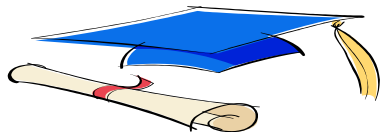


# The Interpreter

## Florida Correspondence School Busted

January 2006

In late November 2005, New York Times reporters, Pete Thamel and Duff Wilson broke a story involving a correspondence school in southern Florida called University High School; where, for up to \$399 anyone can get a high school diploma, regardless of the number of classes the student takes. The school may have been more of a diploma factory for academically deficient athletes than a cheap alternative for a legitimate high school diploma.



In the last two years, at least 28 student-athletes have buffed up their records at University High. The New York Times was able to identify 14 student-athletes who ended up going to NCAA Division I institutions.

Stanley J. Simmons founded University High School and remained the owner until last year, when he sold it to Michael Kinney. Simmons has previously served time in federal prison, after pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud in connection to a college diploma mill in Arizona. Current owner Kinney is wanted on a bench warrant and has previously been in trouble with the law as well.

The NCAA institutions that accepted players from University High felt duped. The players were deemed qualifiers by the NCAA Clearinghouse so little investigation was deemed necessary at first.

Graduates of University High say they never dealt with anyone other than the current owner Kinney, despite the school brochure advertising the school employs six teachers. Additionally, in a letter to new students, John McLeod is identified as the principal, but in reality he has never heard of the school, but had previously met Simmons and thought his signature had been copied.

Graduates say the text books were little more than common cheat sheets, or study-guides. Some of the history stories on which the students were tested contained only a one page story with the questions on the same page. When the school originally opened in 2000, the focus was on adult education, but then in 2004 the school applied to the NCAA Clearinghouse for membership. After this, Antron Wright, a former XFL and Arena Football player, is implicated as having introduced many Miami area high school athletes to the school.

Universities and testing agencies often flag students' records who show large increases on test scores, but not large increases in GPA. Some University High students raised their GPA's nearly three fourths of a point from 2.09 to 2.75, and 2.1 to 2.75 all in the matter of one semester.



What about accreditation? The Florida Department of Education's website lists accreditation for University High by two different agencies: The National Coalition of Alternative and Community Schools, and The Association of Christian Schools International. However, the alternative schools coalition does not accredit high schools, and the director of the Christian Schools International in Florida, reported University High had not sought accreditation through his organization.

Now that the school has gained a reputation and its questionable practices have been exposed, universities may be more reluctant to honor those students from University High. The issue has reached as far as Myles Brand, president of the NCAA who advocated putting a group together to examine the issues surrounding correspondence schools and high school credentials. The NCAA caught wind of the issue when the Southeastern Conference lent a letter highlighting specific cases of students who had attended University High.  
**(Continued on page 2)**



# University High Follow Up

Just recently, Kinney, the current owner, finally agreed to interviews with the press. Kinney denies any wrong doing, saying, "I still believe in everything I've done."

One underlying issue goes beyond the students, and operation of the school, to the state of Florida. In Florida, state law prohibits the regulation of private schools. It also seems the accreditation system needs to be examined, as the school claimed to have been accredited by two agencies, which, in reality, had not approved of the school.

Kinney strongly faults the NCAA for not having more specific legislation over the required courses and oversight over high schools. In reality, it is the NCAA Clearinghouse, a separate entity, that certifies high schools. Strict regulation of all classes in all high schools would be an enormous and unrealistic undertaking.



At some point, the NCAA, just as the state of Florida, has to have faith that school principles are meeting the required rigor in their curriculum.

Kinney bought University High for about \$1 million, but recently defaulted on the purchase and resigned from the company on December 6. Records seem to indicate Simmons, closed the school on December 31, 2005.

Some say University high was a second-chance school, allowing adults to boost their educational records for better jobs, and student-athletes to polish their records to meet NCAA requirements and have a chance to play college football. Others criticize the school for being a diploma factory, churning out ill-prepared students and adults, who will not be equipped for their next step (Thamel, P. & Wilson, D., nytimes.com 11/27/05, and Wilson, D., nytimes.com, 1/8/06)



## *From the Interpretation File*

### Eligibility of Transfer Student-Athlete for Competition in Year of Transfer

The committee confirmed that if the institution from which a student-athlete transfers at midyear declares separate non-championship and championship segments of its playing and practice season, a student-athlete may compete during the non-championship segment for such an institution and during the championship segment for the certifying institution during the same academic year in the same sport, provided the applicable transfer and progress-toward-degree eligibility requirements are satisfied. (Official, 12/13/05, ref. 1)

### Attachments to General Correspondence

The committee determined that attachments to general correspondence may only include information that is not created for recruiting purposes, except for items that are specifically permitted as printed recruiting material (e.g., questionnaires). (Official, 12/13/05, ref. 3)



## January Recruiting Calendar

### Football

Jan 1	Dead
Jan 2-7	Contact
Jan 8	Quiet
Jan 9-12	Dead
Jan 13-14	Quiet
Jan 15-28	Contact
Jan 29	Quiet
Jan 30-Feb 2	Dead

### Men's Basketball

Jan 1-31	Eval
----------	------

### Women's Basketball

Jan 1-31	Quiet
----------	-------

\*except 85 evaluation days from Oct 16-April 18

### Baseball

Jan 1-5 (12:00 am)	Quiet
Jan 5 (12:01 am)-	
Jan 9(12:01 am)	Dead
Jan 10-31	Quiet

### Softball

Jan 1	Quiet
Jan 2-31	Cont/Eval

### Volleyball

Jan 1-Jan 31	Quiet
--------------	-------



# In the News....

## Oklahoma Phone Bill Initiates Investigation

From April 2000 to September 2004, the Oklahoma men's basketball program may have made more than 550 impermissible phone calls to recruits.

