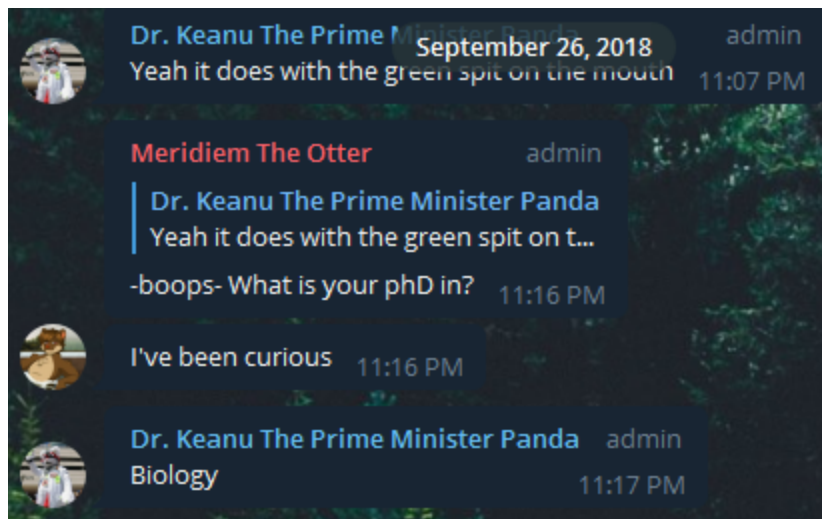


Concerning Keanu Red Panda's “Microbiology PhD”

In March of 2020, at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States, one Keanu Red Panda (legal name James Lovell Thompson), a self-proclaimed “leader” of the Chattanooga, TN furry community, [chastised the admin of a different local Telegram group](#) for [advising locals to stay at home](#) for their safety and to slow the spread of the virus. Despite claiming his statement was backed by the CDC and the WHO, he received immediate pushback, was cited a CDC statement that contradicted his own, and then he left the group. It was this contrarian and dangerous statement (that he later recanted, after receiving even more pushback) that caused many to call into question the validity of his credentials.

Because his name cannot be found on the alumni lists of universities he claims to have attended and his dissertation cannot be located, the purpose of this document is to examine the proof that he *is* willing to provide, and to analyze the veracity of his claims. Web snapshot archives will be utilized whenever possible, and screenshots when this option is unavailable.

The Original Claims



As far back as 2018, Keanu has claimed ([very often](#)) to have a Master's and PhD in **biology**. On [his Staff page](#) (retrieved March 17 2020) from the Anthro Southeast convention website, Keanu claimed to have “a PhD in biological studies from Covenant College” (a school with no PhD program), and that he was on the board of trustees at his Alma mater (presumably, also Covenant

College). [On March 14, 2020](#) he claimed again to have a PhD in “biological studies”, a minor in organic chemistry, and that he is on the board of directors instead. ([Though sometimes used interchangeably, they are technically not the same thing.](#))

Three months later, in a video titled “Square One | Piercing the ASE Veil” ([Direct Link](#), [Archive of Youtube page](#), [Backup of video](#)) (henceforth referred to simply as “Square One”) and an accompanying Google Drive folder, Keanu finally addressed the concerns regarding his PhD (among other

things that this particular document is not concerned with). The transcript of the portion of the video regarding his PhD is as follows:

Timestamp: 00:32-3:50

"Now, as many of you know, I have been accused of falsely claiming to be the recipient of a PhD in microbiology. A PhD such as mine is not to be confused with a PhD in a medical field (MD). Just because someone can put a "Dr." in front of their name does not make them a medical professional. I start with this due to the seriousness of academic fraud, and it is not something to be taken lightly.

Now, as you can see here, this is a PhD. I would've shown this sooner, but as many of you know, my aunt has passed away and I did not want to interrupt my family with this matter. I typically keep the diploma with my aunt and uncle for safekeeping. The keen-eyed among you might notice I am not showing the last name. And for that, we need to change the tone a bit.

