

OPINION

Degree verification a nice touch for NIU

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As graduation inches closer for some college students, getting a leg up in the job market remains a top priority. But proving your degree is valid is now part of the job search.

Recently, however, NIU found a possible solution through the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), a nonprofit organization which provides enrollment and degree verification to prospective employers. Kathleen Dugan, marketing director for the NSC said the nonprofit organization takes care of the legwork universities don't have the time for.

"The Clearinghouse has everything electronic so there is a time-stamped audit trail to check and see where everything goes," Dugan said.

That couldn't be more reassuring in a time when internet-savvy people seem to have an edge over those who aren't as knowledgeable.

As college students search for jobs, nothing is more unsettling than knowing your competition is lying about their degree.

NIU and other colleges across the country are ensuring prospective employers can double-check job candidates actually earned their degrees.

Remember football coach George O'Leary from Notre Dame? He was hired by the school but resigned just five days later after claiming to have an unearned degree on his resume. Lucky for the team and for O'Leary's replacement, Tyrone Willingham, Notre Dame football is publicly recognized enough for the scam to be revealed easily.

Most job hunters aren't that lucky. The pressure of being examined next to other candidates drives some people to lie on their resumes and possibly get a job because of the false information.

Dugan said NIU registered with the NSC in August.

"They are just a fantastic organization," said Adam Stone, director of registration and records. "They're 100 percent ethical."

The NSC is 15 years old and services over 3,200 U.S. colleges, said Dugan. That's a high volume of colleges available on the database.

It's great that NIU decided that the degree verification was a worthwhile service. It makes those who do earn their degrees feel a lot more secure in the job market, at least in one aspect.