SENATE BILL NO. 2620

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-101-241, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO DEFINE THE AUTHORITY OF THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON COLLEGE ACCREDITATION AND TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMISSION TO SEEK AN INJUNCTION TO ENJOIN UNAPPROVED COURSE OFFERINGS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. Section 37-101-241, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-101-241. (1) There is hereby created the Commission on College Accreditation. Said commission shall be composed of the Executive Director of the State Board of Community and Junior Colleges, the Commissioner of Higher Education, or their designees, and two (2) additional members, one (1) of whom shall be selected by the foregoing two (2) members and who shall represent the private colleges within the state, and one (1) of whom shall be selected by the Mississippi Association of Colleges. The latter two (2) members shall each serve for a term of three (3) years.

(2) The commission shall meet and organize by electing from among its membership a chairman, a vice chairman and a secretary. The commission shall keep full and complete minutes and records of all its proceedings and actions.

(3) The commission shall have the power and authority, and it shall be its duty, to prepare an approved list of institutions or other entities which offer one or more post-secondary academic degrees and are domiciled, incorporated, doing business, or otherwise located in the State of Mississippi. Post-secondary academic degrees include, but are not limited to, associate,
bachelor, masters and doctorate degrees. * * * The commission shall adopt standards which are in keeping with the best educational practices in accreditation and receive reports from the institutions seeking to be placed on the approved list.

(4) The above-described institutions or other entities, approved by the Commission or accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education, shall be approved by the commission in order to grant diplomas of graduation, degrees or offer instruction. Bible Colleges and Theological Seminaries not already approved by the commission and the American Association of Bible Colleges or Association of Theological Schools, shall be approved annually, by the commission, in order to grant diplomas of graduation, degrees, or offer instruction.

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(5) The commission shall petition the chancery court of the county in which a person or agent offers one or more post-secondary academic degrees subject to the provisions of this chapter or advertises for the offering of such degrees without having first obtained approval by the commission, for an order enjoining such offering or advertising. The court may grant such injunctive relief upon a showing that the respondent named in the petition is offering or advertising one or more post-secondary academic degrees without having obtained prior approval of the commission. The Attorney General or the District Attorney of the district including the county in which such action is brought, shall, upon request of the commission, represent the commission in bringing any such action.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2002.