

# Landmark Study Reveals U.S. Is the Fake Degree Capital of the World

**B**ased on a recent interview for our very popular monthly column “The International Spotlight,” with Eyal Ben Cohen, managing director, Verifile Limited, a leading background screening firm in Europe, Eyal announced the release of the Accredibase Report. Alarming, the U.S. was found to be the world’s fake college capital. The report indicates that 810 diploma mills have already been identified in the U.S. and many more still are under investigation. With more than 45 percent of the diploma mills operating on the west coast, including those in California, Hawaii, Washington, Nevada and Arizona, the western states have the dubious distinction of leading the country in offering up these fraudulent entities that give students a short-circuited college degree and the ability to misrepresent themselves to employers.

with the support of Cambridge University and the East of England Development Agency. Alan Contreras of Oregon’s Office of Degree Authorization, one of the national leaders aggressively challenging fake universities, stated that the Accredibase Report does “...an excellent job assembling facts about the degree mill problem in the world today. In the murky world of bogus credentials and dubious evaluators, the Accredibase Report provides an example of how research in this field ought to be done.”

The report discusses how these bogus universities and colleges con students out of their money and supply fake degrees that deceive employers into offering jobs, sometimes with alarming or fatal consequences. Eyal Ben Cohen stated: “We have so far identified 1,762 fake institutions worldwide, and we are still investigating a further 1,545 currently filed as ‘suspicious’ before publishing

them on the Accredibase database.”

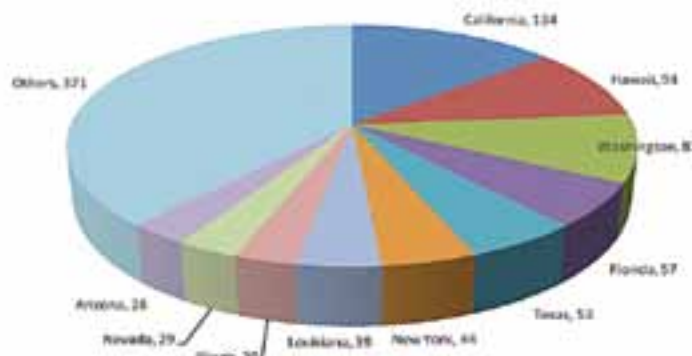
While many organizations dismiss fake degrees as a minor problem, this report establishes that it is a much larger issue than expected. The stark reality is that some fake qualifications can be highly dangerous and have already resulted in tragic consequences. One case discussed in the report is that of a Seattle “doctor,” Brian O’Connell, whose degree in naturopathic medicine was not recognized by either the U.S. Department of Education or the Council of Higher Education Accreditation. The bogus doctor’s “care” hastened the death of a teenage cancer patient. Additional examples revealed in the report include a fake doctorate holder who worked as a clinical director in a hospital, as well as an eminent British forensic psychologist, Gene Morrison, who was convicted of raping three children. He was exposed as possessing a fake degree purchased in

## Top 10 United States locations of the ‘diploma con’ by state

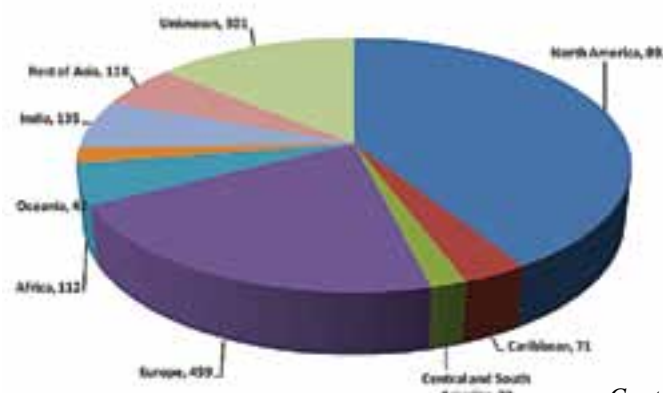
State	Number
California	134
Hawaii	94
Washington	87
Florida	57
Texas	53
New York	44
Louisiana	39
Illinois	9
Nevada	29
Arizona	28

The world’s second-biggest concentration of fake colleges is in the U.K. The report exposes 271 bogus institutions, making the U.K. the center of Europe’s bogus college scam.

The groundbreaking report is the result of an 18-month international study on diploma and accreditation mills — fake universities and colleges. The research was carried out by Verifile’s research team



Unaccredited institutions and unrecognized accrediting bodies by region



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the U.S. for \$200. The report also notes that fake degrees can make it easier for terrorists to infiltrate facilities by helping them secure jobs on the inside.

The report elaborates on how the “con” has become more sophisticated with fake universities setting up fake accreditation bodies in an attempt to make their qualifications look genuine. Emphasizing the magnitude of the problem, Eyal Ben Cohen commented: “We have so far discovered 134 unrecognized accreditation bodies, and we are still investigating a further 81. The problem of unaccredited institutions and bogus colleges is a large and very real one facing employers, background screening firms, government agencies and universities around the world.”

As the managing director of a background screening firm, Eyal added that his focus on creating this report was driven by his deep desire to provide his clients with valid information about applicants’

education, in order to support them in their hiring decisions. He also stressed that he wanted to avoid the embarrassment and potential liability associated with clearing an applicant who is later discovered to possess a bogus degree. As more focus is put on the gathering of accurate information, the need for his firm to verify the legitimacy of educational credentials will continue to increase. In addition, as the practice of infinity screening (conducting background checks on current employees) continues to grow, organizations are discovering that employees are using these diploma mills to weasel promotions that they have not earned.

“For prospective employers,” advised Eyal Ben Cohen, “asking to see original certificates will not tell whether an institution is genuine since these institutions not only provide their ‘students’ with official-looking certificates but also provide verification services where

employers and background screening companies can call to ‘verify’ if a student has the degree he or she claims! What is required is an accreditation check to see if the institution itself is genuine before even considering the validity of the certificate.” ■

### Notes:

Accredibase has set up a global database of unaccredited institutions and unrecognized accrediting bodies that brings together information from government education departments and law-enforcing agencies worldwide.

To download a copy of the report, please go to [www.accredibase.com](http://www.accredibase.com).

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