

Actresses Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman have become the faces of the recent college admission scandal. These performers are only two of the wealthy families that paid William Singer to help get their kids into prestigious colleges. Singer ran two different types of scams. He was able to bribe the monitors of the ACT and SAT standardized tests, so that the monitors would replace the exams of his clients' children with much more accurately answered exams. He also bribed athletic coaches to get his clients' recruited to schools as athletes. An athlete has a much easier time gaining admission to an elite college than an otherwise identical applicant, who is not an athlete.

This scandal should not surprise anyone. These elite schools reject 20 applicants for every one that they accept. There is a politically incorrect proposal that would eliminate the opportunity of similar scandals in the future. Elite colleges could raise their tuition until they no longer have to reject applicants. In this case, people with a lot of money would just pay the high price of tuition if they deemed it worthwhile. With such a policy, wealthy people would no longer feel the need to pay bribes to get admissions for kids.

Elite schools will not adopt such drastic increases in tuition because they have a desire to attract the most able students in the country. Therefore, the schools keep prices low compared to what they could get away with charging and they seek to determine which applicants are the best students. Picking the best high school student is a very imprecise chore. These elite schools turn away valedictorians because they have so many apply. Because the admission process has so much discretion, cheating will continue long after the current FBI case wraps up. College coaches or admissions officers will continue to be tempted to enrich themselves by taking bribes from rich families. Wealthy families are willing to pay so much money to get their kids into elite schools that future scandals will continue to taint the admissions process.

There is a solution. I have a proposal that will reduce bribes for college admission, and give poor students greater access to elite universities. Prestigious universities should auction off a limited number of admission slots to the highest bidders. This approach will drastically cut down on bribery scandals. Rich parents will no longer have to find shady ways to bribe their kids' way into a top school. These parents can pay the school directly. The parents who are willing to pay the most will get their kids into the school. This proposal also allows the school to get the money directly. Money will no longer be wasted on bribing coaches and test monitors. These bribes do not help the school in any way. The school is better off getting the money itself instead of allowing opportunities for unethical people to get payments by manipulating the admissions process.

I can hear the objections to my proposal now. It favors the rich and everyone should have a shot at getting into the elite schools. After all, isn't America the land of opportunity? Hold off on these objections for a minute. I have another part to my proposal that should alleviate your concerns. The money that universities obtain from the auction should be used to give poor students a free ride.

For instance, USC, one of the schools implicated in the scandal, charged \$55,320 for tuition during this academic year. If the school auctioned off one admission slot for one million dollars, the school could use the money to pay for the full tuition of 18 poor students. If the auction raised five million dollars, then 90 students could have a free ride. Finally, if the auction raised 10 million dollars the school could use the money to give 180 students a free ride.

There are certainly families that will pay millions of dollars to ensure that their children get into elite schools. In the extreme cases, families have bought buildings. The auction is just a straightforward way for schools to charge high prices to rich families for obtaining admission. The auction takes away some of the incentive to cheat on the admissions process. It also allows the school to make an elite education available to the best and the brightest high school graduates that do not happen to come from families with significant financial resources.

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