Unconventional University
Diplomas from Online Vendors:
Buying a Ph.D. From a
University That Doesn’t Exist

George Gollin
University of Illinois
September, 2003
Outline

• First contact with the University Degree Program
• Checking out Parkwood “University”
• Mapping the UDP family tree
• Who’s out there?
• Verifying credentials of a UDP client
• Who else is out there?
• Degrees of fraud
• Notes and more information
first contact…

Ever have one of these appear on your PC’s screen?

I called…

(713-559-1760)

to reach the “University Degree Program.”

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“Joseph Kent” returned my phone call.

We discuss (Nov. 2002):

• Who the degree would be for…

• Degree granting institution: Parkwood University
  ➢ “campus is the homes and offices of the students”
  ➢ “credit” for a "student's prior experiences and knowledge."
  ➢ Parkwood is a “fully recognized distance learning center” [by the “Distance Learning Council of Europe”]
first contact…

“Mr. Kent” on the phone

• Parkwood not accredited but…
  ➢ degree for “business and personal purposes.”
  ➢ supporting documentation: “certified copies of transcripts,”
    “letters of recommendation from their professors,” and a
    contact address to give to potential employers.
  ➢ they’ll only do things which are “legal and ethical.”

• The diplomas…
  ➢ “patterned after the UCLA diploma”
  ➢ full program (BA, MA, PhD) would cost $4,400 but I’d get a
    “significant discount” since only requesting a PhD.
So it’s probably not a violation of US law…

• Mr. Kent made sure I understood what it meant for a “university” to be “non-accredited.”
• The diploma would arrive very soon (~10 days)

I would be in good company:
More about that transcript

I called UDP again (April 2003), to see what would happen. “Douglas Abbott” returned my call 5/1/03.

How the transcript works: the “professors” on their staff invent courses [and grades!] that would be the classroom equivalents to things I had learned “through life experience.”

The transcript would not mention “life experience” anywhere. It would be for me to explain all this to a prospective employer if I chose to do so.
So where’s Parkwood University?

• **Google™** to the rescue! Look for Parkwood…
  - no list of faculty or academic officers anywhere.
  - no phone numbers.
  - no mailing address.
  - no departments.
  - no research.
  - only possible contact method: a single email address.
Parkwood University

web site
home page

Nice graphics!

www.parkwooduniversity.org
Parkwood University

Message from “Jonathan Tibbs,” Parkwood’s president.

Except for an actor, there’s no significant web presence for anyone named “Jonathan Tibbs.”

Note opening sentence of the third paragraph: “Those of you whom are already with us at…”

More on this later.

www.parkwooduniversity.org/aboutus.html
Parkwood University

courses of study

Looks impressive, yes?

How’d they come up with the list?

www.parkwooduniversity.org/studyopp.html
They copied it from the University of Central Florida.

www.parkwooduniversity.org/studyopp.html

www.ucf.edu/catalog/current/UCF_Degree_Programs/
mapping the UDP family tree

Let’s look for clones of Parkwood University

Google.com again. Search for “Those of you whom are already with us at”
mapping the UDP family tree

Send in the clones!

Westhampton University president’s message is \textasciitilde{}identical.

http://www.westhamptonuniversity.org/int/about_us.html

you’ll see her later...
Everybody must get cloned!

Hartley University president’s message is too.

http://www.hartleyuniversity.org/president.html
mapping the UDP family tree

Cloned programs of study

Glencullen programs list is also a University of Central Florida copy.

mapping the UDP family tree

Dogbert knows what he’s doing
**Mapping the UDP family tree**

**Searches for similar president’s message or programs of study: summary**

"Those of you whom are already with us at"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashford University</th>
<th>(5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hartley University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsfield University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkwood University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhampton University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"cardiopulmonary sciences" + "operations concentration" + "design concentration"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashford University</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glencullen University</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartley University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsfield University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkwood University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornewood University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ravenhurst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So far we’ve found 8…
mapping the UDP family tree

Searching for identical phone numbers

I ran a credentials check on one of Ashford University’s customers. (More on this later.) Note the UK fax number in the reply.

Let’s look for that phone number elsewhere…

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mapping the UDP family tree

Searching for 44-870-134-4791

www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/devonshire

483 Green Lane Palmers Green, London N13 4BS, England
Email: harrington@univdp.org
Fax: 44-870-134-4791

www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/
Searching for 44-870-134-4791

Note the formatting of the number: as written it’s intended for access from overseas. (Inside the UK the number would be 0870-134-4791.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashford University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Devonshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(that makes 10…)

The University of Devonshire page also shows a voice phone number: 44-207-644-3745. Here it is (you’ve heard the voice before):

(44-207-644-3745)
Searching for www.henryheston.com

Devonshire and Harrington web sites are in the internet domain www.henryheston.com.cnhost.com. What else can we find there?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Devonshire</th>
<th><a href="http://www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/devonshire">www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/devonshire</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glencullen University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/glencullen">www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/glencullen</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com">www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelbourne University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/shelbourne">www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/shelbourne</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(that makes 11…)

Devonshire, Glencullen, and Harrington are University Degree Program creations. Is Shelbourne one of their creations too?

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Yes: Glencullen’s and Shelbourne’s phone numbers…


http://www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/shelbourne/contact.htm

…are identical. Note the email addresses: …@univdp.org

answering machine does not identify the organization

(+353 1 633 5884)
Searching for common mail servers…

Google search for the domain name “univdp.org” turns up Brentwick University, a twin of Shelbourne University.

(that makes 12…)

www.brentwickuniv.org/contact.htm

www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/shelbourne/contact.htm

The Brentwick University phone number is not in service.
Searching for similar “contact us” pages…

Search for “prospective students” + “Registered students and graduates” to find…

(that makes 13…)

(Wexford uses the same server as other UDP mills…)

www.universityofwexford.org/Contact_us/Contact_us.html
mapping the UDP family tree

How do they turn out new sites so quickly?

www.universityofwexford.org/Wexford_univ/OliverHill.html

University of Teesside

By “borrowing” from real universities.

(Teesside is real)

www.tees.ac.uk/prospstud/welcomevc.cfm
Some of the “borrowing” is extensive.

University of Teesside

Since 1993, the University has positioned itself as the 'Opportunity University'. We believe that the current diversity within the British higher education system is a strength and that the University of Teesside should be able to pursue excellence within the context of its distinctive mission and aspirations, which have evolved from its history, academic character, size and social structure.

As befits the Opportunity University, the University continually strives to promote access and widening participation. It seeks to be an open, accessible and inclusive institution, serving the needs of a diverse range of students.