Despite self-imposing sanctions, of two-years probation and a reduction of scholarships by three, the NCAA determined that the penalties were not strong enough. As a result, Oklahoma will appear in front of the Infractions Committee in April.

The violations may go deeper than impermissible phone calls, but finding the evidence may not be easy. The program has allegedly had a close relationship with a local club team made up of prospect-aged players. The team was founded by an Oklahoma alum and booster.

The NCAA manual is very clear that recruits are to be called once per week. Conversations more than a short greeting with the parents are also considered a phone call. (Doyel, G., SportsLine.com, 1/8/06)

## The NCAA Holds 100th Convention

In early January, the NCAA held its centennial convention. Since its inception, when the NCAA had \$28 in the bank, to today, when the latest tax filings indicate over \$400 million, the NCAA has met yearly to discuss legislation and other current issues.

Featured at the convention was a panel discussion with NCAA president Myles Brand and his two predecessors Cedric Dempsey and Dick Schultz.

## Trojan Booster Lures Prospects Via His Greek Restaurant

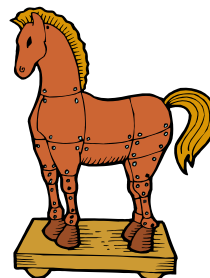
According to two separate news reports, the University of Southern California may be violating NCAA legislation. The violations involve a number of bylaws, the most problematic of which involves boosters talking to recruits.

A common recruiting practice at USC includes taking prospects to dinner at Papadakis Tavern in San Pedro, California. The tavern is 25 miles from the USC campus and serves expensive Greek food with some entrees reaching nearly \$60.00. More problematic than the distance and the price of the meals, which are most likely not comparable to what students eat during the academic year, is the nature of the activities during the dinners.



The restaurant is owned by former USC linebacker John Papadakis. As a supporter of USC athletics and a former player, Papadakis is considered a "representative of athletics interests" and is therefore not allowed to speak with prospects about recruiting.

Reports indicate Papadakis entices students to come to USC through boisterous speeches urging prospects to "become a Trojan." (Wilson, J., Star-Telegram.com, 12/30/05)



## FSU Welcomes Steve Schofield as Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance.

January 10, 2006 marked the first day at Florida State for newcomer Steve Schofield. Previously, Steve worked in the compliance office at the University of Maryland. "It will be an asset to have someone already familiar with ACC rules and regulations," comments Heather McAtee, Compliance Coordinator. Prior to his post at Maryland, Steve worked in compliance positions at Cornell University, Arizona State and the University of Minnesota. Schofield looks forward to working at FSU, and hopes to find some time to hit the links once he settles in.

## FSU's Lance Troester to be Compliance Coordinator at Oklahoma State.

After four years of working at FSU and living in Tallahassee, Lance Troester will be moving on as Compliance Coordinator at Oklahoma State, to further his professional career. Troester has been an asset to the Compliance office shouldering the responsibility for much of Parent/Agent day, and Player/Agent day both held last fall. Lance is looking forward to the career opportunity OK State will offer, but also looks back fondly at the friends, both personal and professional, he has made in Tallahassee. Since starting at FSU four years ago, Troester dabbled in many areas, from basketball, to tickets, to marketing, to compliance, as well as completed his Masters degree. Go get 'em Cowboy—**Good Luck Lance!**

# Dead Periods

## Football

December 20-January 1  
January 9-January 12  
January 30-February 2

## Baseball

January 5 (12:01 am)-  
January 9 (12:01 am)

- ❖ No Official Visits
- ❖ No Unofficial Visits
- ❖ No Contacts
- ❖ No Evaluations
- ❖ No Observations
- ❖ No Speeches at Banquets



## Interpreter On-Line

The Interpreter can be found on-line at [www.seminoles.com](http://www.seminoles.com) by clicking onto "NCAA Compliance", in the left column. The Interpreter icon is under the "What's New??" section. Past issues are archived here.



*The Interpreter* is published by Megan McHugo. All comments should be directed to **The Interpreter**, P.O. Drawer 2195, Tallahassee, FL 32316, phone (850) 644-4272, or by e-mail: [mpm03@garnet.fsu.edu](mailto:mpm03@garnet.fsu.edu).

## COMPLIANCE STAFF 644-4272

**Mr. Bob Minnix**  
Associate AD for  
Compliance

**Mr. Steve Schofield**  
Assistant AD for  
Compliance

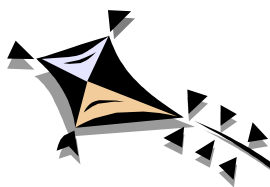
**Ms. Heather McAtee**  
Compliance Coordinator

**Ms. Brooke Williams**  
Secretary

**Ms. Megan McHugo**  
Graduate Assistant

**Mr. Lance Troester**  
Graduate Assistant

Florida State University  
Athletic Compliance Office  
P.O. Drawer 2195  
Tallahassee, FL 32316



*January 2006*

*Florida  
Correspondence  
School Busted*