

## College admissions scheme mastermind William Rick Singer wore wire to expose scam

By Corky Siemaszko and Ezra Kaplan

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The admitted mastermind of a [\\$25 million college entrance exam cheating scheme](#), which ensnared Hollywood actresses [Lori Loughlin](#) and Felicity Huffman among others, published a book in 2014 that stressed the need to establish a “personal brand” to get into a top school.

Now, William Rick Singer’s personal brand includes a host of criminal charges that could send him to jail for a maximum of 65 years. Singer admitted Tuesday that he helped bring down his own criminal enterprise by becoming “a cooperating witness” and wearing a wire for the FBI.

“I am absolutely responsible for it,” Singer, 58, told a federal judge in Boston, where he pleaded guilty to all the charges he was facing. “I put everything in place. I put all the people in place and made the payments directly.”

“Did you know it was illegal?” Judge Rya Zobel asked.

“Yes,” Singer replied.

Singer, who lives in Sacramento and Newport Beach, California, was arrested after the FBI investigation that was dubbed [Operation Varsity Blues](#) exposed a network of well-heeled parents who allegedly paid Singer millions to boost their kids’ chances of getting into elite colleges such as Yale University, Georgetown University and Stanford University.



The author of “Getting In: Gaining Admission to the College of your Choice” was charged with racketeering, money laundering, conspiracy and obstruction of justice, according to a criminal complaint.

"He is very remorseful for getting into this mess" and is cooperating with investigators, Singer's lawyer, Donald Heller, said after the court appearance.

Heller said Singer has been in the college prep business since 1994, and "he's helped a lot of people pro-bono who got into college."

"The sad thing is he didn't prep Trump kids because he probably would have gotten a pardon," he said.

Singer founded The Edge College & Career Network, LLC, also known as “The Key,” in 2007. He incorporated the “for-profit college counseling and preparation business” based in Sacramento with the state of California in 2012, according to court papers.

Singer also established a nonprofit corporation in Newport Beach, California, called the Key Worldwide Foundation as a purported charity around 2012, the papers state.

Both enterprises figured in the alleged scam, the court papers say.

Before he was busted, Singer’s brushes with the law consisted of minor traffic citations, according to available records.

But he has long been a major player on the “college-prep circuit” and much of what we know about him comes from the Sacramento Bee newspaper, which reported that he embarked on his current career several years after he was fired in 1988 as the boys basketball coach at Encina High School in the California capital.

The reason for the firing was described by a district spokesman as a “personal matter.” The Bee also reported that “parents said Singer had an abusive nature toward referees.”

Then in the early 1990s, the Bee reported that Singer was an assistant coach for the Sacramento State University’s men’s basketball team.

Along the way, it appears that Singer was involved in several other businesses.



On [The Key website](#), it says that a decade ago Singer was “one of the nation’s top executives in the Call Center Industry.”

Singer also was a “senior executive” at The Money Store and First Union Bank, the website says. Singer was also the “CEO of one of India’s largest call center companies before selling it to ICICI Bank.”

There were no specific dates provided.

By 1994, Singer was running a business called Future Stars and was making a living helping high school juniors and seniors navigate the college application process.

“It’s not that school counselors don’t want to help,” Singer told the Bee. “It’s just that they often don’t have the time.”

Evidently, Singer quickly made a name for himself in that business.

“For a long time, he was the go-to person in Sacramento,” a consultant who asked not to be identified told the Bee.

It was not immediately clear when exactly Singer set up shop in Newport Beach, a tony oceanfront community south of Los Angeles, in Orange County. But the Newport Beach-based KWF charity was established in 2012 and Singer was ticketed twice in 2014 for minor traffic offenses in Newport Beach, records show.

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