In the first ten years of my life, I lived with my biological parents, who were, and still are, riddled with addiction issues. Since I was two, every summer I visited my aunt and uncle an hour away. This was a major part of my life due to the fact that it gave me a chance to have a time of normalcy in such a broken home. My time with my aunt and uncle was meaningful to me. This led to them formally and graciously adopting me at the age of ten, and to this day I consider them my parents.

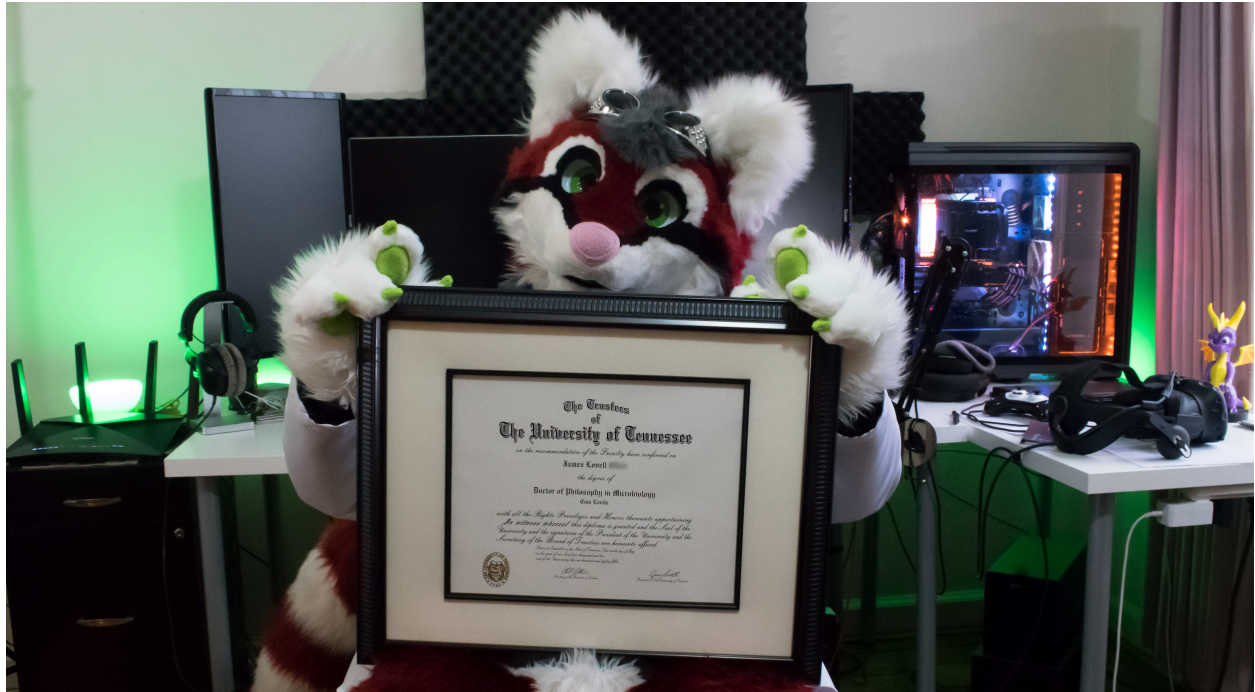
The process of being adopted allowed me to start a new chapter in my life, which led to the success I have today. However, this would not have been possible without the generosity and support offered to me by my new parents, and I want to thank them for giving me a second chance with the hand that life had dealt me.

Growing up, I was indoctrinated with a different worldview, and as some of you may know, Covenant College happens to be a religious institution. Once I broke free from this closed-minded worldview, I elected to have my name changed to further separate myself from the man I once was. After receiving my master's from Covenant, I pursued a joint venture between the Covenant and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville to finish up my PhD.

