

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:

- 1 a. Has accreditation recognized by the United States secretary of education or
- 2 has the foreign equivalent of such accreditation;
- 3 b. Has an authorization to operate under this chapter;
- 4 c. Operates in this state and is exempt from this chapter under section
- 5 15-20.4-02;
- 6 d. Does not operate in this state and is:
 - 7 (1) Licensed by the appropriate state agency; and
 - 8 (2) An active applicant for accreditation by an accrediting body recognized
 - 9 by the United States secretary of education; or
- 10 e. Has been found by the state board for career and technical education to meet
- 11 standards of academic quality comparable to those of an institution located in
- 12 the United States that has accreditation recognized by the United States
- 13 secretary of education to offer degrees of the type and level claimed.

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

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

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

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

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

Fifty-eighth
Legislative Assembly

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