It is both a distinctive feature and a strength of the University that it offers a very broad range of learning opportunities and accredited awards. Courses range from Access programmes and NVQ Level III, through 'small (accredited) bites of learning', to certificate and diploma programmes, ordinary and honours degrees, Masters programmes, postgraduate professional qualifications, doctoral research degrees and higher doctoral programmes.

As the main provider of higher education in the Tees Valley sub region, the University is acutely conscious of its obligations to its regional communities. It already has an extensive range of community outreach initiatives in which learning opportunities are taken into society and the University’s commitment to lifelong learning will see those opportunities extended in the coming years. Further, the University has worked in close partnership with further education colleges in the region since 1993 through the University of Teesside Partnership.

University of Wexford

www.tees.ac.uk/opportunityuniversity.cfm
This is like playing “whack-a-gopher”

The UDP inventions keep coming and going: by 2/1/03, almost all the UDP creations mentioned so far had disappeared. (More on this later…)

Never fear! UDP continues to create new “universities.” Here’s one whose web pages were created 1/13/03. It seems to be a UDP creation:

Landford University (http://www.landforduniversity.org/). Its list of programs of study is also a copy of the University of Central Florida’s.

Its president’s message is taken from the web site of the accredited Cambridge College (http://www.cambridgecollege.edu/).
mapping the UDP family tree

Here’s-a-gopher: Landford University

(that makes 14…)
Landford’s site contains other “borrowed” content…

Mission statement (http://www.landforduniversity.org/mission_statement.htm) resembles Hamilton University’s (http://www.hamilton-university.edu/index2_f.html), a non-accredited school (which is licensed by the state of Wyoming).

Front page (http://www.landforduniversity.org/) resembles parts of Barrington University’s (http://www.barrington.edu/body.asp), an internet-only non-accredited school (which is licensed by the state of Alabama).

History page (http://www.landforduniversity.org/History.htm) resembles parts of California Pacific University’s (http://www.cpu.edu/history.htm), a distance-learning-only non-accredited school (which is licensed by the state of California).

I suppose it is faster to cut-and-paste a new web site than it is to write the material afresh.
mapping the UDP family tree

Here’s-another-gopher: Northfield University

Compare Northfield’s and Ashford’s “student services” web pages…

(that makes 15…)

you’ll see her later…
Tod und Verklärung (Death and Transfiguration)

There are numerous reports on the web of University Degree Program solicitations for “study” at

• University of Palmers Green
• University of San Moritz.

Neither has a web site any more.

Some sites get recycled/reincarnated, others do the Lazarus thing, others just disappear.
mapping the UDP family tree

Westbourne University reborn as Ashford University

Thanks to Google’s caching feature…

I’m back!

www.ashforduniversity.org

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(that makes 16…)

33
Westbourne University reborn as Ashford University

www.ashforduniversity.org/student_services.html

I’m back!
How do we tell if they’re all really UDP creations?

Many (but not all) of the diploma mill mail servers were really the same computer. It seems likely that most of them are run by the same people. Identify the servers two ways:

1. by “domain name.” For example, in
   
   $g$-gollin@mail.hep.uiuc.edu

   mail.hep.uiuc.edu is the domain name.

2. by “IP [Internet Protocol] address.” This is rather like a phone number: it is unique to a particular computer.

   hepux8> nslookup mail.hep.uiuc.edu
   Name:    hepux0.hep.uiuc.edu
   Address:  128.174.118.110
Identifying the mail servers

More about IP addresses…

Easy-to-remember domain names are mapped to hard-to-remember numerical IP addresses. One computer can have many domain names mapped to its single IP address.

```bash
hepux8> nslookup hepux0.hep.uiuc.edu
Name:    hepux0.hep.uiuc.edu
Address:  128.174.118.110

hepux8> nslookup mail.hep.uiuc.edu
Name:    hepux0.hep.uiuc.edu
Address:  128.174.118.110
Aliases:  mail.hep.uiuc.edu

hepux8> nslookup pobox.hep.uiuc.edu
Name:    hepux0.hep.uiuc.edu
Address:  128.174.118.110
Aliases:  pobox.hep.uiuc.edu
```

Look into this…
Mapping the UDP family tree

*nslookup query to learn mail server IP addresses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprise</th>
<th>mail server</th>
<th>mail server IP address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ashford University</td>
<td>ashfordu.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Brentwick University</td>
<td>univdp.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Glencullen University</td>
<td>univdp.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Harrington University</td>
<td>no email address in site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hartley University</td>
<td>hartleyuniversity.org</td>
<td>207.150.192.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Kingsfield University</td>
<td>kingsfieldu.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Parkwood University</td>
<td>parkwoodu.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Shelbourne University</td>
<td>univdp.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Thornewood University</td>
<td>thornewood.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 University of Devonshire</td>
<td>uofdevonshire.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 University of Palmers Green</td>
<td>no web site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 University of Ravenhurst</td>
<td>uofravenhurst.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 University of San Moritz</td>
<td>no web site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 University of Wexford</td>
<td>uofwexford.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Westbourne University</td>
<td>westbourneu.org</td>
<td>216.136.232.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Westhampton University</td>
<td>europe.com</td>
<td>62.23.130.195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## mapping the UDP family tree

### The (Incomplete) University Degree Program Family Tree as of January, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Degree Program</th>
<th>Web site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ashford University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ashforduniversity.org">www.ashforduniversity.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Brentwick University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.brentwickuniv.org">www.brentwickuniv.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Hartley University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hartleyuniversity.org">www.hartleyuniversity.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Kingsfield University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kingsfielduniversity.org">www.kingsfielduniversity.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Parkwood University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.parkwooduniversity.org">www.parkwooduniversity.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Thornewood University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thornewooduniversity.org">www.thornewooduniversity.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 University of Palmers Green</td>
<td>No web site in evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 University of Ravenhurst</td>
<td><a href="http://www.universityofravenhurst.org">www.universityofravenhurst.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 University of San Moritz</td>
<td>No web site in evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 University of Wexford</td>
<td><a href="http://www.universityofwexford.org">http://www.universityofwexford.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Westbourne University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.westbourneuniversity.org/about_us.html">www.westbourneuniversity.org/about_us.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Westhampton University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.westhamptonuniversity.org">www.westhamptonuniversity.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mapping the UDP family tree

Did/do any of these places really exist?
Ask the Royal Mail at www.royalmail.com…

e-mail from Ashford University said the address is 5-7 Singer St. EC2A 4BQ London.

No Ashford University.
Well, maybe the Royal mail is mistaken.

Let’s take a look...

...at Singer Street.
Ashford’s home page photo…

http://www.ashford-university.org/

I don’t think so.

