

Kensington University

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Kensington University was an unaccredited distance education institution that was based at different times in Hawaii and California. It was eventually shut down by state authorities in both states.

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History

The school was founded in 1976 by Alfred Calabro in Glendale, California, as a "no fat, no bull" correspondence school to meet the needs of working adults.^[1] The university was housed in a Glendale office that also contained Calabro's law practice. Kensington awarded bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in a wide range of fields.^[2] The Hawaii branch was started in 1996.^[3]

As of 1976, Kensington was an "authorized" independent postsecondary institution in the state of California.^[4] After the California Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education was created in 1989 to regulate higher education institutions in the state, Kensington was required to obtain Council approval. In 1994, the Council's first review of the institution found deficiencies.^{[1][2]} Following a protracted legal battle, Kensington University was ordered shut down by California authorities in 1996, no new degrees could be awarded, but prior degrees from the school would remain valid. The school was then re-opened by Anthony Calabro in Sep 1996^[5] at O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, where it was closed by court order in 2003.^{[3][6][7]}

Notable alumni

In 1996, Kensington reported having graduated 7,000 students in the previous two decades.^[8] One of the notable people who received degrees from Kensington University is Jennifer Carroll, who served as Florida lieutenant governor and as a member of the Florida House of Representatives. She received an MBA degree from Kensington in 1995, but removed it from her personal biography in 2004 after a CBS News investigation informed her of concerns about the school's legitimacy. The news reports also led Carroll to resign from the National Commission on Presidential Scholars.^{[7][9]} René Drouin, who sat on an advisory committee at the U.S. Department of Education, also was identified by CBS News as a Kensington degree holder.^[7] Both Carroll and Drouin told reporters that they had worked hard in their Kensington degree programs and thought the academic programs were legitimate.^{[7][9]} Martin S. Roden, an engineering

professor at California State University at Los Angeles, obtained a doctorate from Kensington in 1982, by which time he already held a full professorship at Cal State.^{[1][10]} In 1996 he said Kensington was "not a fraud, but certainly no one going there would be compared to someone with a UCLA degree."^[1] He later told the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that he had the degree to avoid having to correct students who mistakenly addressed him as "Doctor".^[10] The only Western degree displayed by former North Korean "eternal President" Kim Il-sung in his residence the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun was from Kensington.^[11]

Recognition in law

It is illegal in Texas to use a degree after 1996 from Kensington University.^[12]

Says John Bear, author of *Bear's Guide to Earning Degrees by Distance Learning*, a compilation of information on early distance education, "Kensington did meet California's new Approval standards, and operated as a state-approved university for a while, and their law degrees did qualify people to take the state Bar (where they actually had a fairly decent record in the late 80s-early 90s; the school was owned and operated by a law firm). They were the first approved school to have that status taken away by the state, which was why they took up addresses (if not actual facilities) in Hawaii and Asia, and were called variously Kensington Pacific, Kensington International, and something else I think.

If an applicant's degree is pre-1994, then it is a legal California degree. Rich's survey of corporate HR people suggest that a Kensington degree would have negligible acceptance in the academic world; somewhat higher in business. And there are scores of lawyers currently practicing in California with a Kensington law degree." ^[13]

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