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February 20, 2017

By: Dahm of the Senate

and

Brumbaugh of the House

An Act relating to higher education; amending 70 O.S. 2011, Section 4104, which relates to degrees offered by private institutions; exempting from certain requirements religious degrees issued by certain institutions; requiring religious degrees and associated documents to contain certain modifier; requiring religious organizations offering degrees to be accredited; providing criteria for accrediting service or company; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

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

SECTION 1. AMENDATORY 70 O.S. 2011, Section 4104, is amended to read as follows:

Section 4104. A. A private educational institution shall grant only those degrees authorized by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education unless approved otherwise by a national or regional accrediting agency which is recognized by the Secretary of the United States Department of Education as a reliable authority as to the quality of education or training offered by institutions of higher education for the purposes of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

1 B. 1. This section shall not apply to religious degrees which
2 are used solely for religious purposes within a religious
3 organization or any institution of higher education whose primary
4 purpose is to provide religious training or theological education
5 and which is exempt from taxation pursuant to the provisions of
6 Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, 26 U.S.C., Section
7 501(c)(3).

8 2. Each degree title offered pursuant to this subsection shall
9 include a religious modifier. The religious modifier must be placed
10 on the degree, on the transcript and wherever the title of the
11 degree appears in official school documents or publications.

12 3. Each religious organization offering degrees pursuant to
13 this subsection shall be accredited by an accrediting service or
14 company that has been in operation for a minimum of five (5) years
15 and is in operation in more than one state within the United States.
16 The accrediting service or company shall perform regular reviews of
17 the religious organization using best practices.

18 SECTION 2. This act shall become effective July 1, 2017.

19 SECTION 3. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
20 of the public peace, health or safety, an emergency is hereby
21 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
22 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

23 COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
24 February 20, 2017 - DO PASS