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Critic questions AQMD board member's doctorates

AQMD board member who is to vote on whether to ban Newport, Huntington fire pits has two Ph.D.s from 'diploma mills'.

[Partial Article]

By Jill Cowan and Alicia Lopez

May 17, 2013 | 5:02 p.m.

A critic of the region's air-quality agency is questioning the academic credentials of a board member empowered to vote on the fate of the fire rings in Newport Beach and Huntington Beach.

Clark E. Parker, who sits on the South Coast Air Quality Management District board, lists two doctorates in his [online biography](#) on the agency website. Parker, who was appointed in June by the state [Senate Rules Committee](#), is referred to as "Dr. Parker" throughout the document.

But the listed doctorates are from so-called diploma mills that provide degrees in exchange for payment, contends epidemiologist Jim Enstrom, a researcher who has criticized the science behind some of AQMD's regulations.

Enstrom sent a letter March 21 to Parker questioning his credentials and posted it [online](#).

Parker did not respond to the Daily Pilot's repeated requests for comment over the course of several days.

District officials said the biographies are self-submitted and not checked for accuracy.

The biography lists — among other accomplishments — a "doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) from the University of Central Arizona, and a doctor of laws from Laurence University."

Both the University of Central Arizona and Laurence University are now-defunct organizations that allegedly operated as diploma mills, meaning they were unaccredited, for-profit colleges accused of selling degrees, in the 1970s and 1980s, according to an expert on nontraditional education and reports from that time.

Parker's biography says he received an honorary "doctor of law" from the Laurence University in 1971. He received a doctor of arts in management from the University of Central Arizona in 1980.

"I earned [my Ph.D.] from [Stanford University](#), putting in five of the hardest years of my life," Enstrom said. "He doesn't deserve to call himself a Ph.D., and he doesn't deserve to say he has doctoral level knowledge in anything."

An official at the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education said the agency had no official record of University of Central Arizona's existence, aside from one 1982 letter to the state Board of Regents warning of the school's illegitimacy.

That letter was from John Bear, Ph.D., who has written extensively on correspondence education and degree mills.

Bear said that he recalled that the University of Central Arizona and Laurence University occupied a "gray area" between straightforward money-for-diploma exchanges and unaccredited schools that require some amount of work.

"I keep writing about fake degrees being a time bomb in your resume, ticking away and not knowing when it'll go off, but it so often does," he said. "There's such a continuum, from 'Give me 1,000 bucks and you're done this afternoon, to how about a 30-page dissertation and 1,000 bucks."

He said such set-ups, particularly in Arizona, were "legal at the time, which doesn't mean acceptable."

Enstrom in March asked district administrators for verification of Parker's education and was provided [images of diplomas](#) from a University of Central Arizona, a Laurence University, the University of Redlands and the University of Minnesota.

Both the University of Minnesota, from which Parker earned a bachelor of science in 1975, and the University of Redlands, from which he earned a master of arts in 1981, confirmed that Parker graduated. However, his diploma from the University of Redlands shows that he earned a master of arts in management, while his biography lists a "master of science (MS) from Redlands University."

While district Executive Officer Barry Wallerstein said not even a bachelor's degree is legally required to serve on the AQMD board, Enstrom said it's a matter of "integrity" when representing the public's interests.

Enstrom said he has met with various members of the district board and believed from Parker's biography that he had a background in science, unlike many of the other board members, who are chosen from among area elected officials to represent certain constituencies.

For example, Orange County Supervisor Shawn Nelson serves on the AQMD board on behalf of the County of Orange.

Parker, Enstrom said, had "no right" to claim such a high level of education, because it had "a direct bearing on his credibility in my mind."

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CLARK E. PARKER, Ph.D.
Governing Board Member
Senate Rules Committee Appointee

Dr. Clark E. Parker, Sr. was appointed to the AQMD governing board by the California Senate Rules Committee on June 1, 2012. Dr. Parker is a successful business executive and has worked extensively in a variety of businesses and industries. Dr. Parker chairs the Refinery Committee. He also serves on the Finance, Legislative, Mobile Source, Technology and Personnel Committees for AQMD and is the Board appointee to the California Fuel Cell Partnership.

Clark was Manager of the Operations Research Department for Tidewater and Getty Oil. During his work with Tidewater and Getty Oil, Dr. Parker wrote several computer programs that simulated and modeled crude oil refineries, using linear programming simulation techniques (1962-1963).

Dr. Parker worked for IBM where he was involved in marketing hardware and software to the Oil and Gas Industry and to the Insurance and Banking Industry (1963-1967).

Dr. Parker was Vice President for PennCorp Financial, a New York Stock Exchange Company that owned multiple insurance companies, banks and brokerage firms; he headed corporate acquisitions during his tenure with PennCorp Financial. Clark held this position with PennCorp for 15 years (1967-1982).

Dr. Parker is currently an alternate member of the California Coastal Commission, a member of the California Professional Fiduciaries Advisory Commission. Clark was a member of the California Senate Select Committee on Telecommunication; he has served as an Advisory Member of the University of California Santa Barbara Foundation Board; he has served as an advisor to California Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell.

Dr. Parker is currently the Honorary Counsel General for the Central African Republic Government.

Dr. Parker currently sits on several community base non-profit organizations, Today's Fresh Start Charter School (10 years) and Golden Day Schools (47 years).

Clark's career endeavors has lead him to be the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Spectrum Surveillance Systems and View Park Development Corporation (38 years) and he has developed hundreds of commercial and residential properties throughout Southern California. Clark is currently a Licensed General Contractor and Real Estate Developer; he is also a California Licensed Real Estate Broker. Dr. Parker currently holds a California Contractor's license for general building, electrical, plumbing, and low voltage systems.

His educational background has allowed him to earn and hold a Bachelor of Science Degree (BS) from the University of Minnesota, a Master of Science (MS) from Redlands University, a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from the University of Central Arizona, and a Doctor of Laws from Laurence University. Dr. Parker holds Advanced and Basic Certifications from UELA, and an Associate of Arts Degree from the Center for Early Education in Los Angeles, California. Clark holds several Teaching Certificates and Credentials from Preschool through College.

Dr. Parker has traveled extensively, throughout Europe, South America and Africa.

A screen grab of Clark E. Parker's biography on the South Coast Air Quality Management District's website. (Screenshot, Daily Pilot / May 17, 2013)