

**TOPIC:                   DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT – CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY  
GLOBALNET:   REQUEST   FOR   RELIGIOUS   EXEMPT  
AUTHORIZATION**

**PREPARED BY:   HEATHER DELANGE, ACADEMIC POLICY OFFICER**

**I.     SUMMARY**

This consent item recommends authorization for Christian University GlobalNet to operate as a seminary or bible college.

**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 and to meet criteria found 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. Commission action is required by statute in order for institutional authorization 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. It shall require for admission at least a high school diploma or its equivalent and shall not offer programs or courses that are secular in nature. 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.

Christian University GlobalNet is proposing to offer the following religious degrees:

- Certificate in Bible (16 credits)
- Diploma in Biblical Studies (26 credits)
- Master of Arts in Religion (60 credits)
  - Consideration for admission into the Master of Arts in Religion degree program requires a university or college baccalaureate degree or equivalent and must have successfully completed Christian University GlobalNet's Diploma in Biblical Studies.

Each program is designed for clergy and lay leaders who desire theological training. The programs are designed to provide flexibility and affordability. All programs are fully online.

## **II. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Christian University GlobalNet is the academic division of ChristianCourses.com, affiliated with the RBC Ministries family, which is headquartered in Michigan. Christian University GlobalNet began in 1998 as a collaborative partnership among the colleges, universities, and seminaries of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. The vision from the start was to develop online learning opportunities that provided students with Christ-centered learning at anytime and from any place.

A representative from Christian University GlobalNet met with Department of Higher Education staff as required by the Degree Authorization Act policy and formally applied for authorization to operate as a seminary or bible college. The representative was able to provide all documentation required by the Act. It was determined that Christian University GlobalNet meets the criteria set forth in policy promulgated by Title 23, Article 2.

RBC Ministries, Inc., a Michigan nonprofit religious corporation, is the sole corporate member of Christian University GlobalNet. RBC was founded in 1938 and now has 300 U.S. employees and 20 international offices. RBC Ministries owns, maintains, and operates Christian University GlobalNet

Christian University GlobalNet is leasing space from Colorado Community Church. Christian University GlobalNet meets the definition of “a seminary or bible college as a bona fide religious postsecondary educational institution doing business or maintaining a place of business in the state of Colorado and that is exempt from property taxation under the laws of this state and that offers bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degrees or diplomas” (C.R.S. 23-2-102 (4)).

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Commission approves authorization for Christian University GlobalNet as an exempt seminary or bible college under the Degree Authorization Act.**

#### **STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

23-2-103.3 (4) C.R.S.