

# College Admission Scandal

**Case Study II - October 21 2023**

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# Synopsis



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- Extremely wealthy parents paid William Singer, “College Preparation Consultant,” significant amounts of money to guarantee admission into highly prestigious institutions
  - Students of these parents could not qualify for regular admission protocols (academics or legacy donations)
  - Payments to Singer were often disguised as donations
  - Singer guaranteed admission by falsifying SAT and ACT scores
  - Singer bribed exam invigilators to guide students to the correct answers

## Synopsis (cont.)

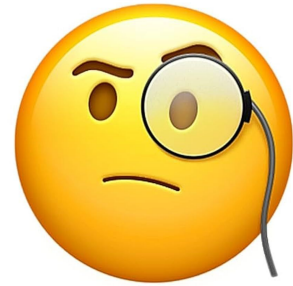
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**FULL  
HOUSE**

**DESPERATE  
HOUSEWIVES**

- Singer also created false sense of athletic ability for students applying as a student athlete by having staged photos taken of the student with athletic equipment in an athletic setting
- Some famous celebrities were involved; Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman
- FBI became aware of the scheme and Singer eventually plead guilty; 50 people/parents/co-conspirators were charged by the FBI
- Colleges were in charge of determining courses of action for students who were admitted under this scheme

# Overarching Ethical Considerations



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1. The belief that an individual can use personal wealth/status to circumvent established admission protocols; admission packages are not created in good faith
  2. Further perpetuating the idea that “money talks” to the children of these parents; calls into question what is being taught/modeled at home
  3. A willingness of colleges to do everything they can to review admission protocols to prevent falsified documentation to be used or the ability for families to use legacy donations as a basis for admission

# What should happen to the students who were admitted under the bribery scheme?



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- Does not seem fair for these students to be occupying competitive seats or taking a seat from someone who has worked hard
- Some students may be placed on a waitlist or sent a rejection letter due to undeserving students occupying seats
- A few things could happen:
  - They could be ejected from the school and not allowed to return
  - They could be ejected from the school and asked to re-apply with an added interview that focuses on the issue; why should the institution re-admit them? Why are they deserving? What have they learned from this experience?
  - They could be subject to a special program of courses to assess academic ability (in addition to regular program requirements)

# How can the college admission process be made fairer?



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- Singer acted unethically without question
  - This sets an unfair advantage to students who can afford to bribe
  - This undermines the integrity of the institution and to those who have worked hard to earn their place
  - Some students have gained entrance from legacy donations; if we eliminate this privilege, it will allow students to enter on their academic achievements only
  - Reduce number of spaces for athletes
  - Institutions should do an internal review of application process to gauge equitable practices; adjust as necessary

# Is donating a building to secure admission a form of bribery? Why or why not?



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- If the donation is contingent on an admission (explicitly), then it is a form of bribery
- If the donation is made with an implicit expectation that at some point there may be preferential treatment, then this calls into question the code of ethics
- It is not uncommon for universities to rely on significant donations; the need for donations requires clear codes of ethics and guidelines
- There ought to be clear separation between donations and decisions related to admissions

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# Questions?