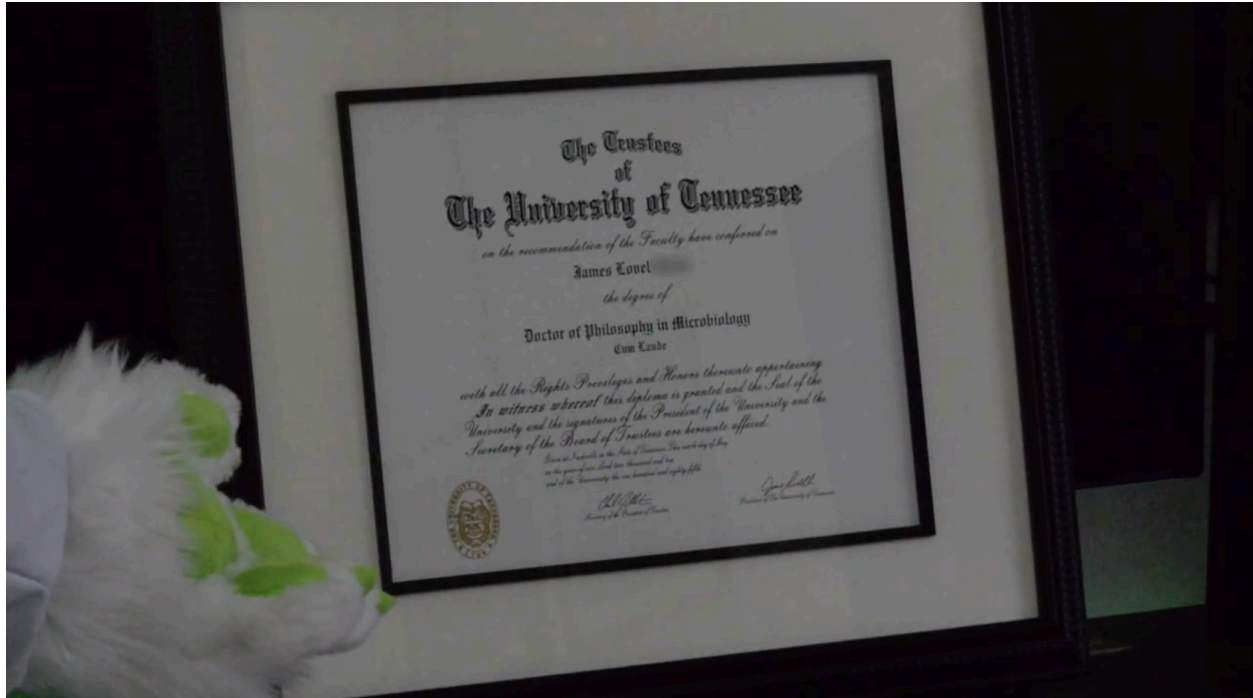
Now, this was originally in the pursuit of living out the life my parents had set out for me. If it was up to them, I would be a pharmacist, which honestly I was on board for. However, when I spent a summer working as a pharmacy technician during an internship, I realized this was not the life for me. I hated it. But being so far into the program, I figured it would be best not to give up, and finish my PhD in microbiology. My academic advisor strongly suggested that. This would explain why I've held jobs that do not pertain to microbiology.

On a more personal note, as to why I will not be releasing my last name, that is a chapter of my life that I feel is best left untouched. My private life has been invaded under my current last name, Thompson, and I would prefer to keep that chapter of my life as it has been: private. In the recent months, there have been calls to people close to me in my personal life. My address was posted on Twitter, and an unabated invasion into my personal identity. This is why I will not be releasing my previous last name, as to not repeat history. I hope you understand."

Now he has attended the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (henceforth referred to as UTK) as well as Covenant College, and his PhD is actually in *microbiology*. (Although [he did claim in 2019](#) in the Anthro SouthEast telegram group to have gone to UT, at this point the PhD is still in biology) The explanation of his previous last name is presumably to explain why concerned individuals have had a difficult time verifying his PhD under his current name, and why he has blurred out his last name in the photo and video of his PhD. This photo and a screenshot from “Square One” are presented below:



(from the Google Drive folder accompanying “Square One”)



(from the video "Square One")

The claims thus made, the authors of this document (henceforth referred to as "we") will now examine them, and this PhD diploma.

