

TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – WESTWOOD COLLEGE

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I. SUMMARY

This item serves to provide an update to the recommendation at the October 2010 meeting of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education with regard to Westwood College’s operational status in Colorado.

II. BACKGROUND

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) 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.

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 and for any change to authorization status.

Pursuant to C.R.S. 23-2-103.5(5)(b), “The commission may place the private college or university on probationary status if the commission finds the private college or university has been placed on probation or the equivalent by an accrediting agency.”

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

At the October 2010 regular CCHE meeting, staff recommended a status change for Westwood College based on a probation order by its accreditation body, the Accrediting Commission of Colleges and Schools (ACCSC). At that meeting, CCHE voted to defer the recommendation to allow time to receive more information from ACCSC. Rather, staff was instructed to present the outcomes of the November 2010 ACCSC meeting. The ACCSC has not disseminated the public notice at this time. The letter outlining actions taken by the ACCSC is expected to be released on or near December 8, 2010.

Westwood College has been on probationary status with its accreditation body since September 1, 2010. State probationary status would still allow the institution to conduct its day to day operations, including enrolling, instructing, and graduating students.

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.

Pursuant to C.R.S. 23-2-103.3 (5) (a) (b), the Colorado Commission on Higher Education has the following options:

- The Commission may take action based on previous information;
- The Commission may defer action on the item until the letter from the ACCSC has been received by staff and schedule a special meeting as soon as is reasonable; or,
- The Commission may defer action on the item until the next regular CCHE meeting which is scheduled for January 7, 2011.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Commission defer the item until further documentation is received from the accreditation body, ACCSC. Upon receiving this additional information, a special meeting will be called, if necessary.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. §23-2-103.3 (5) (b)