

# **Diploma Mills and Fake Degrees No Books, No Classes . . . Big Problem!**

## ***What is a Diploma Mill?***

- An illegal operation selling certificates and/or degrees that require no coursework or tests.
- An operation awarding “degrees” for life experiences.

## ***What’s wrong with a diploma mill and a fake degree?***

- Diploma Mills and fake degrees make all institutions and degrees suspect.
- Diploma Mills target the less well-informed citizens.
- Diploma Mills cause employers to waste time and money verifying degrees.
- Fake degrees are not recognized by the legitimate institutions when students request transfer or acceptance to graduate school.
- Employers may not recognize the diploma for employment or promotions.

## ***How do I identify a Diploma Mill or a fake degree?***

- The operation lacks state and/or federal authority to operate.
- The e-mail address for the operation changes regularly and cannot be used for inquiries or other contact.
- The operation provides only a post office box or telephone number for contact (the telephone number is usually connected to an answering service promising contact within 24 hours).
- A very short period is required to earn a degree.
- Very few, if any, assignments are required to complete a degree.
- Little, if any, class attendance, online or in person, is required of the student.

## ***What is ADHE doing to prevent Diploma Mills from establishing operations in the State?***

- Requiring all degree-granting institutions operating in Arkansas to meet the standards established for the operation of an institution of higher education in Arkansas by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board).
- Requiring all degree-granting institutions to have all degree programs (traditional delivery and distance delivery) approved by the Coordinating Board.
- Constantly monitoring the operations of all institutions approved by the Coordinating Board.
- Investigating reports of non-authorized institution(s) in the State and providing information to the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Office if the institution(s) does not comply with Arkansas Rules and Regulations.
- Working with other states to prevent the spread of diploma mills.

### **How can I find out if an institution is approved to offer degree programs in Arkansas?**

- The Arkansas Department of Higher Education maintains a list of the colleges and universities approved by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board and authorized by the Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to offer degrees to Arkansas citizens. The lists are available at:

Arkansas Public Colleges and Universities

<http://www.adhe.edu>

Non-public and Out-of-State College and Universities

<http://www.adhe.edu/pdfs/ICAC/ICACA-Institutions.pdf>

<http://www.adhe.edu/ICAC/ExemptInstitutions.doc>

- Contact the Arkansas Department of Higher Education at (501) 371-2000.

### **Who do I contact if I think I have been in contact with a Diploma Mill?**

- The Coordinator for Institutional Certification (501) 371-2012 or (501) 371-2000.
- Arkansas Attorney General's Office of Consumer Protection (501) 682-2007.

### **More information about Diploma Mills can be found at:**

- The Council for Higher Education Accreditation  
<http://www.chea.org>
- The United States Department of Education  
<http://www.ed.gov>
- The Federal Trade Commission  
<http://www.ftc.gov>
- US Department of Labor  
<http://www.dol.gov>
- Better Business Bureau  
<http://www.bbb.org>

*Information on this website was compiled from documents prepared by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, Council for Higher Education Accreditation; Illinois Board of Higher Education; Kentucky Community and Technical College System; Oregon Student Assistance Commission Office of Degree Authorization; Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board Degree Authorization Staff; and Dr. John Bear in the 13th edition of Bear's Guide to Earning Degrees Non-traditionally (1999).*