

**TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT: RECOMMENDATION FOR
REVOCATION OF AUTHORIZATION – COLORADO
UNIVERSITY OF COMMERCE**

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I. SUMMARY

This action item recommends revocation of authorization for Colorado University of Commerce as an authorized institution of higher education under the Degree Authorization Act.

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 the following types of institutions to offer degrees and/or degree credits: (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 policy in order for institutions to be authorized at any level. Probationary authorization requires institutions to continuously seek, and make satisfactory progress toward, accreditation.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

When the Colorado University of Commerce received probationary authorization in 2007, CCHE policy allowed private, degree-granting institutions to enroll, instruct, and graduate students as soon as a relationship with an accreditation body was established. Institutions could operate under probationary authorization if continuous efforts toward accreditation were made and if accreditation could be awarded within a reasonable time. Colorado University of Commerce did not meet the requirement to attain accreditation during its probationary authorization.

The Colorado University of Commerce gained its probationary status from the CCHE under the expectation that the institution would seek formal accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The CCHE's probationary authorization of the Colorado University of Commerce expired in February 2009. At that time, the president of the institution requested and received a 12-month extension to the institution's probationary status based upon the institution's plan to submit a Letter of Intent to the HLC by May 2010. The HLC later denied the Colorado University of Commerce's Letter of Intent. The Colorado University of Commerce has informed the Department that it does not plan to seek accreditation from another accrediting body.

After reviewing the original authorization action taken by the CCHE, the subsequent extension action by the CCHE, and the HLC's action to deny the Colorado University of Commerce, DHE staff have determined that the institution has neither made reasonable steps towards accreditation in the five years it has held probationary authorization nor is it likely to gain accreditation.

It has been reported to the Department (but not yet confirmed), that the Colorado University of Commerce has 15 students located outside of the United States currently enrolled. It has been reported to the Department that all students currently registered at the institution will finish their academic programs at the end of the current term (August 2012). Moreover, the institution reports that it has no other enrollments for future terms. Current statute does not require an institution operating under the Degree Authorization Act to demonstrate financial integrity (i.e., maintain surety).

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission revoke authorization for Colorado University of Commerce.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

C.R.S. 23-2-103.3