

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 2nd Session of the 54th Legislature (2014)

3 SENATE BILL 1160

By: Dahm

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5  
6 AS INTRODUCED

7 An Act relating to private education; amending 70  
8 O.S. 2011, Sections 4103 and 4104, which relate to  
9 private educational institutions; providing an  
10 exemption from certain accreditation requirements for  
11 religious, theological, or faith-based institutions  
12 that meet certain criteria; directing the Oklahoma  
13 State Regents for Higher Education to promulgate  
14 certain rules; prohibiting religious, theological, or  
15 faith-based institutions from making certain  
16 advertisement or marketing; providing for limitations  
17 on diplomas or degrees offered by certain  
18 institutions; providing an effective date; and  
19 declaring an emergency.

20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

21 SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2011, Section 4103, is  
22 amended to read as follows:

23 Section 4103. ~~A~~ A. Except as otherwise provided in subsection  
24 B of this section, a private educational institution shall be  
25 accredited under rules promulgated and adopted by the Oklahoma State  
26 Regents for Higher Education unless such institution is accredited  
27 by a national or regional accrediting agency which is recognized by  
28 the Secretary of the United States Department of Education as a

1 reliable authority as to the quality of education or training  
2 offered by institutions of higher education for the purposes of the  
3 Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

4 B. A religious, theological, or faith-based institution shall  
5 be exempt from the accreditation requirements set forth in  
6 subsection A of this section if the institution meets the following  
7 criteria and submits related evidence to the Oklahoma State Regents  
8 for Higher Education:

9 1. Is a nonprofit institution owned, controlled, and operated  
10 and maintained by bona fide church or religious denomination,  
11 lawfully operating as a nonprofit religious corporation;

12 2. Limits the educational program to the principles of the  
13 associated church or denomination and the diploma or degree is  
14 limited to evidence of completion of the program; and

15 3. Only grants degrees or diplomas in areas of study that  
16 contain on their face in the written description of the title of the  
17 degree or diploma being conferred a reference to the religious,  
18 theological, or faith-based aspect of the degree's subject area.

19 C. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall  
20 promulgate rules to implement the provisions of this section. The  
21 rules shall include an application process by which a religious,  
22 theological, or faith-based institution submits evidence to the  
23 State Regents for Higher Education of its compliance with subsection  
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1 B of this section. The process shall provide for submission of  
2 additional evidence, including but not limited to:

3 1. Evidence that the institution holds at least a pre-  
4 accreditation status with a nationally recognized accreditation  
5 association;

6 2. A statement of the institution's mission, clearly  
7 establishing the mission of the institution as solely religious, and  
8 the curricula and programs offered clearly support that mission; or

9 3. Other appropriate, substantial evidence regarding the  
10 programs offered by the institution.

11 D. A religious, theological, or faith-based institution meeting  
12 the criteria set forth in subsection B of this section shall be  
13 prohibited from distributing marketing or advertising material  
14 indicating an endorsement from the State of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma  
15 State Regents for Higher Education or any other agency or agent of  
16 the state regarding the education offered by the institution,  
17 degrees or diplomas granted by the institution, or the institution  
18 itself.

19 SECTION 2. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2011, Section 4104, is  
20 amended to read as follows:

21 Section 4104. ~~A~~ A. Except as otherwise provided in subsection  
22 B of this section, a private educational institution shall grant  
23 only those degrees authorized by the Oklahoma State Regents for  
24 Higher Education unless approved otherwise by a national or regional

1 accrediting agency which is recognized by the Secretary of the  
2 United States Department of Education as a reliable authority as to  
3 the quality of education or training offered by institutions of  
4 higher education for the purposes of the Higher Education Act of  
5 1965, as amended.

6 B. A religious, theological, or faith-based institution meeting  
7 the criteria established in subsection B of Section 4103 of this  
8 title shall grant only degrees or diplomas in areas of study that  
9 contain on their face in the written description of the title of the  
10 degree or diploma being conferred, a reference to the religious,  
11 theological, or faith-based aspect of the degree's subject area.

12 SECTION 3. This act shall become effective July 1, 2014.

13 SECTION 4. It being immediately necessary for the preservation  
14 of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby  
15 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and  
16 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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