

**TOPIC: DEGREE AUTHORIZATION ACT: COLLEGEAMERICA –
REQUEST FOR THE RENEWAL OF PROVISIONAL
AUTHORIZATION**

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I. SUMMARY

This item recommends the renewal of provisional authorization for CollegeAmerica to continue operating as an authorized private, degree-granting institution in Colorado pursuant to 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 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 Schools. 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 and bible colleges are required to register with the Colorado Department of Higher Education and meet criteria in CCHE Policy Section I Part J in order to receive authorization to offer degrees within Colorado. Private institutions must receive authorization by CCHE 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.

Recent changes to C.R.S. 23-2-102 et seq. authorize the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to renew the authorization of institutions that previously received provisional authorization. To renew its authorization to operate in Colorado, a private college or university or seminary or religious training institution shall demonstrate that it continues to meet the minimum operating standards specified in statute. Department staff created a procedure for institutions to follow in order to apply for the renewal of provisional authorization.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

As required by the Degree Authorization Act, CollegeAmerica submitted the renewal documentation to ensure it meets minimum operating standards along with a renewal fee for each

campus. CollegeAmerica has three campuses (Colorado Springs, Denver, and Fort Collins) within Colorado and the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) accredits all three campuses. ACCSC is a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency. CollegeAmerica continues to be accredited by the ACCSC even though the ACCSC has issued a system-wide show cause notice. Specifically, the ACCSC

expressed concern as to whether there are systemic issues with regard to recruitment, admissions, student achievement, advertising, state licensure, and cohort default rates [for all schools within the parent corporation]. ACCSC determined that a system-wide review of these issues is merited. As such, the ACCSC voted to direct the schools to show cause as to why accreditation should not be withdrawn. (ACCSC, July 12, 2013)

The three CollegeAmerica Colorado campuses are part of this system-wide action. The ACCSC order required a response by CollegeAmerica and its affiliate schools on or before September 17, 2013 for review at the November 2013 ACCSC Commission meeting. Department staff will follow up on the status of this order after that meeting occurs.

Also, because of the institution's dual authorization with the Division of Private Occupational Schools (DPOS), part of the Degree Authorization Act renewal process required a review of status under DPOS. The DPOS board recently reviewed several student complaints that were based on misrepresentation. The DPOS board settled the complaints and the institution continues to operate as an approved DPOS school. However, DPOS will monitor the school for two-years pursuant to the settlement agreement. The action taken by the DPOS board partly informed ACCSC's show cause notice.

It is important to remember that the institution remains accredited until the ACCSC takes action to change that. Thus, the institution remains in compliance with Colorado state authorization requirements.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the renewal of provisional authorization for CollegeAmerica until October of 2014.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

§23-2-103.3, C.R.S.