

Well, the following two articles merely provide a synoptic snap-shot of the American Educational System: first, no coordination exists between the state and federal governments; no universal literacy standards exist, since each state has state legal jurisdiction; no universal educational standards exist to monitor private secondary or post-secondary “educational” qualifications for schools to advertise or to “teach”; no minimum universal educational qualifications to license teachers to “teach” at any secondary or post-secondary so-called “educational” institution of instruction; no universal, minimum testing qualifications or guidelines exist so no coordination exists among local, state and federal testing agencies or tests and I could extend the list to a full page.

Since I wrote the California legislation in 1980 to license, audit and de-license private post-secondary and public post-secondary educational institutions (which receive federal funds for veterans attending state colleges and universities, hereafter IHLs, the Private Post-Secondary Educational Council, the Republican led legislature trashed the Council in 1992 and transferred the authority of the Council to the state’s Consumer Affairs Agency - a political hack appointment agency which cannot even monitor the availability of toilet paper in public rest rooms!), NO effective agency exists in California to license or audit private (or public) post-secondary IHLs.

By way of comment, this means that all federal and state loan and grants available for college students can be available for student use at ANY IHL. The net result is that many IHLs shut-down after the sixth week of operation (when half the student’s tuition check is “cut” to the IHLs financial officer and the student who then signs-off on the check); IHL administrators then take the loan or grant money with them. This causes many low-income and minority students to bankrupt and basically ruins their academic chances and personal lives.

Yet, given the federal and state tax-payer money available and paid, the states resist and reject universal standards, whether of student achievement or financial accountability and the federal government rejects the responsibility. Both state legislatures and congressional lawmakers avoid universal standards like the plague, so the burden rests on students who, like the enrollees at University High School do not give a damn about learning only about football and other dead-end careers.

New York Times

Correspondence School Helped College Players Qualify

By [PETE THAMEL](#) and [DUFF WILSON](#)

Published: November 27, 2005

By the end of his junior year at Miami Killian High School, Demetrice Morley flashed the speed, size and talent of a top college football prospect. His classroom performance,

however, failed to match his athletic skills.

A Quick Fix for College

This listing for University High School appears on the directory of a building located in South Miami. University High School has raised the G.P.A.s of several college-bound athletes.

He received three F's that year and had a 2.09 grade point average in his core courses, giving him little hope of qualifying for a scholarship under National Collegiate Athletic Association guidelines.

In December of his senior year, Morley led Killian to the 2004 state title while taking a full course load. He also took seven courses at University High School, a local correspondence school, scoring all A's and B's. He graduated that December, not from Killian but from University High. His grade point average in his core courses was 2.75, precisely what he wound up needing to qualify for a scholarship.

Morley, now a freshman defensive back for the University of Tennessee, was one of at least 28 athletes who polished their grades at University High in the last two years.

The New York Times identified 14 who had signed with 11 Division I football programs: Auburn, Central Florida, Colorado State, Florida, Florida State, Florida International, Rutgers, South Carolina State, South Florida, Tennessee and Temple.

University High, which has no classes and no educational accreditation, appears to have offered the players little more than a speedy academic makeover - and illustrates that even as the N.C.A.A. presses for academic reforms, its loopholes are quickly recognized and exploited.

In the case of University High, the athletes were grateful that its classes gave them an opportunity to qualify for college, although many acknowledged that they learned little.

Lorenzo Ferguson, a second-year defensive back at Auburn, said he left Miami Southridge High School for University High, where after one month he had raised his average to 2.6 from 2.0.

"You take each course you failed in ninth or 10th grade," he said. "If it was applied math, you do them on the packets they give you. It didn't take that long. The answers were basically in the book."

The N.C.A.A. has allowed students to use correspondence school courses to meet eligibility requirements since 2000. That year, the N.C.A.A. also shifted the power to determine which classes count as core courses to high school administrators. In doing so, it essentially left schools to determine their own legitimacy.

"We're not the educational accreditation police," Diane Dickman, the N.C.A.A.'s managing director for membership services, said in September.

