

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Higher Education Committee

BILL: CS/SB 156

INTRODUCER: Higher Education Committee and Senator Ring

SUBJECT: Nonpublic Postsecondary Institutions

DATE: March 27, 2009 **REVISED:** _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Harkey	Matthews	HE	Fav/CS
2.			HI	
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:

A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... Statement of Substantial Changes

B. AMENDMENTS..... Technical amendments were recommended

Amendments were recommended

Significant amendments were recommended

I. Summary:

This bill would revise criteria concerning the standards by which the Commission for Independent Education (CIE) evaluates institutions for licensure. All licensed nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions that offer academic degrees would have to obtain accreditation within five years after the date they are first licensed or by 2014 if they are currently licensed but not accredited. Institutions would be required to notify the Department of Education (DOE) and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) of their progress in obtaining accreditation.

The bill defines the term academic degree for private postsecondary institutions.

The bill requires the Commission for Independent Education to maintain, on its website, a current list of the institutions that are licensed and hold accreditation. The DOE and the OAG are required to maintain a link to the commission's list on their respective websites.

This bill amends ss. 1005.02, 1005.31, and 1005.38, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The Commission for Independent Education (CIE)

Every private college or postsecondary school operating in Florida must be licensed by CIE unless it is exempt from licensure under s. 1005.06, F.S.¹ Accreditation is not a requirement of licensure. Approximately 50 percent of the 870 institutions currently licensed by the CIE are accredited. The CIE reports that 25 licensed institutions that offer academic degrees are not accredited.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

For the purposes of licensure of private postsecondary institutions under ch. 1005, F.S., the bill defines academic degree as a degree titled as an associate, bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree.

All institutions licensed by CIE that offer academic degrees would have to become accredited by 2014. New applicants for licensure that offer academic degrees would have to become accredited within five years after receiving a license. During the period when an institution was licensed but not accredited, it would have to post that information on its website.

The bill authorizes postsecondary institutions to recognize a degree conferred by an institution that is licensed but not accredited only if the institution becomes accredited within the required period. It is not clear how this provision would be enforced.

Each institution that is licensed but not accredited must notify the DOE and OAG monthly concerning the status of its progress in obtaining accreditation.

Institutions that grant a student credit for previous work or life experience would have to use nationally recognized standards for doing so. Each institution would have to provide the CIE an annual report of the credits granted and the national standards used in granting credits. The CIE must require institutions to comply with state and federal laws that require annual reporting of crime statistics.

The CIE must maintain on its website a current list of the institutions that are licensed and accredited. The list must specify the accrediting body and whether it is recognized by the U.S. DOE. The DOE and OAG must maintain links to the list on their respective websites.

The CIE must revoke the license of any institution that does not meet the requirements for accreditation.

¹ Institutions that are exempt from licensure include those operated by the state or federal government; nursing, dentistry, real estate schools and any others requiring licensing under other chapters of the Florida Statutes; nonprofit independent colleges accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; religious institutions, schools regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration; and institutions that were exempt from licensure prior to 2001.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

The DOE estimates that the cost of accreditation would be at least \$5,000 per school for approximately 25 schools for a total cost of \$125,000 per year for the non-accredited, licensed institutions.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The DOE indicates that a cost would be incurred by the DOE Web Team and the CIE staff for creating and maintaining the list of accredited institutions on the CIE Web site.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