Analysis

"On the board of trustees at my Alma mater"

We'll start with this one because it is short: he's not there. There is no James on the board of trustees of [Covenant College](#) nor that of the [University of Tennessee](#). (UTK does have an alumni board of directors, [but he's not there either](#).) Unless there is a third university that he's attended that we don't know about, this claim is bunk. *One's alma mater is the school, college, or university that one once attended.

The PhD Itself

We have found many discrepancies between Keanu's PhD as presented by himself and [examples we found](#) of other legitimate degrees from UT.

The following is the clearest image we have of the document, although it is still somewhat difficult to read, and the original image is in .tif format so it's annoying to try and open from its original Google Drive. You can click the image below to view a larger .png and compare for yourself. To the best of our ability we have transcribed this diploma as follows:




The Trustees of The University of Tennessee
on the recommendation of the Faculty have conferred on
James Lovell (Redacted)
the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Microbiology
Cum Laude
with all the Rights Privileges and Honors thereunto appertaining
In witness whereof this diploma is granted and and the Seal of the
University and the signatures of the President of the University and the
Secretary of the Board of Trustees are hereunto affixed.

Given at Nashville in the State of Tennessee This ninth day of May
in the year of our Lord two thousand and ten
and of the University the one hundred and eighty-fifth.

The Signatures

We were unable to determine who actually signed Keanu's diploma, but the image is clear enough to determine whose signatures these *aren't*.

In 2010, the year this diploma is dated, the President of the University was Dr. Jan Simek, and the Secretary was Catherine Mizell. It's worth noting that Mizell was the secretary uninterrupted from 2000 to 2019, and her signature can be found on every example we could find of other UT diplomas, even ones from other UT campuses, such as the UTHSC in Memphis.

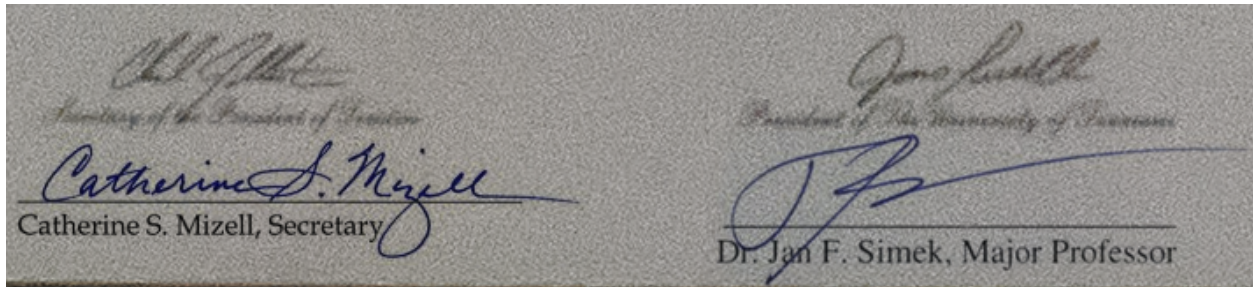

Dr. Jan F. Simek, Major Professor

([source](#))

Respectfully Submitted,


Catherine S. Mizell, Secretary

([source](#))

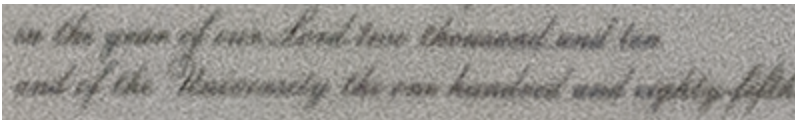


The image shows two signatures side-by-side. On the left is the signature of Catherine S. Mizell, Secretary, and on the right is the signature of Dr. Jan F. Simek, Major Professor. Both signatures are in blue ink and are quite distinct from each other.

