

Introduced by

Representative R. Kelsch

(At the request of the State Board for Vocational and Technical Education)

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact three new sections to chapter 15-20.4 of the North
2 Dakota Century Code, relating to the issuance, manufacture, and use of false academic
3 degrees or certificates; and to provide a penalty.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1.** A new section to chapter 15-20.4 of the North Dakota Century Code is
6 created and enacted as follows:

7 **Unlawful to issue, manufacture, or use false academic degrees - Penalty.**

- 8 1. It is unlawful for a person to knowingly issue or manufacture a false academic
9 degree. A person that violates this subsection is guilty of a class C felony.
- 10 2. a. It is unlawful for an individual to knowingly use or claim to have a false
11 academic degree:
- 12 (1) To obtain employment;
- 13 (2) To obtain a promotion of higher compensation in employment;
- 14 (3) To obtain admission to an institution of higher learning; or
- 15 (4) In connection with any business, trade, profession, or occupation.
- 16 b. An individual who violates this subsection is guilty of a class A misdemeanor.
- 17 3. As used in this section, "false academic degree" means a document such as a
18 degree or certification of completion of a degree, coursework, or degree credit,
19 including a transcript, that provides evidence or demonstrates completion of a
20 course of instruction or coursework that results in the attainment of a rank or level
21 of associate or higher which is issued by a person that is not a duly authorized
22 institution of higher learning.
- 23 4. As used in this section, "duly authorized institution of higher learning" means an
24 institution that:

- a. Has accreditation recognized by the United States secretary of education or has the foreign equivalent of such accreditation;
- b. Has an authorization to operate under this chapter;
- c. Operates in this state and is exempt from this chapter under section 15-20.4-02;
- d. Does not operate in this state and is:
 - (1) Licensed by the appropriate state agency; and
 - (2) An active applicant for accreditation by an accrediting body recognized by the United States secretary of education; or
- e. Has been found by the state board for career and technical education to meet standards of academic quality comparable to those of an institution located in the United States that has accreditation recognized by the United States secretary of education to offer degrees of the type and level claimed.

SECTION 2. A new section to chapter 15-20.4 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

Unlawful to use degree or certificate when coursework not completed - Penalty.

1. An individual may not knowingly use a degree, certificate, diploma, transcript, or other document purporting to indicate that the individual has completed an organized program of study or completed courses when the individual has not completed the organized program of study or the courses as indicated on the degree, certificate, diploma, transcript, or document:
 - a. To obtain employment;
 - b. To obtain a promotion or higher compensation in employment;
 - c. To obtain admission to an institution of higher learning; or
 - d. In connection with any business, trade, profession, or occupation.
2. An individual who violates this section is guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

SECTION 3. A new section to chapter 15-20.4 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

Consumer protection - False academic degrees. The state board for career and technical education, in collaboration with the North Dakota university system, shall provide via

- 1 internet web sites, information to protect students, businesses, and others from persons that
- 2 issue, manufacture, or use false academic degrees.