

3-27-2006 Academic Fraud

1 (File: 20060327_Myles_Brand_acadfraud22m16.)

2 JOSH CENTOR: Over the last couple of
3 months, academic fraud has becomes an important topic of
4 discussion at the NCAA. I have some pretty strong
5 personal opinions about some of the things that have
6 transpired. And I'm sure my guest does, as well.

7 Dr. Brand, how are you this morning?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: Good to talk to you,
9 Josh.

10 JOSH CENTOR: I appreciate you being here
11 to discuss some of these important issues about academic
12 fraud. Can you explain a little bit of what's gone on in
13 the past three or four months?

14 DR. MYLES BRAND: What we've discovered,
15 unfortunately, is that there's academic fraud at the
16 secondary school level, which, in fact, has come to
17 resemble some of the problems we've had in the past at
18 the university level.

19 These are diploma mills. And what it is is
20 you buy a degree -- in colleges it's called a matchbook
21 degree. And we've got a pretty good handle on it at the
22 college level. But we've just discovered how extensive
23 it is on the secondary school, prep school level.

24 Investigative reporting by the New York
25 Times brought it to light, as well as some investigative

1 work done by the Southeastern Conference.

2 JOSH CENTOR: How big a problem is this?

3 DR. MYLES BRAND: We don't know how big a
4 problem it is. We've isolated a large handful of such
5 schools. I suspect it's much larger than that, but we
6 just don't have a handle on it. We're right now getting
7 into the problem.

8 JOSH CENTOR: How are we going to figure it
9 out?

10 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, we have
11 unscrupulous people who have taken advantage of the
12 system and have been selling degrees, frankly, for a few
13 hundred dollars. You're not required to go to class,
14 take tests, or even show that you're literate to pass.

15 How we're going to deal with it is the
16 NCAA, just this April, is going to pass some emergency
17 legislation, some new rules that should keep it in check,
18 as much as we possibly can. We'll even undergo site
19 visits to some of these schools. But we also expect that
20 the other groups that are involved in making sure that
21 this fraud stops become involved, namely, the admissions
22 office from each university. They too have to see who
23 they're admitting, whether they're student athletes or
24 not.

25 And this is fraud. This is something --

1 this is a crime committed against the people of a state.
2 And so we expect law enforcement, both local and
3 statewide, to become involved. In fact, we've seen that.
4 We had one case, University High in the state of Florida
5 which has been closed down because of the Attorney
6 General's Office there. They were not only graduating or
7 selling degrees to student athletes, but to many other
8 people as well. And we found out about it because of the
9 investigating reports.

10 JOSH CENTOR: Before we get to the
11 admissions offices a little bit, can we talk about how
12 student athletes, prospective student athletes become
13 eligible?

14 DR. MYLES BRAND: They have to pass a
15 certain minimum standard at the NCAA level, which is
16 checked by a national clearinghouse. And that includes
17 the number of core courses they take and the grade point
18 average they have, as well as their SAT scores. They
19 have to do that in a way that's legal and compatible with
20 good educational practices.

21 What's happened in these prep schools is
22 that it's not good educational practices. These are
23 private -- so-called private institutions, and so no city
24 or state or federal government has any check on them.
25 For many states, if you're not a public institution, a

1 public high school, you don't have to be certified or
2 accredited in any way.

3 JOSH CENTOR: Now, one of the things that
4 has gone around in my head is how some of these
5 prospective student athletes were able to get through the
6 clearinghouse, having went from one school to another in
7 their last semester?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: The transcript did not
9 reflect actually what was going on. This is fraud. And
10 what has happened is that we now have to find a way to
11 catch those who are going to fraudulent schools.

12 Not every prep school is bad. Some of them
13 are superb. Some of them are very, very difficult. Some
14 of them prepare people with the highest SAT scores for
15 Ivy League schools. But there are others, fly-by-night
16 institutions, frankly, that aren't doing that job at all.

17 JOSH CENTOR: You've put together a
18 committee to deal with some of these issues. Can you
19 talk a little bit about that?

20 DR. MYLES BRAND: Yes. We've asked vice
21 president Kevin Lennon to chair a group that includes
22 college presidents, admissions offices, commissioners,
23 others who are engaged in this problem. We're not going
24 to wait long. We've put this on a fast track, so by the
25 end of April, we'll have a great deal of emergency

1 legislation in place.

2 Any high school student who is attending
3 one of these schools in the hopes of getting through the
4 NCAA clearinghouse and playing next year had better think
5 twice and figure out another route, because we're
6 clamping down immediately.

7 JOSH CENTOR: This also brings to light, as
8 you mentioned, the admissions offices. Even if the
9 prospective student athlete is deemed eligible, that
10 doesn't mean that these schools need to let them in.

11 DR. MYLES BRAND: You're absolutely right
12 about that. All we do is set absolutely minimum
13 standards which we think will be important for students
14 to succeed in college. But there's great diversity
15 amongst our colleges, and so it takes more than minimum
16 standards in many of them, the vast majority of them,
17 frankly, to succeed.

18 And so what we expect is every admissions
19 office to be able to set the standards for what it would
20 take for any student, athlete or not, to succeed in that.
21 And so it's a shared responsibility, in part from the
22 NCAA to set the minimum standards and then the admissions
23 office to make sure that those who they admit have an
24 genuine chance of getting an education.

25 JOSH CENTOR: You were the president of a

1 couple of high profile institutions, both academically
2 and athletically. What did you tell your admissions
3 offices about student athletes and academic
4 qualifications?

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, we had the same
6 admissions standards for student athletes and nonstudent
7 athletes in both of those institutions, which was
8 absolutely critical. We wanted to make sure that any
9 student athlete that came in had an opportunity to
10 graduate. And so I think we've followed that standard.

11 In fact, just to brag a little bit, Indiana
12 University had 100 percent graduation rate of its
13 basketball players this past year.

14 JOSH CENTOR: That's phenomenal. This goes
15 a little bit though with academic reform, everything
16 coming together at the same time, kind of reforming
17 intercollegiate athletics.

18 DR. MYLES BRAND: There's no question about
19 that. Admission is part of academic reform. If you
20 don't admit people who can do the job and only those who
21 could do the job, then I think you're bound to have a bad
22 graduation rate. So the admissions office has to
23 represent the standards of that university. I think
24 that's incredibly important.

25 JOSH CENTOR: Okay. Well, thank you so

1 much for sharing some of your thoughts about academic
2 reform and academic fraud with us. And I appreciate you
3 being here.

4 DR. MYLES BRAND: My pleasure.

5 JOSH CENTOR: Thanks for tuning in to
6 "Mondays With Myles", which can be found on the NCAA
7 blog, DoubleAZone.com, every Monday morning. If you'll
8 like to subscribe, you can find our podcasts on iTunes.
9 Thanks for joining us.

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