As can plainly be seen, these signatures are not at all similar. Mizell was Secretary for almost a decade, and her signature is very consistent.

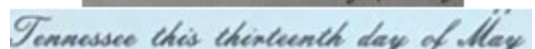
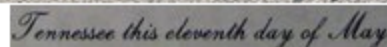
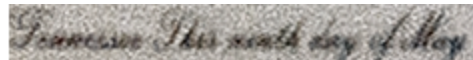
The Year of the University

This one may take a bit of explaining if you are not familiar with the verbiage of diplomas. At the end they read “Given at [city] in the State of [state] this [day and month] in the year of our Lord [the year] and of the University [the number of years since the university was founded].” UTK was founded September 10, 1794, so, for example, the 2002 diploma reads “in the year of our Lord two thousand and two and of the University the two hundred and eighth.” In 2002, the University was 208 years old. The 2017 diplomas are of the University the 223rd, and so on.



eighty-fifth.” So, he received his PhD in 2010, when the university was... 185 years old? That would put the founding year of UTK in 1825, which is incorrect.

While we’re on this little section of the diploma, one other inconsistency found was in the word “this”, as seen in “This ninth day of May”. In all the other examples we found, including the one from 2002



which most matches the layout of his diploma, the word “this” in that sentence is lowercase. It’s not a font thing-- the capitalized Tennessee is right next to the word “this”, so you can tell the difference.

The Seal

A detailed description of the official seal of the University of Tennessee can be found on its [Brand Guidelines](#) page. A comparison between the seal on Keanu’s diploma, the UT seal, and the other examples of seals on diplomas we have found are pictured below. Click the image to see it in larger resolution.

“The official seal of the University of Tennessee features images of an open book, globe, sextant, gear, and laurels. The words “agriculture” and “commerce,” and images of a plow and riverboat, are elements of the seal of the State of Tennessee. The date, 1794, is the year Blount College—the University of Tennessee’s forerunner—was established in Knoxville.”

The seal as pictured in UTK’s Brand Guidelines.



Keanu's, 2010



- The GLOBE is missing
- “Agriculture” and “Commerce” ribbons are blank
- Not embossed
- Muddy, unclear details



UTK, 2002

- Globe is always present
- “Agriculture” and “Commerce” ribbons are not blank
- Embossed and foil
- Details much clearer

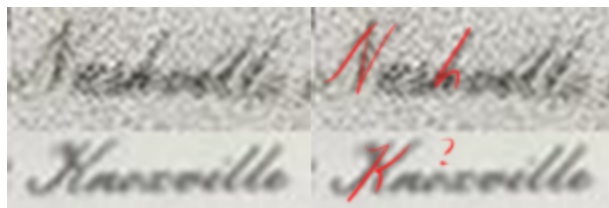


UTK, 2017



From a UTHSC doctorate, 2017

Nashville or Knoxville?



Keanu's PhD states that it was given at Nashville. While UT has several other campuses, including the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center campus in Nashville (an example of a diploma from the UTHSC Memphis campus can be seen [here](#)),

[they don't offer any degree programs in microbiology.](#)