Let’s take a look at street level…
mapping the UDP family tree

5-7 Singer Street, EC2A 4BQ London

(Friends on sabbatical in London took the photographs.)
Whose names are on the doorbells in the lobby?
Ashford University doesn’t exist

Perhaps one of the businesses at 5-7 Singer Street has an “arrangement” to serve as a mail drop for the University Degree Program?
mapping the UDP family tree

The Royal Mail says these don’t exist either.

University of Devonshire
27 Old Gloucester St.
WC1N 3XX  London.
…not there.

Harrington University
483 Green Lane Palmers Green
N13 4BS London.
…not there. (Also not anywhere else in N13 4BS postal code.)
But sometimes they say they have campus facilities!

Glencullen University: 23 Waterloo St., Dublin 4, Ireland

- There’s no “Glencullen …” listed in the Dublin online white/yellow pages.
- Glencullen University claims its “Facilities include the sports hall, squash courts, gym, climbing wall, dance studios, tennis courts, boat hard and swimming pool, as well as extensive outdoor sports pitches.”

How’d they cook up such an elaborate description of something that doesn’t exist?

The same way they concocted their programs of study…
mapping the UDP family tree

...they “borrowed” it.

University of Southampton

SPORT
At the University of Southampton you will be able to take advantage of one of the best opportunities you will ever have to participate in sport at every level. Nearly eighty different sport clubs are on offer, so whether you are interested in participating competitively or recreationally, there should be something for you. Facilities include the sports hall, squash courts, gym, climbing wall, dance studios, tennis courts, boat hard and swimming pool (New College), as well as extensive outdoor sports pitches. Many of the clubs have their own websites listed at http://www.soton.ac.uk/menus/mvmenu.html

(Southampton is a real university)

George Gollin, UIUC
The real experts

I am an amateur.

The real experts: John Bear and Allen Ezell.

Dr. Bear publishes articles and books on the subject: see http://circledance.tripod.com/johnbear/id1.html.

Mr. Ezell was head of the FBI’s “DipScam” operation until his retirement in 1992. (He now works in the private sector investigating corporate fraud, but continues to track down diploma mills.)

We share information as we find it.

Greg Ashe (an attorney at the Federal Trade Commission) has been managing FTC efforts concerning some of this. We send him stuff too.
So why’d the UDP yank most of its sites in Jan. 2003?

Because the U.S. Federal Trade Commission burned them, but not because of the diploma mill scam.

FTC case No. 1:03-CV-00021-RMC preliminary injunction (filed 1/24/03):

(See http://www.ftc.gov/os/2003/01/unknownpi.pdf)
About those licenses... here's an address you've seen before

(Document image from Allen Ezell)

**The Institute for International Licensing**

483 Green Lanes, Palmers Green, London, N13 4BS

Phone (United States) 770-496-4304 — Fax (United States) 786-524-2739 — E-Mail ili@london.com

30 September 2002

USA

Dear License Recipient:

Congratulations! This letter is your Proof of Registration and Receipt for your International Driver's License. The fee for registration is US $200.00, payment of which you made already, completely or partially, through Western Union, your bank, or credit card.

If you make any payments by credit card, please remember that the payment on your credit card statement will be made to:

"Hyacinth, Romania."

Our Institute name will never appear on your statement for two reasons:
1. To protect your privacy.
2. To keep currency conversion costs to a minimum.

You have been assigned License Number L005320. Please refer to your License Number in all correspondence with the Institute.

Be on the lookout for other benefits available only to license holders.

Note that it is difficult to answer inquiries by phone accurately. Accordingly, to service our license holders better, we require inquiries to be sent by email to ili@london.com or by fax to 786-524-2739. (If you email us or fax us and do not receive a complete response within 72 hours, please call us immediately at 770-496-4304.) Thank you again, and we wish you good fortune in all your future endeavours.

Yours truly,

William McLaughlin, License Registration Manager

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**Harrington University**

483 Green Lane Palmers Green, London N13 4BS, England
Email: harrington@univdp.org
Fax: 44-870-134-4791
Different addresses, but similar text in the license scam and diploma mill letters...

(Document image from Allen Ezell)
Dear License Recipient:

Congratulations! This letter is your Proof of Registration and Receipt for your International Driver’s License. The fee for registration is US $200.00, payment of which you made already, completely or partially, through Western Union, your bank, or credit card.

If you make any payments by credit card, please remember that the payment on your credit card statement will be made to:

“Hyacinth, Romania.”

Our Institute name will never appear on your statement for two reasons:
1. To protect your privacy.
2. To keep currency conversion costs to a minimum.

You have been assigned License Number [redacted] for all correspondence with the Institute.

Be on the lookout for other benefits available only to students of our University.

---

Dear Diploma Recipient:

Congratulations! This letter is your Proof of Registration and Receipt. The fee for registration is US $500.00, payment of which you made already, completely or partially, through Western Union, your bank, or Credit Card.

If you make any payments by credit card, please remember that the payment on your credit card statement will be made to:

“Hyacinth, Romania.”

Our University name will never appear on your statement for two reasons:
1. To protect your privacy.
2. To keep currency conversion costs to a minimum.

You have been assigned student ID number DP2619910. Please refer to your student ID in all correspondence with the university.

Also included is your FREE prestigious sample diploma and the accompanying paperwork. Your diploma was printed to your exact specifications and is suitable for framing. It will make a fine addition to your awards, honors, and other diplomas. If there is a need for any corrections or changes, please contact the University.

Be on the lookout for other benefits available only to students of our University.
mapping the UDP family tree

Here’s an example of a fake international license

(Document image from Allen Ezell)
mapping the UDP family tree

More of the same license

(Document image from Allen Ezell)
The “licenses” are copies of AAA documents

Such nice looking documents. How’d they come up with such a lovely design?

The same way they cooked up their web sites: they copied someone else’s work.

Ever buy an “International Driving Permit” from AAA before a trip to Europe? They cost $10 and are valid for a year. Let’s compare…
Fake license on left, AAA driving permit on right
mapping the UDP family tree

Fake license on left, AAA driving permit on right
Fake license on left, AAA driving permit on right
Fake license on left, AAA driving permit on right

**LICENSE VALID ONLY IF ADHERING TO THE FOLLOWING RULES**

(1) The International Driving Permit (IDP) requires your signature on the line directly beneath your photograph.

(2) Rubber Stamp of The Institute for International Licensing must appear on both picture and page in upper right and lower left of picture.

(3) Driver must not drive while drinking, speeding, or breaking any other local law.

(4) Driver must adhere to all local laws and statutes.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE TO HOLDER!**

(1) The International Driving Permit (IDP) requires your signature on the line directly beneath your photograph.

