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Warren National University (formerly Kennedy-Western University) to close.

Its Cheyenne presence will end March 31.

February 2, 2009

by Dave FEATHERLY

Thousands of words have been printed on the pages of the Cheyenne Herald over the past nearly four years on the subject of unaccredited "institutions" that had set up shop in Wyoming over the past several years.

For years, Wyoming has been the target of nationally criticism based on the State's willingness to allow businesses chased from other states to operate with impunity here. For some reason, there were those who had no qualms about welcoming illegitimate and undesirable businesses elsewhere to set up shop within our borders and ply their fraudulent business all over the United States and world, using a Wyoming address.

Instead of shutting the scoundrels down as the 2006 legislation accomplished, Wyoming first imposed the rather timid requirement of "having a presence" in Wyoming, with at least a single employee here. These outfits rake in hundreds of thousands to several million dollars a year - renting a \$350.00 a month office and a minimum wage employee to meet that requirement was no problem.

Basement offices in the Downtown Mini Mall, the old J.C. Penney Building and the Mossholder's Building and second story offices in the Majestic Building and the Tivoli, in addition to office space at the former Aero Tech Building by the airport runway, presented no challenge.

When some in the Legislature tired of being ridiculed nationally, they passed legislation requiring these unaccredited institutions to gain, or at least seek, accreditation or get out of Dodge. Like rats from a sinking ship, most immediately scurried. They were not going to become accredited. They couldn't. They weren't providing an education with merit or value - they were selling hope to the unsuspecting.

Kennedy-Western University has been in business for almost 25 years. "Kennedy." Just imagine how that resonated around the world. Our hero to the free world, John F. Kennedy, had his name usurped by a business that for the past several years could not peddle their product in the state they called home - California.

Degrees from unaccredited universities aren't meant for citizens of the United States. They are designed to give false hope to those in foreign countries. To those who crave an "American" degree. They don't know Lacrosse University of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi - the notorious degree seller - from University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse - a legitimate campus in the highly-respected University of Wisconsin system.

Many of the degree peddlers, more often referred to as diploma mills but I don't think that begins to cover the damage they've done, took grandiose names to fool the

students who lived far away, most often overseas, into believing the peddler had a connection with something far better than just a bank account to deposit their ill-gotten gains. American Global University. American Capital University. American City University.

Paramount University of Technology. Three exaggerations in three words.

Trusting foreign students and their parents didn't know these were scammers. But we did. Employees at the Wyoming Department of Education visited these basement and second floor offices. They knew they weren't conducting classes - they weren't providing an education - from these tiny offices. There were no "professors" there to grade papers or accept calls for assistance. But, our people tolerated this charade. This scam perpetrated on unknowing and trusting students far distant from Wyoming - in particular, from Cheyenne was ignored.

Junkets were provided legislators and WDOE employees. When you can go to the United Arab Emirates or London, are you going to blow the whistle on these frauds? Does the reputation of Wyoming mean less to these public officials than travel to exotic destinations? Obviously, it meant far less. In one of the stories readers can link to with this story, I made a terrible mistake. I identified Jayne Mockler as one of those who traveled at Preston University expense. It should have been Kathryn Sessions. A career educator, Sessions went to bat for that scammer. Preston was one of the first rats to abandon the sinking ship of unaccredited institutions - they fled to Montgomery, Alabama before the ink dried on the Governor's signature to the new legislation.

Perhaps the largest of the money takers has been Kennedy-Western University, lastly known as Warren National University. It was not enough to link itself to Kennedy, they grabbed the "Warren" name when they attempted to gain accreditation. Maybe there were less than honorable reasons to take another name after fleecing students for two decades. Maybe they were aware that input from students would be diminished if they didn't realize Warren National was one and the same as Kennedy-Western.

In the long run, nothing they tried worked. They were not recommended for eligibility for accreditation and they will now pull the plug on their nefarious operation.

The subject of Warren National University has heated up considerably in recent days. The Cheyenne Herald has been contacted by students who were concerned about the future of WNU, including one who had been trying to get a refund. Further research uncovered even more disconcerting news about WNU. National forums found the Cheyenne Herald's front page story about former superintendent of public instruction Judy Catchpole serving on the boards of both WNU and its parent company, L3, Inc. Over 500 visits were made to that website on a single day last week.

Another e-mail came from a guy in Illinois. He was upset with that story about Judy Catchpole. He said he had a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering from WNU and had worked hard for it. He called my story "horrible." I informed him that it was illegal in Illinois to use a degree from an unaccredited "university" to obtain a job, advancement or higher pay. He didn't know that.

Oregon passed a law in the last couple years that requires anyone using a degree from an unaccredited university like Kennedy-Western or Warren National to show a discrediting statement with it. Read this from Oregon:

"So now Kennedy-Western grads can proudly proclaim their degrees ... sort of. Under the new law, those graduates will have to follow mention of their degree by saying that their alma mater "does not have accreditation recognized by the United States Department of Education and has not been approved by the [Oregon] Office of Degree Authorization," the official language dictated by the legislation. The bill, which received only 3 "nay" votes in the 60-member House and 30-member Senate, says that the "disclaimer shall be made in any résumé, letterhead, business card, announcement or advertisement in which the person is claiming or representing to have an academic degree" from an institution that is not either accredited, or licensed to give degrees by the state.

People who do not use the disclaimer will face up to a \$1,000 fine for every violation. They could also face criminal prosecution if the omission is a potential public threat, such as in the case of a public health worker."

Looks like that would have made it hard to get many jobs in Oregon with a KWU or WNU degree.

So now that Warren National has failed in its bid to become legitimate and has announced its closing, what about its students? Those with "degrees" should know by now that they could have gotten a comparable degree from a Cracker Jack's box but those who were in the middle of their pursuit are up the creek. Will WNU refund unearned deposits? Probably not. One "Online Degree" forum poster suggested that Wells Fargo Bank was providing loans for students to take the WNU courses. Will they forgive those loans? Probably not.

KWU continues to treat its students with disrespect. In the closing announcement (<http://www.wnu.edu.com/> or follow the prompt from the Cheyenne Herald Home Page), WNU told students they could continue their studies at Preston University. You remember Preston, don't you? Another unaccredited scammer that bolted from Wyoming. PU have no intention of becoming accredited. Did WNU make this transfer to avoid litigation for abandoning students in pursuit of a degree? Did they refer students to an equally reprehensible scammer to perpetrate one final injustice to students who trusted them? That story will follow. (According to the Alabama Department of Post Secondary Education website, Preston University's license expired on 12/1/2008.)