But last week, Myles Brand, president of the N.C.A.A., said he would form a group to examine issues involving correspondence courses and high school credentials. Brand acted partly in response to a letter sent on Nov. 2 from the Southeastern Conference that highlighted cases similar to Morley's and Ferguson's.

The man who founded University High School and owned it until last year, Stanley J. Simmons, served 10 months in a federal prison camp from 1989 to 1990 after pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud for his involvement with a college diploma mill in Arizona. Among the activities Simmons acknowledged in court documents were awarding degrees without academic achievement and awarding degrees based on studies he was unqualified to evaluate.

In interviews last week, he said he should never have pleaded guilty and that he operated legitimate correspondence schools for adults.

In 2004, Simmons sold University High to Michael R. Kinney, its director. Kinney, 27, who was arrested for marijuana possession in 2003 and is wanted on a bench warrant, declined to comment, despite requests by phone, fax and visits to his apartment.

Several University High graduates said they found the school through Antron Wright, a former XFL and Arena Football League player who is prominent in Miami's high school athletic circles. He is considered a savior by some players, but at least one principal has barred Wright from his building for luring athletes to a rival school and introducing them to University High. Miami has ideal conditions for academic-athletic exploitation. It is fertile recruiting ground: 38 players from Dade County were on N.F.L. rosters at the start of the 2004 season, more than any other county. Also, Florida's public schools require an exit examination for graduation, but private schools have no such requirement, and operate under a law that prohibits any state regulation. That allows University High to operate essentially unsupervised.

Pat Herring, the interim admissions director at the University of Florida, looked into University High after admitting one of its graduates, Dane Guthrie, a former Killian tight end.

"We found that University High School was kind of a storefront operation," Herring said. "It didn't seem to have much in the way of an academic program."

While Florida officials were discussing whether to allow Guthrie to remain, he transferred to Arizona State.

Other colleges that have admitted University High graduates say they know little about it.

Auburn admitted Ferguson in 2004 and a fellow University graduate, Ulysses Alexander, this year. "The bottom line is they were both qualifiers by the N.C.A.A.," said Mark Richard, a senior associate athletic director at Auburn.

A four-member academic panel at Tennessee admitted Morley after sending an athletic department official to Miami to investigate University High. Morley has thrived on the field at Tennessee, but Philip Simpson has stumbled at Temple.

Simpson, a standout quarterback at Southridge High, said Wright had met with him and his parents and offered a sure alternative from high school to college, telling him: "You either stay there and bust your behind and hope and pray that at the end you don't get short-handed. Or you can do this."

Simpson said his mother called the N.C.A.A. to check whether University High courses would be accepted. He said he graduated in three weeks by taking four classes, improving his average to 2.3 from 2.0.

He now says he lacks the educational skills for college. For a basic math class at Temple, Simpson said, he studied at least three hours every day, got help from tutors and met regularly with the professor. He still did not score higher than 53 out of 100 on any test.

Simpson said Temple ruled him academically ineligible to play. He watched this season from the sideline.

A Quick Diploma

University High School consists of two small rooms on the third floor of an office building wedged between a Starbucks and an animal hospital on Route 1 in south Miami. Inside are three desks, three employees and two framed posters from art museums on the wall.

Promotional brochures say diplomas can be earned in four to six weeks, with open-book exams, no classes and no timed tests. A diploma costs \$399, no matter how many courses.

In paperwork filed with the state of Florida, the school says it has six teachers. None of the school's graduates interviewed, however, mentioned dealing with anyone besides Kinney, the current owner.

John M. McLeod, a Miami-Dade Community College educator, is identified as the University High principal on a letter welcoming new students. McLeod said he met Simmons in the 1970's, but that he had no connection to University High. He said his signature had been copied.

"I've never seen this letter," he said. "I know nothing about University High School."

Simmons said he did not know why McLeod's signature was on the letter.

Former students said in interviews that courses consisted of picking up work packets from University High and completing them at home. Grades they received on the packets counted the same on their transcripts as a yearlong high school course.