(2) Your valid U.S. driver’s license must accompany the IDP at all times.

(3) Permit is valid for one year from date of issue.
Back to you-know-whats…

So what happened after the FTC whacked lots of diploma mill sites?
They came right back!

A few weeks later, Ashford and Westbourne resurfaced with different domain names. (Ashford has two now!)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“University”</th>
<th>site closed by FTC</th>
<th>new site(s)</th>
<th>dates from…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashford</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ashforduniversity.org">www.ashforduniversity.org</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ashford-university.org">www.ashford-university.org</a></td>
<td>8/1/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ashforduniversity.net">www.ashforduniversity.net</a></td>
<td>2/16/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westbourne</td>
<td><a href="http://www.westbourneuniversity.org">www.westbourneuniversity.org</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.uwestbourne.ca">www.uwestbourne.ca</a></td>
<td>2/6/03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Content of sites is very similar (but not completely identical) to the old sites.

Very resilient, those gophers!
And, of course, there are new gophers too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“University”</th>
<th>site</th>
<th>site IP address</th>
<th>dates from…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Austin University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aus-edu.org">www.aus-edu.org</a></td>
<td>66.70.20.10</td>
<td>can’t tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ashford-university.org">www.ashford-university.org</a></td>
<td>63.241.136.202</td>
<td>8/1/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ashforduniversity.net">www.ashforduniversity.net</a></td>
<td>216.219.254.45</td>
<td>2/16/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Bedford</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uofbedford.org">www.uofbedford.org</a></td>
<td>63.241.136.203</td>
<td>2/27/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Dunham</td>
<td><a href="http://www.universityofdunham.org.uk/">http://www.universityofdunham.org.uk/</a></td>
<td>66.132.45.177</td>
<td>4/28/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hartforduniversity-edu.org">www.hartforduniversity-edu.org</a></td>
<td>207.155.252.9</td>
<td>3/6/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landford University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.landfordu.org">www.landfordu.org</a></td>
<td>12.168.32.116</td>
<td>3/5/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northfield University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.northfield-university.net">www.northfield-university.net</a></td>
<td>64.191.36.98</td>
<td>3/30/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkhurst University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.parkhurstuniversity.org">www.parkhurstuniversity.org</a></td>
<td>66.218.79.190</td>
<td>3/12/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaftesbury University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.shaftesburyu.org.uk">www.shaftesburyu.org.uk</a></td>
<td>139.81.148.3</td>
<td>2/26/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stafford University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.stafford.ac">www.stafford.ac</a></td>
<td>139.81.148.3</td>
<td>4/29/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strassford University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.strassfordu.org.uk">www.strassfordu.org.uk</a></td>
<td>139.81.148.3</td>
<td>4/7/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Switzerland</td>
<td><a href="http://www.swissu.org/">http://www.swissu.org/</a></td>
<td>198.69.224.150</td>
<td>5/24/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westbourne</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uwestbourne.ca">www.uwestbourne.ca</a></td>
<td>162.42.208.252</td>
<td>2/6/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhampton University</td>
<td><a href="http://www.westhamptonuniversity.org">www.westhamptonuniversity.org</a></td>
<td>64.70.212.249</td>
<td>6/24/02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above table last modified 5/21/03.
mapping the UDP family tree

Two of the gophers have the same president.

President’s Message

Dear Students,

Northfield University is proud to be able to offer you high quality education opportunities for your personal and professional growth.

Our degree programs cover all academic levels from an Associate to PhD. Our advisory department offers assistance and support for all of our students, and can develop a degree program that works best for you!

Northfield University’s list of successful graduates includes many business people, engineering and computer professionals who are earning competitive salaries in most desirable work environments.

Whether you are beginning a program of academic study, developing new skills for career expansion, returning to complete your education, or taking courses for general knowledge, we are confident that Northfield University can meet your needs.

Let us help you begin your journey to a bright new future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Harold P. Caldwell

President
Northfield University

President’s Message

Mission & Faculty

Dear Students,

Parkhurst University is proud to be able to offer you high quality education opportunities for your personal and professional growth.

Our degree programs cover all academic levels from an Associate to PhD. Our advisory department offers assistance and support for all of our students, and can develop a degree program that works best for you!

Parkhurst University’s list of successful graduates includes many business people, engineering and computer professionals who are earning competitive salaries in most desirable work environments.

Whether you are beginning a program of academic study, developing new skills for career expansion, returning to complete your education, or taking courses for general knowledge, we are confident that Parkhurst University can meet your needs.

Let us help you begin your journey to a bright new future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Harold P. Caldwell

President
Parkhurst University
mapping the UDP family tree

There’s also a UDP web page served by an Israeli internet service provider.

Web access stats are provided by a Dutch tracking service. Like to see who’s visiting?

http://extremetracking.com/open;unique?login=degreexy

http://www.connect.co.il/degree/
So who are these people anyway?

FTC case No. 1:03-CV-00021-RMC, amended complaint… (2/21/03):

“JASON MATTHIEU ABRAHAM, also known as Yaakov Abraham;
CAROLINE SHALLON, also known as Caroline Abraham also known as Chaya Rochel Abraham;
CHARLES FOGEL also known as Charlie Lewis.”

(These are the folks selling bogus licenses. The FTC complaint is here: http://www.ftc.gov/os/2003/02/mvslamdcmp.htm )
Their businesses (named in the FTC complaint):

“…Mountain View Systems, Ltd. is an Israeli company with its principal place of business at 89 Rechov Mea Shearim, Jerusalem, Israel.

…Wheelie International Limited is an [sic] Bahamian company with its principal place of business at 89 Rechov Mea Shearim, Jerusalem, Israel and registered office in Nassau, Bahamas…

(http://www.ftc.gov/os/2003/02/mvslamdcmp.htm)
mapping the UDP family tree

Their businesses (named in the FTC complaint):

…Aladdin Travel, Inc. is a North Carolina company with its principal place of business at 3305 Durham Drive, Suite 111, Raleigh, North Carolina and registered office at 1308 Claymore Drive, Garner, North Carolina. Aladdin Travel, Inc. does business as Aladdin Financial Management and University Systems.

…S.C. Hyacinth S.R.L. is a Romanian company with its principal place of business at 46 Fabrica de Chibrituri Street, Bucharest, Romania and registered office at 25 C.A. Rosetti Street, Ground Floor, Apartment 2, Sector 2, Bucharest, Romania.”

(ftp://www.ftc.gov/os/2003/02/mvslamdcmp.htm)
There’s more information…

• additional confirmation that the same people are doing the license and degree scams
• estimates of financial intake, number of employees
• how the information was obtained, etc. etc.

