

UNCLASSIFIED//~~FOUO~~

18 August 2011

DISPOSITION MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: (U) Unaccredited Degree: Adjudicator

CASE: 2011-10152-IG

ISSUES UNDER INVESTIGATION:

1. (U//~~FOUO~~) Based on a 2008 United States Secret Service investigation that identified an Agency contractor as possessing a degree from a known diploma mill, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) initiated a proactive investigation on 5 August 2008 into Agency staff claiming degrees from non-accredited institutions. OIG matched a list of unaccredited institutions against Agency BIO information to identify any individuals who had provided degree evidence to Human Resources.^{1,2} One of the individuals identified, [redacted], claimed bachelor's and master's degrees from [redacted] an unaccredited institution, on his Agency BIO.

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2. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG reviewed the claims made by [redacted] regarding his degrees and the associated education to determine if there were false statements or improper use of an unaccredited degree, and if there was an improper reimbursement for the degrees by the Agency.

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¹ (U//~~FOUO~~) The term unaccredited refers to the recognition and acceptability of a degree for use in federal employment as recognized by the Office of Personnel Management. Unaccredited degrees cannot be used to meet the qualifications for federal positions that require a degree. The complete definitions of accreditation are included in the Appendix.

² (U//~~FOUO~~) The Agency biographical profile (Agency BIO) is the mechanism for tracking information on individuals who officially declare their education to the Agency by providing proof of attendance. The Agency BIO is made available to hiring managers and used directly in staffing decisions. Only staff employees and former employees were covered by this review because there is no central database on contractor educational records.

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INVESTIGATIVE EFFORTS:

3. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG reviewed [redacted] security file for any degree claims.

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4. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG reviewed [redacted] Official Personnel Folder (OPF) and online Agency BIO.

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5. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG interviewed [redacted] on 4 September 2008, regarding his unaccredited degrees.

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6. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG obtained and reviewed [redacted] internal job applications and resumes for positions that he held at the Agency as well as his Performance Appraisal Reports.

7. (U//~~FOUO~~) OIG reviewed Agency regulations and relevant laws related to the allegations.

RESULTS:

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[redacted]

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9. (U//~~FOUO~~) [redacted] received a bachelor of science "degree" in [redacted] from [redacted] and a [redacted]

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master of science "degree" in [redacted] from [redacted] [redacted] transcripts noted that he [redacted]

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enrolled in his bachelor's program on [redacted] graduating on [redacted]

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[redacted] and that he enrolled in his master's program on [redacted]

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graduating on [redacted] These transcripts list a completion of 12 and [redacted]

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10 courses, respectively, for the bachelor's and master's programs. The transcripts do not provide course completion dates for any [redacted]

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courses at [redacted]

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[redacted]

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[Redacted]

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12. (U) [Redacted] claimed accreditation by a [Redacted]

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[Redacted] The accreditor is not recognized by the US Department of Education (DoE). [Redacted] was never accredited by the US DOE.³

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13. (U//~~FOUO~~) According to [Redacted] he had taken classes at other schools, but confirmed that his only degrees were from [Redacted] [Redacted] During a 4 September 2008 OIG interview, [Redacted] stated that he was unsure of the total cost of his [Redacted] degrees, as both were funded by his then-employer, [Redacted] (b)(6) but he believed the cost to be approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000. (b)(7)(c)

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14. (U//~~FOUO~~) [Redacted] initially presented his master's degree information to the Agency in his applicant Questionnaire for National Security Positions (SF-86 EG) [Redacted] did not include his bachelor's degree information despite the form's instructions to "list college or university degrees and the dates they were received." He cited the attendance dates as [Redacted] which did not correspond accurately to either his master's program [Redacted] or his initial (b)(6)

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³ (U//~~FOUO~~) According to Title 20 U.S.C. § 1099b (*Recognition of accrediting agency or association*), the Secretary of Education is responsible for recognizing accrediting bodies, which in turn recognize institutions.

⁴ (U) [Redacted] provided transcripts showing courses completed at [Redacted]

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bachelor's program, which began in [redacted] according to his [redacted] transcripts. [redacted] included his degree information in his Agency BIO, where it remains. [redacted] also presented his bachelor's and master's degree information as part of his application for his last position at the [redacted]

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15. (U//~~FOUO~~) [redacted] stated in his OIG interview that he first learned of the non-accreditation of his degrees from OIG investigators during his interview. [redacted] claimed that he had researched [redacted] accreditation when first reviewing potential on-line schools, and that he believed at that time that [redacted] was accredited. [redacted] stated that did not find [redacted] program to be substandard in any way and that he worked hard to complete the coursework.

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16. (U//~~FOUO~~) [redacted] was qualified for his initial position as a [redacted] on the basis of his experience, and a degree was not required for the position.

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18. (U//~~FOUO~~) [redacted] resume indicates his experience is limited to [redacted] and does not indicate that he possesses the requisite equivalent experience to qualify for the [redacted] position in lieu of an accredited bachelor's degree.

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DISPOSITION:	(b)(6)	(b)(3)	(b)(6)
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19. (U//~~FOUO~~) [redacted] obtained a position in [redacted] [redacted] using his non-accredited "degrees." [redacted] "degrees" have been present on his Agency BIO between [redacted] and the present, where they would have been used in consideration for obtaining one additional position. Additionally, [redacted] has continued to present his degrees on his BIO after notification by OIG of their non-accredited status. Based on the currently available information, no disciplinary action or further investigation is recommended. OIG will notify HR and request [redacted] [redacted] degree information be removed from his Agency BIO.

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[redacted]

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Special Agent

[redacted]

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Supervisory Special Agent

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