



January 3, 2014

TO: Andrew M. Wasilisin
Chief Human Capital Officer

FROM: Stuart Axenfeld /s/
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

SUBJECT: OIG Report 14-07 - Results of OIG Evaluation of the Corporation's
Personnel Education and Qualification Review

The Office of Inspector General (OIG), Corporation for National and Community Service (Corporation), performed an evaluation of the Corporation's Personnel Education and Qualification Review. The evaluation focused on validating the Corporation's personnel academic credentials and professional certification and was conducted in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation promulgated by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

Results: We found no instances of fraudulent or "diploma mill" academic degrees. None of the schools we reviewed were on the List of Unaccredited Schools obtained from the Consumer Fraud Reporting Organization. All the schools we reviewed were listed on the Department of Education's Database of Accredited Post-Secondary Institutions and Programs, with the exception of two schools which were no longer in existence.

However, we found that the Corporation has no policies or procedures for validating new personnel's academic credentials. The Corporation relies on the background procedures performed by the Office of Personnel Management to validate the academic credentials. Lack of policies and procedures to govern the review of personnel academic credentials can create avenues that result in poor enforcement of hiring new personnel with fraudulent degrees.

Recommendations: We recommend the Corporation develop policies and procedures to ensure that only employees with academic credentials from accredited institutions are considered for Federal positions with education requirements, student loan repayment, and sponsoring employees to obtain college degrees (if applicable). The policies and procedures should be communicated to all Corporation employees.

Objectives, Methodology, and Scope: The objectives of this evaluation are to: (1) determine if the Corporation has processes and procedures in place to verify the authenticity and credibility of employee's academic credentials (e.g. degrees, diplomas,

and professional certificates); and (2) verify that the Corporation did not fund education or training from a “Diploma Mill” or unaccredited educational institute.

We conducted our field work at the OIG’s office from June 3rd to September 10th, 2013. Our methodology included reviewing electronic personnel files to obtain academic records including resumes and applications; contacting the schools and accessing the National Student Clearing House to validate the academic credentials; and reviewing the Office of Personnel Management’s policies and procedures, Department of Education guidance, and the Corporation’s policies and procedures relating to hiring practices. We selected 45 random samples of the Corporation employees and reviewed their electronic personnel files. The scope of the review focused on current Corporation employees with the exceptions of presidential appointees, temporary and discretionary staff as of March 31, 2013.

Background: In May 2004, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on Diploma Mills which revealed several instances where federal employees obtained degrees from “Diploma Mills” and other unaccredited schools, some at government expense. Diploma Mills (also known as degree mills) are fraudulent postsecondary, nontraditional, and unaccredited schools that sell academic degrees based upon life experience or substandard or negligible academic work. Diploma Mills offer degrees for a relatively low flat fee, promote the award of academic credits based on life experience, and typically do not require any classroom instruction. The credits and degrees awarded by a “Diploma Mill” should not be recognized by reputable employers. In February 2005, the US Department of Education launched www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation to combat the spread of fraudulent degrees.

According to the Department of Education, the Office of Personnel Management has been involved with keeping diploma mill degrees from the Federal workplace by providing ongoing guidance to Federal departments and agencies emphasizing that 'degrees' from diploma mills will not be accepted for purposes of qualifying for Federal positions, for student loan repayment, and for purposes of paying employees to obtain college degrees.

We appreciate the time and assistance you and your staff provided during the review. If you have questions or wish to discuss this letter, please contact me at (202) 606-9360 or s.axenfeld@cncsoig.gov; or Sheyi Idowu, Auditor, at (410) 274-0265 or sheyi.idowu@cncsoig.gov.

Sincerely,

Stuart G. Axenfeld
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

cc: Kim Mansaray, Acting Chief Operating Officer
Sherman Tsien, Senior Human Capital Advisor
Lisa Love-Adams, Director of Personnel Operations (Staffing)