There’s quite a story here.
Who’s out there?

One would think that University Degree Program clients would tend to “lie low”…

How many people would want to expose their bogus credentials to search engines and wandering “internauts?”
The answer is “at least 138.”

Some statistics concerning what was on the web in January, 2003:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>highest degree claimed</th>
<th>number of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>doctorate</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master's</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bachelor's</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who’s out there

More stats…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“university”</th>
<th>number of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashford University</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentwick University</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glencullen University</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrington University</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartley University</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsfield University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkwood University</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelbourne University</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornewood University</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Devonshire</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Palmers Green</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ravenhurst</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of San Moritz</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wexford</td>
<td>didn’t look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westbourne University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westhampton University</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who’s out there

Even more stats…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>degree field</th>
<th>number of clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>business/finance</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>science/engineering</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>healthcare/medicine</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychology</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unspecified</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

uh oh!

So… some of our UDP clients have used their degrees to obtain clinical and educational positions. That’s serious.
## College and university positions held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>position held</th>
<th>degree source</th>
<th>comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College athletic coach</td>
<td>Brentwick</td>
<td>Bachelor's in physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University assoc. professor</td>
<td>Harrington</td>
<td>MBA and PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Health Sciences faculty member</td>
<td>Harrington</td>
<td>Ph.D., Physiology (foreign home institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University director of database development</td>
<td>Harrington</td>
<td>Doctorate degree in cognitive psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University lecturer</td>
<td>Kingsfield</td>
<td>PhD in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College athletic coach</td>
<td>Shelbourne</td>
<td>Master of Science in Rehabilitative Medicine and Physical Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college assoc. professor</td>
<td>Shelbourne</td>
<td>Degree not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University asst. clinical professor</td>
<td>Devonshire</td>
<td>Ph.D. (also holds a legitimate Pharm.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College asst. professor</td>
<td>Devonshire</td>
<td>D.B.A. (also holds a legitimate Ph.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University assoc. professor</td>
<td>Devonshire</td>
<td>J.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who’s out there

# Primary and secondary education positions held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>position held</th>
<th>degree source</th>
<th>comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten, grade 1 teacher</td>
<td>Brentwick</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Glencullen</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts degree in Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home schooling organization director</td>
<td>Harrington</td>
<td>Ph.D. in Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American international school teacher</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>B.Ed., MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIH training coordinator</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>M.S., Life Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music teacher and violinist</td>
<td>Shelbourne</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Healthcare and counseling positions held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>position held</th>
<th>degree source</th>
<th>comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forensic psychologist</td>
<td>Ashford</td>
<td>Ph.D. Forensic Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life coach</td>
<td>Brentwick</td>
<td>Master of Arts in Psychology, Doctorate in Education &amp; Human Development with specialisation in subliminal persuasion techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance abuse/addiction counselor</td>
<td>Brentwick</td>
<td>Brentwick is referred to as his medical school in a healthcare directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family counselor</td>
<td>Glencullen</td>
<td>Ph.D. in Counseling from Glencullen University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypnotherapist specializing in weight loss and drug detoxification</td>
<td>Harrington</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical psychologist</td>
<td>Harrington</td>
<td>Ph.D. in clinical psychology and a Ph.D. in ministry, divinity and religious studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed marriage &amp; family psychotherapist and clinical supervisor</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>Doctorate Degree in Clinical Psychology (Masters is bogus too.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

It is alarming to see clinical positions held by untrained people.

Remember the Kitty Genovese murder (New York, 1964)? In the face of potential harm to others we are morally obliged to decide whether or not to act on behalf of the (potential) victim.

What to do?

- call the employer? (but what if it’s just a typo on the employer web site?)
- contact the person claiming the diploma mill degree?
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

Early on, I stumbled onto the web site for…

 Their Chief Operations Officer’s educational credentials include…

Ph.D., Forensic Psychology
- Ashford University
 England 1999
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

Apparently, the C.O.O.’s duties include clinical responsibilities:

- "First point of contact" to aide in victim and witness management to assist Law Enforcement
- Crisis management and counseling for those effected by violent crime
- Instructing and providing Law Enforcement seminars towards higher quality investigation and victim and witness relations

This is not a good thing.
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

But perhaps it’s a typo, and the fault of the webmaster?

Contacting the “forensic psychologist’s” employer might get him/her in hot water, even if it’s just a transcription error.

What to do? Well, maybe it’s a typo. I sent the forensic psychologist an email message to ask…
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

Dear Dr. [Name],

Your information on web sites mentions that you have a Ph.D. in [Field] from Ashford University (London, England 1999). Is that information accurate?

thanks,
George Gollin
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

Here's the reply.

Mr. Gollin,

Yes this information is correct. I would suggest for further verification of this that you contact the university directly. You may do so via e-mail at gradservices@ashfordu.org it would probably aid you in your search if you have my student number of [redacted].

Regards,

[redacted], Ph.D.

This information lets the UDP know that their client has approved the credentials check.
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

So I sent email to Ashford University...

Dear Sir/Madame:

At his suggestion, I am writing to verify the educational credentials for Dr. [redacted] who received a Ph.D. in [redacted] from Ashford University in 1999. Dr. [redacted] said that it would be helpful to you to know that his student number was [redacted]. Generally, a Ph.D. degree includes the generation of a work of original research; I would appreciate knowing the title of Dr. [redacted]’s thesis (or set of articles describing his work, if this is more in keeping with the requirements of your program).

Thank you,
George Gollin
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

I asked about the thesis title, too.
Verifying credentials of a UDP client
Ashford University replied (email shown on two slides)...

From: Ashford University [gradservices@ashfordu.org]  
To: g-gollin@mail.physics.uiuc.edu  
Cc:  
Subject: [Redacted]

Ashford University
5-7 Singer St
London EC2A 4BQ, England

Email Transmission - This information is personal and confidential.

To: George Gollin
Email: g-gollin@mail.physics.uiuc.edu
From: Samantha Small
Fax #'s: (USA) 1-212-465-3317
(UK) 44-870-134-4791
Date: 21 November 2002
E-mail: gradservices@ashfordu.org

Regarding [Redacted] (Student ID #
Verifying credentials of a UDP client
Ashford University reply, continued…

Regarding [redacted]:

Our records indicate that we awarded the following:

Degree: [redacted]
Degree Field: [redacted]
Award Date: December 6, 1999

The dissertation title was [redacted]

Sincerely,

Samantha Small
Student Archives Manager
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

I wondered what they’d say if I asked to see the thesis...

From: Gollin, George
To: 'Ashford University'; Gollin, George
Cc: 
Subject: RE: 

Thank you for the information. Is the thesis available electronically, or through a university phd thesis system?

