



State of New Jersey


DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

LUCILLE E. DAVY
Commissioner

September 2, 2008

TO: District Superintendents
Charter School Leaders

FROM: Lucille E. Davy 
Commissioner

SUBJECT: Use of Academic Degrees

Recently there have been serious concerns raised regarding the use of degrees from non-accredited institutions by New Jersey educators. As you know, the Department of Education does not permit the use of such degrees when issuing certification credentials. In addition, under state law individuals are not permitted to use titles or degree references unless the degree was obtained from an institution duly authorized by the State of New Jersey. Given these concerns, I thought it would be helpful to provide you with the applicable statutory information as well as information with respect to how you can determine if an institution is an institution duly authorized by the State of New Jersey.

The Commission on Higher Education is the agency of State government responsible for regulating the use of academic degrees in New Jersey. N.J.S.A. 18A:3-15.3 provides: "A person shall not append to his name any letters in the same form designated by the Commission on Higher Education as entitled to the protection accorded to an academic degree unless the person has received from a duly authorized institution of higher education the degree or certificate for which the letters are registered. For the purposes of this section, a duly authorized institution of higher education means an in-State institution licensed by the Commission on Higher Education or an out-of-state institution licensed by the appropriate state agency and regionally accredited or seeking accreditation by the appropriate accrediting body recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Education or the United States Department of Education."

The Commission's website at www.state.nj.us/highereducation features a link to the U.S. Department of Education searchable data base of approved accreditors and accredited institutions. The regional accreditors acceptable for out-of-state institutions are as follows: Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and Western

www.nj.gov/education

Association of Schools and Colleges. Degrees earned from out-of state institutions accredited by one of these accreditors are legal for use in New Jersey, in addition to degrees earned at New Jersey institutions of higher education licensed by the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education.

Please share this information with the professional staff in your district as well as with your school board members and urge your staff to utilize these resources to check the status of an institution before enrolling. The New Jersey School Boards Association will also distribute this memorandum directly to school board members throughout the State as they, too, recognize the seriousness of this matter.

c: Senior Staff

NJLEE Group

Garden State Coalition of Schools

Jane Oates, Executive Director, NJ Commission on Higher Education

Marie Bilik, Executive Director, NJSBA