

817.567 Making false claims of academic degree or title.—

(1) No person in the state may claim, either orally or in writing, to possess an academic degree, as defined in s. 1005.02, or the title associated with said degree, unless the person has, in fact, been awarded said degree from an institution that is:

(a) Accredited by a regional or professional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education or the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation;

(b) Provided, operated, and supported by a state government or any of its political subdivisions or by the Federal Government;

(c) A school, institute, college, or university chartered outside the United States, the academic degree from which has been validated by an accrediting agency approved by the United States Department of Education as equivalent to the baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate degree conferred by a regionally accredited college or university in the United States;

(d) Licensed by the ¹State Board of Independent Colleges and Universities pursuant to ss. 1005.01-1005.38 or exempt from licensure pursuant to ²s. 246.085; or

(e) A religious seminary, institute, college, or university which offers only educational programs that prepare students for a religious vocation, career, occupation, profession, or lifework, and the nomenclature of whose certificates, diplomas, or degrees clearly identifies the religious character of the educational program.

(2) No person awarded a doctorate degree from an institution not listed in subsection (1) shall claim in the state, either orally or in writing, the title “Dr.” before the person’s name or any mark, appellation, or series of letters, numbers, or words, such as, but not limited to, “Ph.D.,” “Ed.D.,” “D.N.,” or “D.Th.,” which signifies, purports, or is generally taken to signify satisfactory completion of the requirements of a doctorate degree, after the person’s name.

(3)(a) A person who violates the provisions of subsection (1) or subsection (2) commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(b) In addition to any penalty imposed under paragraph (a), a violator shall be subject to any other penalty provided by law, including, but not limited to, suspension or revocation of the violator’s license or certification to practice an occupation or profession.

History.—s. 2, ch. 89-40; s. 32, ch. 94-310; s. 1039, ch. 2002-387.

¹Note.—Section 246.031, which created the State Board of Independent Colleges and Universities, was repealed by s. 1058, ch. 2002-387.

²Note.—Repealed by s. 1058, ch. 2002-387. Similar material is now found at s. 1005.32.