will cease issuing degrees and will cease advertising or promoting the school as an institution that grants academic or professional degrees. The Department responded by saying that it must cease issuing or advertising any kind of “degree” and not only academic or professional degrees.

- **Wittfield College, Milford.** January 2003.
For operating a Master of Management program without authorization by the Board of Governors to operate as an institution of higher education in the state.

Result: The Department is awaiting a response from Wittfield. We will refer the matter to the Attorney General for legal action if a response is not forthcoming.

We continue to monitor all appropriate advertising sites — print and electronic — to ensure that all those institutions and organizations that seek to offer college-level educational programs do so appropriately and that they file applications for review and potential authorization by the Board of Governors to operate in the state before they begin their programs.

B. PRIVATE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOOLS OPERATING ILLEGALLY IN CONNECTICUT

Connecticut's private occupational schools provide entry-level employment training and specific and immediately applicable job skills. They operate as for-profit businesses to train individuals in trade, industrial, commercial, and service occupations. Private occupational schools provide "certification" of skills and use that certification to place graduates into particular occupations. Those certifications are recognized by employers who hire private occupational school graduates for specific jobs that require specific training. Private occupational schools must therefore meet strict standards in all of their educational programs, to ensure that students are properly trained and employers get what they expect and pay for.

Bringing training providers into compliance, especially in evolving fields, is a growing activity. For example, in October 2000 the Department of Higher Education issued cease and desist orders to 157 computer training providers.

Result: Most of those demonstrated to our satisfaction why they were not qualified or expected to be licensed as private occupational schools. For example, they served only corporate clients or provided only one-on-one skills enhancement training. Many others had gone out of business. Six of them, which could not demonstrate to our satisfaction that they were exempt from licensure as private occupational schools, filed applications with the Department for authorization as private occupational schools.

This year, to date, the Department has issued the following cease and desist orders:

- **United States Home Inspection Academy, Danbury.** November 22, 2002.
For operating a training program for Home Inspectors without authorization by the Commissioner.

Result: The Academy argued that because their activities are reviewed by the Department of Consumer Protection, they do not need authorization under the statutes and regulations governing the private occupational schools. The Department continues to work with the Academy and has referred this issue to the Attorney General for a ruling.

- Eight computer training providers identified in a *Hartford Business Journal* article as providing computer training: **Key-Logic in Windsor, The Golden Company in West Hartford, Anderson PC in Avon, Computer Strategies in Tolland, Techniques PC in Glastonbury, Ontrack Computer in East Hampton, Mentor Communications in Ellington, and Enterprise Company in Manchester.** December 13, 2002.

Result: Ontrack Computer in East Hampton is in the process of applying for licensure as a private occupational school. The other seven organizations responded that they are delivering software and hardware training only for employees of Connecticut and other businesses and they provide various consulting services with no direct access to services by the general public. They therefore did not qualify or were expected to be licensed as private occupational schools.

We continue to monitor all appropriate advertising sites — print and electronic — to ensure that all training providers who advertise private occupational or vocational training opportunities to the public do so appropriately and that those who are qualified to be licensed as private occupational schools file the appropriate applications for review and authorization by the Commissioner.