George Gollin
Verifying credentials of a UDP client

They told me to “bugger off.” (The UDP pretends to be English.)

Dear George,

Dr. [redacted] thesis is not available electronically.

Due to the nature of her work, Dr [redacted] has made the request that her personal information beyond graduation details be held in the strictest of confidence unless [redacted] gives permission for their release in person.

Unfortunately we can give no further details regarding her studies.

Sincerely,

Samantha Small
Student Archives Manager
So what happened next?

The forensic psychologist checked me out (via the web), then sent email asking if I’d be interested in helping them understand crime scene information (pro bono, which would be the right way for me to do it) in difficult cases.

I replied sure, OK, if I could be of service, but I don’t know much of anything about this sort of thing.

I never contacted the psychologist’s employer.

And then, in two steps, Dr. X disappeared.
verifying credentials...

Step 1: the Ph.D. degree disappears

About two weeks later mention of a Ph.D. disappeared from the employer’s web site.
Step 2: the C.O.O. disappears

About a week after that mention of the “forensic psychologist” disappeared from the employer web site.

The name was scrubbed from other pages in which it appeared. (Movie reviews [!!], etc.)
The lesson in this

Someone who knows they’ve been burned may decide to disappear, perhaps to resurface elsewhere.
One of those letters of recommendation

Another service promised by the UDP is the creation of letters of recommendation.

Here’s one, posted to the web by a customer.

Not very informative, is it? Can you guess the field of study?
who else…?

Who else is out there? What to do?

Three examples from those earlier tables…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University asst. clinical professor</td>
<td>Devonshire</td>
<td>Ph.D. (also holds a legitimate Pharm.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College asst. professor</td>
<td>Devonshire</td>
<td>D.B.A. (also holds a legitimate Ph.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed marriage &amp; family psychotherapist and clinical supervisor</td>
<td>Parkwood</td>
<td>Doctorate Degree in Clinical Psychology (Masters is bogus too.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who else…?

A university asst. clinical professor of medicine

UCSF Pharm.D. is legit but Ph.D. is a UDP fabrication.

What I did…
A college assistant professor

Ph.D. is real (but from Southern University, not the non-existent University of Louisiana at Baton Rouge). D.B.A is a UDP fabrication.

What I did...
Licensed “marriage & family psychotherapist and clinical supervisor”


A “psychologist” is licensed by the California Board of Psychology (http://www.psychboard.ca.gov/). Doctorate is required “from an approved or accredited educational institution.”

“Approved” (non-accredited) institutions are listed by the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education (http://www.bppve.ca.gov/).
who else…?

Licensed “marriage & family psychotherapist and successful clinical supervisor”

Other California counseling certifications include “Marriage, Family, and Child Counselor” (renamed “Marriage and Family Therapist” in 1999), among other things.

MFCC/MFT licensing requirements defined by California Board of Behavioral Sciences (http://www.bbs.ca.gov/): doctors or masters degree required from accredited or approved school. Lists of these are available at http://www.bbs.ca.gov/MFCSCHL1.HTM and http://www.bbs.ca.gov/MFCSCHL2.HTM.

Links to licensing information for other states can be found at http://kspope.com/licenseboards.html.
Licensed “marriage & family psychotherapist...”

Google cache:
M.A. from “La Jolla University” (this is not UCSD)
As far as I can tell, La Jolla Univ. does not exist.
It is not on the BBS lists of accredited/approved institutions. It has no listed phone numbers.
Parkwood we know about already.
who else…?

Licensed…

This web page is still active.

License verification through BBS:
http://www.bbs.ca.gov/Weblcpup.htm

Active license issued in 1996 in spite of unacceptable educational credentials.

Several La Jolla University “graduates” take the MFT license exam every year.

I contacted California BBS. This is in progress…
Contact from a former UDP staff member

In March, 2003 I started receiving email from someone who said he had worked for the University Degree Program for two and a half years, but was no longer involved with them.

He began sending me information, asking that I disseminate it widely. Included: faxes of a dozen “Diploma Registration Forms” from transactions with customers who had bought degrees, mostly PhD, but in medical fields.

I do not have independent verification of all the information he has sent. With this in mind… here is an example.
who else...?

One of the Diploma Registration Forms

1

2

3
Diploma Registration Form (1)

Sale date: 11/24/02

Sale price: $2500

It seems that the form is the transaction log used by the salesperson working in the UDP "boiler room"
who else…?

Diploma Registration Form (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>BS</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>MBA</th>
<th>PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invoice Number</td>
<td>1022980</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>NU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pharmaceutical Sciences

“graduation date”: Dec. 2000

cum laude

PhD

Medical Chemistry

MS

Geriatric Pharmacy

NU = Northfield University??

PhD

diploma sent: 1/29/03

print date: 1/29/03

NU = Northfield University??
Diploma Registration Form (3)

Payment date: 1/14/03

Agent paid by check ("check done")

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invoice#</th>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Payment</th>
<th>Paid Date</th>
<th>PMethod</th>
<th>PStatus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1022980</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>$2,500.00</td>
<td>1/14/03</td>
<td>Check/Money Order</td>
<td>Check Done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

log of activity and contact with customer
So who is this particular guy?

He bought an MS in Pharmaceutical Sciences, a PhD in Medicinal Chemistry, and MS and PhD degrees in “Geriatric Pharmacy.”

His business phone included an extension, so I called (without dialing the extension) and asked the operator for his contact information.

He is a pharmacist in a large health care program in New Jersey.

I asked if he was “Dr. so-and-so” or “Mr. so-and-so.” The operator said he was “Mr., not Dr.”
Information on some of the other order forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject of highest degree</th>
<th>total cost</th>
<th>degrees purchased</th>
<th>country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aeronautical engineering</td>
<td>$360</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>$950</td>
<td>BA, MA, MS, MS, MS, PhD</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicinal chemistry</td>
<td>$2500</td>
<td>MS, MS, PhD, PhD</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embryology</td>
<td>$1300</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X-ray technology</td>
<td>$1400</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteopathic medicine</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Switz.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic surgery</td>
<td>$1400</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health</td>
<td>$900</td>
<td>MA, PhD</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic surgery</td>
<td>$1850</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency medicine</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oncology</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is terrible.
What else to talk about…

With more time I would also discuss

• college/university accreditation in the U.S. and Great Britain ("recognized" non-governmental agencies vs. parliamentary charters)
• bogus accreditation organizations
• other phony distance-learning programs
• diploma forgery
• differences in U.S. and British law (we can’t nail ‘em, but they can)
• legal risks (lawsuits for “tortious interference of contract”)
• strategies for investigation of sham universities and their customers
degrees of fraud

It is dishonest, and it does matter

The University Degree Program's clients acquire diplomas to misrepresent their level of knowledge and accomplishment to potential customers, licensing boards, students, colleagues, and patients.

