

**TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – SPIRITUAL PATHS
INSTITUTE**

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends revocation of authorization for Spiritual Paths Institute to operate in Colorado because of its failure to make required timely progress toward accreditation.

The Commission granted Spiritual Paths Institute probationary authorization on June 1, 2006, with the requirement that it obtain accreditation with a U.S. Department of Education recognized accreditation body within 24 months. Spiritual Paths Institute missed a deadline imposed by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and as a result failed to meet the requirements of the Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) and by the HLC.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education has statutory responsibility for administration of Title 23, Article 2 of the Colorado Revised Statutes, commonly referred to as the Degree Authorization Act, which sets out the terms under which certain types of institutions¹ may offer degrees or degree credits. Persons or 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, seminaries and bible colleges are required to register with the Colorado Department of Higher Education and to meet criteria in CCHE Policy Section I Part J, Degree Authorization Act, in order to be granted authorization to offer degrees within 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. Policy requires Commission action for institutions to be authorized at any level.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Under the previous Degree Authorization Act (in effect in 2006), private, degree-granting institutions were given authorization to enroll, instruct and graduate students once a relationship

¹ (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 Schools.

with an accreditation body was established. The institution would maintain its authorization if it made continuous effort toward accreditation and was approved within a reasonable and timely manner.

Spiritual Paths Institute received probationary authorization in 2006 on the condition that it seek accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. Spiritual Paths Institute missed the first deadline set by the HLC. Its probationary authorization expired in July 2008. HLC advised department staff that Spiritual Paths Institute missed HLC's first deadline and now would need to start the HLC process over. DHE staff assesses the failure to meet this deadline as sufficient evidence that the institution is not likely to obtain accreditation in a reasonable and timely manner and therefore should not be enrolling and instructing students.

Spiritual Paths Institute is currently offering InterSpiritual Wisdom programs out of Aspen, Colorado and Santa Barbara, California but has removed language that it is an institution of higher education.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission revoke the probationary authorization for Spiritual Paths Institute.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-2-103.3(b)