

TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – VERITAS COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL

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I. SUMMARY

The Commission has statutory responsibility for the administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, commonly referred to as the Degree Authorization Act. The Commission has developed policies and procedures to include an application process for any degree granting institution wishing to begin operation in Colorado. Institutions meeting the applicable requirements will be granted authority to operate upon the Commission's approval.

Veritas College International has requested such authorization to operate as a seminary or bible college. Staff has conducted the required review of the institution's application materials and finds that the institution meets all the requirements, with the exception of the property tax exemption. Veritas College International is not buying property in the state, instead it will lease property, and therefore has not applied for a property tax exemption.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education has statutory responsibility for administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, which authorizes certain types of institutions to offer degrees and/or degree credits. These are: (1) Colorado publicly-supported colleges and universities; (2) properly accredited private colleges and universities; (3) postsecondary seminaries and bible colleges; and (4) private occupational schools authorized by the Division of Private Occupational School. Persons or unauthorized organizations that violate the provisions of the statute are subject to legal penalties.

All private colleges and universities, out of state public colleges and universities, and seminaries or bible colleges are required to register with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) and to meet criteria found in CCHE Policy Section I Part J, Degree Authorization Act, and in applicable statute in order to be granted authorization to offer degrees in Colorado. Such authorization must be received by the institution prior to offering any program of instruction, academic credits, or degrees; opening a place of business; soliciting students or enrollees; or offering educational support services.

The Commission administers the Degree Authorization Act by determining an institution's eligibility to operate pursuant to statute and CCHE policy. Commission action is required by policy in order for institutions to be authorized at any level.

In the case of a seminary or bible college, an institution must qualify as a bona fide religious postsecondary educational institution which is exempt from property taxation under the laws of this state and require for admission at least a high school diploma or its equivalent. Additionally, to qualify as a bona fide religious postsecondary educational institution, an organization must meet each of the following criteria:

1. Be a non-profit institution owned, controlled, operated and maintained by a bona fide church or religious denomination, lawfully operating as a non-profit religious corporation pursuant to Title 7 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.
2. Limit the educational program to the principles of that church or denomination and grant degrees or diplomas only in areas of study that contain on their face a reference to the theological or religious aspect of the degree's subject area. Institutions operating under this degree authorization shall not award degrees in any area of physical science or medicine; or degrees appropriate only for academic institutions; or degrees associated with specific professional fields or endeavors not clearly and directly related to religious studies or occupations.
3. Not market, offer, or grant degrees or diplomas which are represented as being linked to a church or denomination, but which actually are degrees in secular areas of study.
4. Have obtained exemption from property taxation under state law and shall have provided the Department a copy of the certificate of this exemption.

Veritas College International is proposing to offer six degrees. Each program listed is exactly as it will appear on the degree face.

- Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Ministry
- Master of Arts in Biblical Ministry
- Doctor of Ministry
- Master of Divinity
- Doctor of Philosophy (Theology)
- Doctor of Divinity (Causa Horaris)

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

A representative from Veritas College International communicated with the DHE as required by the Degree Authorization Act policy and formally applied for authorization to operate as a seminary or bible college. The representative provided all documentation required by the Act with the exception of one item. The College has not obtained a property tax exemption due to the fact that the institution administrators seek to lease rather than purchase property. After consulting with the Attorney General's office, DHE staff has determined that the institution would be exempt under the laws of this state if the institution sought to operate on purchased property. Copies of all relevant application materials are on file in the Academic Affairs Office.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve authorization for Veritas College International as an exempt seminary or bible college.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

23-2-101 C.R.S.
23-2-102 C.R.S.
23-2-103 C.R.S.
23-2-103.3 C.R.S.