With their false credentials, they gain unfair advantage when seeking jobs and promotions.

As alleged by the FTC, these are acts of fraud.

These acts are committed with the intention of gaining corrupt entry into professions where competence, honesty and trust are essential.
It is dishonest, and it does matter

Most of the results reported here concern only those individuals foolish enough to post their status as University Degree Program clients to the web. There are more of them out there!

These diplomas allow an untrained psychologist to offer clinical services to children of murder victims; an under-qualified NIH employee to pose as an expert before groups of schoolchildren; a "marriage and family psychotherapist" with a fraudulently obtained license to train therapists with legitimate credentials.

This is unacceptable.
Role of the U.S. Department of Education

The role played by the U.S. Department of Education in the accrediting process is described in their website at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/accreditation/. As explained there,

The United States has no Federal Ministry of Education or other centralized authority exercising single national control over postsecondary educational institutions in this country. The States assume varying degrees of control over education, but, in general, institutions of higher education are permitted to operate with considerable independence and autonomy. As a consequence, American educational institutions can vary widely in the character and quality of their programs.

In order to insure a basic level of quality, the practice of accreditation arose in the United States as a means of conducting non-governmental, peer evaluation of educational institutions and programs. Private educational associations of regional or national scope have adopted criteria reflecting the qualities of a sound educational program and have developed procedures for evaluating institutions or programs to determine whether or not they are operating at basic levels of quality. [USDOE2002]
The Department of Education does not accredit universities itself. Instead, it
...is required by statute to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that the Secretary
determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of education or training provided by the institutions
of higher education and the higher education programs they accredit. The Secretary only evaluates
accrediting agencies that apply for recognition... [ibid.]

It would seem more difficult to block the creation of sham universities in the United States than in the
United Kingdom where it is illegal to issue something "which may reasonably be taken to be... a degree"
[DfES2002] without government approval.

**Regional and specialized accreditation boards**

Between 1974 and 1993 the principal non-governmental agency recognized to oversee accrediting in the
United States was the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). After COPA dissolved it was
replaced by a temporary organization (the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation)
until the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was organized in 1997.

CHEA ([http://www.chea.org/](http://www.chea.org/)) watches over six regional accreditation boards, which are listed in the
following table.
## Notes and more information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Accreditation Board</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Coverage Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle States Association (MSA)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.msache.org/">http://www.msache.org/</a></td>
<td>DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA, PR, VI, overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Association of Schools &amp; Colleges (NASC)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nwccu.org/">http://www.nwccu.org/</a></td>
<td>AK, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA; name was changed in 2001)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ncacihe.org/">http://www.ncacihe.org/</a></td>
<td>AR, AZ, CO, IA, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, OK, NM, SD, WI, WV, WY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Association of Schools &amp; Colleges (NEASC)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.neasc.org/">http://www.neasc.org/</a></td>
<td>CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT, international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Association of Colleges &amp; Schools (SACS)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sacs.org/">http://www.sacs.org/</a></td>
<td>AL, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA, Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Association of Schools &amp; Colleges (WASC)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wascsenior.org/senior/">http://www.wascsenior.org/senior/</a></td>
<td>CA, HI, Pacific basin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An accredited degree-granting program in the United States is usually one that has been reviewed by one of these six boards: this is the "gold standard" of accreditation in the U.S. Though participation in the accreditation process is voluntary, most schools which maintain programs of high quality do participate.

In addition to the regional accrediting boards, the Department of Education lists a number of "National Institutional and Specialized Accrediting Bodies" which it recognizes as "reliable authorities" concerning the quality of specific programs in higher education. There are organizations that evaluate programs in acupuncture and oriental medicine, distance education and training, marriage and family therapy, medicine, and psychology. The complete list can be found at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/accreditation/natlagencies.html. The Distance Education and Training Council, Accrediting Commission (DETC, with web site http://www.detc.org/) lists domestic as well as foreign institutions that request accreditation and meet DETC's standards.

It is not always the case that schools without accreditation from a regional board are to be viewed with suspicion. For example, California established a two-tiered system of higher education after the Second World War in which non-accredited schools can participate. Review and regulation of these schools was codified in the state's Educational Reform Act of 1989 in part "to counter California's growing reputation as a diploma mill state." [Penman2000] This review function is now carried out by the Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education (BPPVE), part of the state's Department of Consumer Affairs. The BPPVE web site is http://www.bppve.ca.gov/.
Notes and more information

Evaluation of foreign programs; licensing boards

Through the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation (NCFMEA http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/ncfmea/index.html), the U.S. Department of Education reviews the standards used by foreign countries to accredit their medical schools, but does not participate in the accreditation process directly.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES), a British government agency, maintains a list of institutions that have been granted degree-conferring power in the U.K. The information is available at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recognisedukdegrees/. None of the "universities" linked to the University Degree Program are on the list. (Several UDP "schools" claim mailing addresses in Great Britain. For example, the University of Devonshire web site http://www.henryheston.com.cnchost.com/devonshire/ lists “27 Old Gloucester St., London." With its London address, Devonshire should be on the DfES list of recognized programs.)
Notes and more information

Some professions require that practitioners hold licenses from state-approved licensing boards. In California the regulations pertaining to clinical psychologists are codified in Section 2914 of the state's Business and Professions Code. [CBP2002] Links to licensing information for other states can be found at http://ksoppe.com/licenseboards.html. The manner in which degrees from foreign institutions are evaluated by licensing boards varies from state to state. The California Board of Psychology requires "that applicants [for licensure] with degrees from schools outside the US and Canada must provide the board with a comprehensive evaluation of the degree performed by a foreign credential evaluation service that is a member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES), and any other documentation the board deems necessary." [CBP2002] The NACES web site can be found at http://www.naces.org/.

Organizations that provide accreditation for sham universities

There are a number of suspicious accrediting organizations with presences on the web. The “European Council for Distance and Open Learning” has a web site with URL http://www.ecdol.org/ and phone/fax numbers +44-208-387-8359 and +44-870-132-8246. (44 is the country code for the United Kingdom, while 208 is a city code for London.) According to AT&T's international services, the first number is not a real phone number; AT&T has no phone listing for the European Council for Distance and Open Learning in the United Kingdom. Dialing the fax number brings up the message “This number is not in use. Thank you for calling. Goodbye.” ECDOL's list of institutions includes five created by the University Degree Program.
Another unsavory accrediting organization is the “Distance Learning Council of Europe” (DLCE) with a real fax number (+44-870-138-6297) but no phone number. It lists six UDP "universities." Its web site is http://www.dlce.org/dlcenet/dlcenet.htm.

