

Tuesday Tidbits
Tuesday, February 16, 2010

Purdue North Central and the University of New Castle

Recently, the University of New Castle has popped up in conversation about protecting the integrity of our institution. What happened?

In mid April of 2007, Professor Spoljoric discovered that her name was listed as a faculty member at a different institution. She tracked it down and soon found she was not alone.

This started one of the strangest situations this campus has ever been involved in. To put it simply, 146 PNC faculty and staff names and position titles had been copied and claimed to be the faculty and staff of a scam university called the University of New Castle. Our list on our website matched their list with a few interesting omissions. It seems the New Castle thieves didn't like higher administrative titles or long names. They left out Chancellor Dworkin, VC Back, and Professors Duttlinger, Duzinkiewicz and Schwingendorf. They also stopped with Professor Richard Taylor so maybe the end of the alphabet bothered them as well or all they wanted was 146.

Professor Spoljoric told Professor Hayes and the two of them came over to Campus Relations to see how to get our names off the web site and they called me because the New Castle site claimed they were accredited by the Kingdom of Wallis and Fatuna Islands. (Yes, those places do exist. Look in the South Pacific for a few very small islands.) We all decided that this was worthy of further scrutiny and passed it up to the Chancellor's office. The next step was the legal representatives for Purdue University and in short order our names were removed and have not reappeared.

In a nutshell that's all that happened. We intend to use this situation as an example of how we protect our integrity and it fits nicely in Criterion 1, Core Component E.

Back in 2007, would this have affected our accreditation with HLC?

No idea! This situation isn't covered in the HLC Handbook! However, as luck would have it, the annual HLC meeting was only three days away. I made copies of everything and took it to the meeting and presented it to Dr. Robert Appleson. He was utterly amazed and said that he had never seen anything like it! He noted that the location of this bogus outfit was Portland, Oregon and thought the legal authorities out there could be of some assistance. He agreed that this was an issue of the highest concern and he noted that we had immediately brought it to the attention of the HLC. We were innocent!

I returned to PNC, passed on the information about Oregon to the legal representatives and kept track of the situation.

How do you know we aren't on their website anymore?

I keep checking. For quite a long time they had a website with pretty pictures and a lot of flowery words (what a mission statement!) but no lists of names. Then in August of 2009 I found a different list of names and titles. After a simple google search, I discovered that these names belonged to the faculty and staff at another institution on the west coast. I called one of the individuals listed who turned out to be the administrative assistant for their board of trustees. She said they had a restraining order out against the University of New Castle and she would pass the information on to her legal department.

What else can you tell us about the University of New Castle?

I recently checked on “ www.uncedu.com” and can tell you that:
their target audience is probably the international student with little knowledge of American universities and probably interested in an online degree
they have moved from Portland to Washington D.C.
they now call themselves Newcastle University
www.uncedu.us is their new website but the old one works too
they have fallen on hard times. Their website does not have the pictures of a vibrant, beautiful campus with green grass, rolling hills etc. and pictures of learned faculty and eager students. Their “click here” notations don't work either.

What happens if I google it?

There are two other University of New Castle institutions. The one with this title is in Australia. Newcastle University is in England. Both are legitimate. When you google the name those two popup. No mention of our friends.

Speaking of google, why didn't our faculty notice it when they googled their own names and checked themselves out? Some people do it weekly!

To my limited knowledge, the University of New Castle made their faculty/staff list of names “un-googleable”. It was never mentioned as an entry for anybody whose name was on the stolen list. It didn't turn up when I googled the names for the other campus either. I bow to the expertise of anyone who can explain how this can happen.

So, now you know the story. As soon as it was discovered, the proper authorities were called in and the names removed. Our accreditation was never in jeopardy and you may look up the bogus website at “www.uncedu.us” to see for yourself. By the way if you forget and go to www.unc.edu you will find the University of North Carolina.

When is our visit?

425 days from today – Feb. 16, 2010. The HLC Team arrives on April 18, 2011.
After all that, I'll skip the poetry until next time.