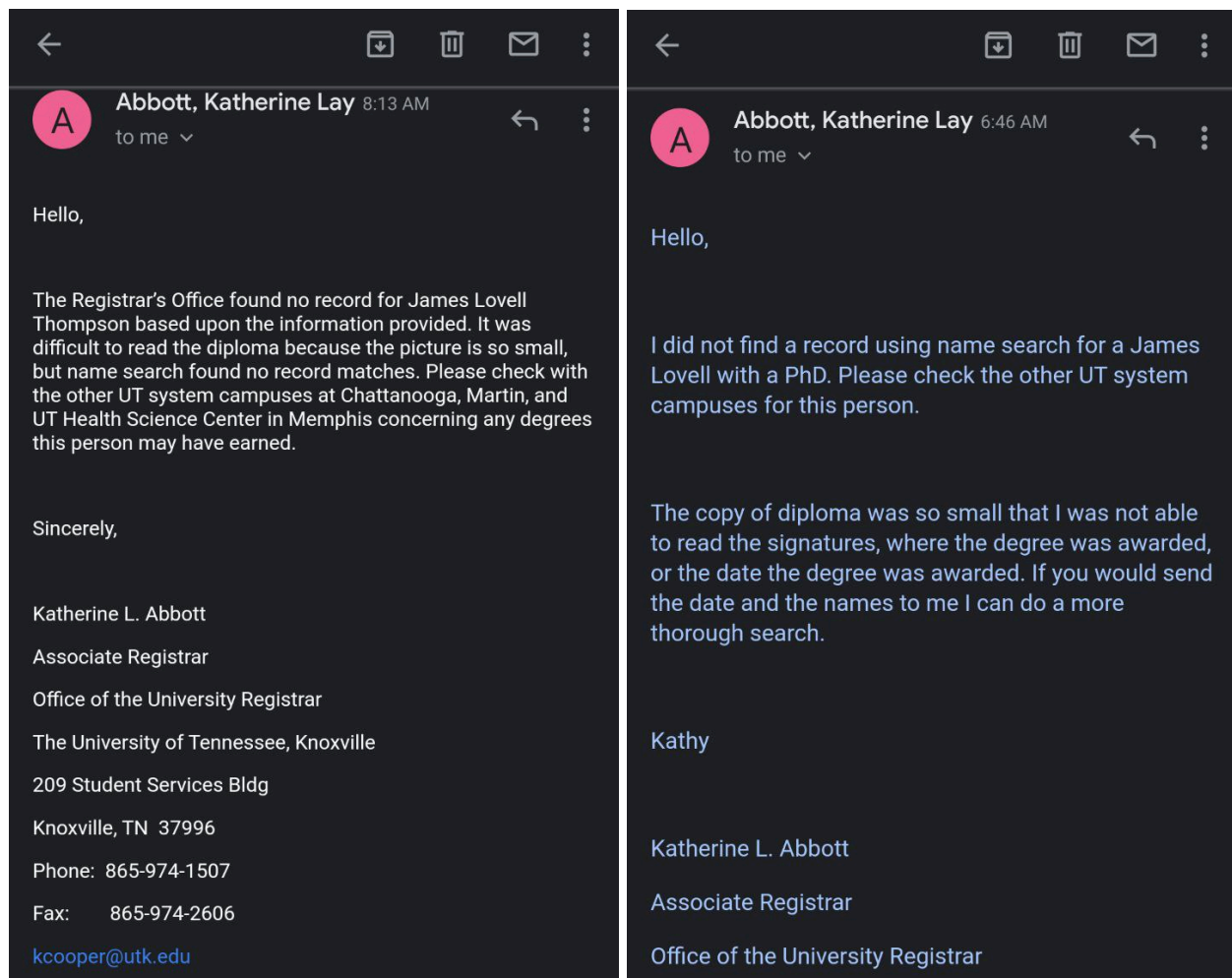
UTK Alumni

Regardless of whatever his last name happened to be at the time of his graduation, we can see that his first name at the time his PhD was presented was still James, middle name Lovell. It follows that a James-Lovell-something would appear on the alumni lists of either Covenant College or UTK. Given that Covenant College does not *have* a PhD program or microbiology department, we can only look at UTK's. He cannot be found on the [list of alumni of the](#)

[Department of Microbiology](#). [\(archive\)](#) Furthermore, he cannot be found on [this list of 2010 alumni](#) either. Although several James-es graduated in 2010, none of them were involved in microbiology.

Correspondence with the University Registrar

One of the many duties of a university's registrar is to confirm dates of attendance and graduation and to verify enrollment or degrees (for example, if an employer wants to verify the credentials of a prospective employee, they can contact the college's registrar). One of the authors of this document reached out to the University of Tennessee's registrar, the responses to which are displayed below.