A third organization is The National Board of Education, Inc. (NBOE) which describes itself as "a comprehensive provider of Degree & Document Authentication & Apostille Services." At their web site (http://www.nationalboardedu.com/) they offer "Attestation/Credential Evaluation Services" and explain that "an Attestation Report is a document that attests that your degree or other credential is equivalent to a regionally accredited US or Canadian degree." NBOE has filed its papers of incorporation in Liberia. They explain this by stating "NBOE provides services worldwide, and has found The Republic of Liberia to be the finest example of supportive leadership in educational advancement to all nations." NBOE is not recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a reliable authority on the quality of educational programs even though many of the programs it "accredits" are based in the United States.
Notes and more information

Verifying academic credentials

We tend to trust colleagues in our professional sphere. However, when job applicants are unknown to us it is sensible to be cautious and to confirm that their credentials and accomplishments are accurately represented.

- Check that the degree-granting institution is legitimate. Contact the relevant regional accreditation board or appropriate state agency to confirm the status of the degree-granting institution.

- Verify that the degree was actually awarded.

- Verify the credentials and affiliations of authors of letters of recommendation. Confirm by telephone that their letters are genuine.

Responding to instances of misrepresentation of academic credentials

When we encounter indications of misconduct that could imperil others, we are obliged to consider whether or not to act. The moral calculation involves a number of factors. How reliable is the information? How great is the risk to others if we choose not to act? How much time will it take? Do we risk being sued in retaliation?
A first step is to document the misconduct by saving copies of relevant web pages. One way to do this is to produce a screen shot of the page. Holding down the Alt key while pressing the "Print Scrn" key will place a bitmap image of the visible portion of the PC's active window on the clipboard. This can be pasted into a word processor document or Photoshop picture. (The Print Scrn key is usually near the right side of the row of F keys on the keyboard. Converting the bitmap into a GIF or JPG file with Photoshop will reduce the file's size considerably.) Another way is to use Internet Explorer's ability to save a web page and embedded graphics in a folder. From the browser, follow the menu path File → Save As... and select the option Web Page, complete (*.htm, *.html) in the Save as type: box.

The search engine Google.com stores temporary ("cached") copies of web pages that are saved until the search engine revisits the site. If a web page has been changed, the cached file may show the earlier version. This proved useful after I contacted an Ashford University Ph.D. to inquire about credentials: a few weeks later the employer began expunging all mention of the staff member from the web site. (I did not contact the employer.) The cached versions of the pages provided a time-lapse record of the changes.

A query to other search engines such as Altavista.com, Alltheweb.com, and Lycos.com may yield links not returned with the Google.com results.

The “internet archive” at http://www.archive.org/ stores periodic snapshots of large numbers of web sites, allowing one to view the time-evolution of sites which it has archived.

The Sam Spade site at http://samspade.org/ contains a number of internet tracking utilities which can be used to learn more about the registration and location of a web site.
It is worth discussing your findings with a lawyer before proceeding further. (Those of us at universities may be able to find expert advice concerning risks and strategies through our school's legal staff.) There can be differences between what the law actually says and what we assume it will say! It is naïve to expect that placing publicly available information before an employer is an act without risk. If the UDP client is disciplined or fired they might claim "tortious interference of contract" and sue. "Tortious interference of contract" refers to damaging interference by a third party with a contractual relationship between two other parties (the employer and the employee). It is not necessarily the case that a pure heart and an honest voice will guarantee victory in a lawsuit. Here is a selection from a 1998 Arkansas Supreme Court opinion [ARK1998] that discusses the subject.

In 1995, our Civil Instructions Committee met and adopted AMI Civ. 3d 406, which requires that the plaintiff must prove the following five elements to prove interference with contractual relationship or business expectancy:

(1) plaintiff sustained damages;

(2) plaintiff had a valid contractual relationship (and/or business expectancy);

(3) defendant had knowledge of the contractual relationship and/or business expectancy;

[continued next page]
(4) defendant by intentional interference induced or caused a disruption or termination of the relationship and/or expectancy; and

(5) the disruption or termination was a proximate cause of the plaintiff's damages.

The foregoing instruction on (and definition of) tortious interference with contractual relationship was based upon a host of Arkansas cases where this court required the elements listed above, but made no mention of any "improper motive" requirement. [ARK1998]

This surprised me: providing factual information that is not selected with an eye towards misleading the employer does not immunize a Good Samaritan against an unfavorable outcome in a lawsuit.

State licensing boards define the required credentials for a number of professions including medicine and clinical psychology. Contact information for U.S. and Canadian psychology licensing boards can be found at http://kspope.com/licenseboards.html; some states maintain web sites that include online verification of licenses as well as descriptions of the credentials required for a license. One possible course of action to discuss with a lawyer would be to describe the apparent misrepresentation of academic qualifications to a licensing board. It is possible that the board would function as a buffer between yourself and the employer/employee so that you were not interfering directly with the employer/employee contract.
References and further information


References and further information


The newspaper *The Australian* published an "extensive guide to active, emerging, and recent diploma mills..." on September 2, 2002. The article is available online at http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,5017662%255E23004,00.html.

The web site http://www.degree.net contains a large amount of information about accredited distance learning programs and diploma mills.


George Brown's article "Competing for the Cyber-Savvy; challenging the competitor you never knew you had" was shown at the 16th Australian International Education Conference, 30 September – 4 October 2002 (Hobart, Tasmania, Australia). Brown discusses a variety of topics including possible definitions for the terms "degree mill" and "diploma mill."

George Gollin, UIUC
Need a degree in a hurry? Take a look here:

The American College of Metaphysical Theology (http://www.americancollege.com/). The "total fee" for a Ph.D. is $199.

Replacement Diplomas (http://www.degree-mill.com/) produces forgeries of diplomas and transcripts from real universities (including medical schools) for $225.

CollegeDiploma Reproductions (http://www.geocities.com/collegediploma/) also forges diplomas and transcripts, but charges $750.

Cooldegree.com (http://www.cooldegree.com/) forges diplomas and transcripts from a mix of imaginary and real universities ($159), as well as providing "verification" of credentials ($225) and letters of recommendation ($20 per letter).

Capitol University (http://www.capitoluniversity.com/) charges $1650 for a masters and Ph.D. and promises delivery "within 3 weeks of enrollment." It is accredited by the "Distance Graduation Accrediting Association" (DGAA; http://www.accredit.t2u.com/). The DGAA web site uses remarkably poor graphics.