We believe these messages speak for themselves. Even when looking for only the first and middle name listed on the PhD, an associate registrar wasn't able to find any records.

The Last Name Thing

While the following observations are less conclusive, the authors of this document will share our findings regardless. His current last name, Thompson, is also the last name of his parents. The

last name of his aunt and uncle is Reynolds. (as seen in the [obituary](#) of his late aunt, whose passing is attributed to why it took Keanu so long to provide documentation of his PhD; her brother, Charles Thompson, is presumably Keanu's father. [archive](#)) It is the opinion of the authors of this document that the name that is blurred out on his PhD is simply too short to be Thompson or Reynolds, unless he once had some other third last name we do not know of.

Unless online voter registrations retroactively update to reflect one's current last name (the authors don't know whether or not that's the case, hence why we consider it less conclusive evidence), then we can see that by 2008, Keanu's last name was, in fact, Thompson, and for there to be a *different* last name on his PhD, he would have needed to change his name again between 2008 and 2010. Such court records are public, and we were unable to find such records in the state of Georgia. The following is a screenshot of his voter registration from the Georgia My Voter Page, retrieved using his information:

My Voter Page

Voter Information

JAMES LOVELL THOMPSON
[Blurred Address]
[Blurred City, State, Zip]

Race: White not of Hispanic Origin
Gender: Male Status: Active
Registration Date: 08/20/2008

[Change Voter Information](#)

[Click Here for Sample Ballots](#)

His address here is blurred, because that's the kind and responsible thing to do, but we will state the address that can be found here is corroborated by the authors of this document, affirming that this James Lovell Thompson who registered in 2008 is Keanu.. ([Here's the full, uncropped screenshot](#) of the My Voter Page, but with his address still blurred out.)

Conclusion

To put it bluntly, the authors of this document believe that Keanu is lying about having a PhD in biology, biological studies and/or microbiology, that his diploma is a forgery, and that the severity of lying about these things should call into question anything else he has had to say about those who have attempted to take him to task for his claims, statements, and behavior while posturing as a community “leader”. For [years](#) Keanu maintained that he had a Master’s and/or PhD in biology (sometimes going back to having a Master’s after already claiming a PhD, in conversations where a Master’s is no more contextually relevant than a PhD would’ve been-- if he’s had the PhD since 2010 why not just always say the latest one at that point?) and that it was from Covenant College, then later [it was actually from UT](#), and then finally he changed the PhD to *microbiology*. The PhD diploma itself is positively rife with issues which cause it to be inconsistent with every other legitimate example we could find (all of which were consistent between each other in those same areas that Keanu’s is not).

We also believe that it is irresponsible and disingenuous for Keanu to choose to flaunt his degree, whether by just describing his “professional life” or using his supposed credentials to give authority to his opinions on public health and safety, while at the same time obfuscating the last name on his diploma so that his credentials cannot be verified through conventional means or by looking up his dissertation. PhD dissertations are required to not be classified, as a matter of scientific principle and integrity. If you’re unwilling to allow others to properly verify your credentials, you don’t have the right to benefit from those credentials.

If Keanu were to, perhaps, suddenly manifest a PhD that does not have the aforementioned inconsistencies *and* he were to publicly share his dissertation, the authors of this document are willing to retract our statements and correct our findings. However, until that day arrives, we encourage anyone to take anything he has to say with a healthy amount of skepticism, especially if it’s concerning those he considers detractors. Lying about something this grave for this long casts a severe shadow upon his character and integrity. If he is willing to lie about this, and to forge documentation, what else is he willing to do? It also speaks to how *boldly* he is willing to lie-- every bit of this we found with Google, by browsing the universities’ own websites, and by contacting university staff whose very job it is to verify these things. As someone who wants so *badly* to position himself as a “leader” in his local community, Keanu should expect to be held accountable, to be trustworthy, and to be willing to work with other community leaders.