"If it was history, they had the story with the questions right next to it," Simpson said. "They were one-page stories. It wasn't really hard."

University High says its textbooks are the Essential Series from Research and Education Association of Piscataway, N.J., but their publisher describes them as study guides.

"You wouldn't describe them as textbooks," Carl M. Fuchs, president of Research and Education, said. "You would say they're more supplemental, but they can be used on their own. A textbook is certainly going to have a lot more text, a lot more information." University High's literature claims it is accredited by the [National Association for the Legal Support of Alternative Schools](#). The association's Web site says it is "not meant to represent an evaluation and/or approval of the materials, teaching staff or educational philosophy employed by the applicant program." It says "only one standard is applied: consumer protection."

The Florida Department of Education's Web site lists accreditation for University High by the National Coalition of Alternative and Community Schools and by the Association of Christian Schools International. But the alternative schools coalition does not accredit high schools, and David Ray, the Florida regional director of the Christian schools association said, "University was never accredited and has never sought accreditation with us."

To Some, a Second Chance

Simmons said that he opened University High School in 2000 to serve adults and that in the first few years the average age of students was 36. Football players from public schools in poor neighborhoods began enrolling around March 2004, when University applied for membership to the N.C.A.A. Clearinghouse, which determines if a student is eligible and can qualify for a scholarship. Several players said Wright led them to University High.

Philip Simpson said that when he went to University to enroll, Kinney was expecting him because Wright had called. Ferguson and Simpson said they worked on their University High packets at Wright's apartment.

Wright, 30, could relate to talented athletes with academic struggles, some of the players said. A former star at Southridge and Palmetto High Schools in Miami, he did not attend a Division I-A university because of poor grades, local players and coaches said. He graduated from junior college, then played two years at Division I-AA Bethune-

Cookman.

Wright later rooted himself in the Miami football community, serving as an assistant coach at three schools and as a substitute teacher at Dade County football powers. He developed a strong bond with his players.

"I thank God every time I step on the practice field for Tron," said Keyon Brooks, a former Killian player and University High graduate now playing for South Carolina State. "He got me here. He helped me succeed in life. I look at him as a role model."

Tavares Kendrick, a top-rated quarterback from Homestead High, credits Wright for helping him get to Florida International University, where he is a backup quarterback. Kendrick said his average improved to 3.0 from about 2.1 in about seven weeks by taking nine classes at University High.

"Antron is a great guy," he said. "He helps kids that have great talent but don't have the smarts for school."

Yet Wright is barred from Southridge, partly because he lured players to Killian and to University High. In January 2004, five football players left Southridge and later played crucial roles on Killian's state title team.

"He can't come into my building," Carzell J. Morris, the principal at Southridge, said. "Just for the fact he comes in and takes my kids out. Kids that could probably make it if they weren't looking for the easy way out."

Southridge Coach Rodney Hunter said Wright also encouraged Damaso Munoz, who is now at Rutgers, to leave for University High early this year.

Thirteen of the 38 seniors on Killian's 2004 state title team did not graduate with their class. Many, including Morley and Brooks, wound up at University High.

"How legitimate is it?" Otis Collier, the athletic director at Killian, said about Morley's improvement at University. "I don't know. I guess it's because of me. I probably should want to know, but I don't want to know. I don't want to know anything about it."

Wright declined multiple requests to be interviewed for this article.

By transferring to University High, students can bypass the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, which is mandatory for public school graduation, and focus on passing through the N.C.A.A. Clearinghouse.

N.C.A.A. minimum standards require the completion of 14 core courses. Grade-point average in those courses and standardized test scores are rated on a scale. Students with

high averages can qualify with lower test scores and vice versa. For example, after Morley's junior year at Killian, a computer program used to project eligibility showed him graduating with about a 2.1 G.P.A., meaning he would need at least a 960 on the SAT. At University, he raised his average to 2.75, so his 720 SAT score was exactly what he needed to qualify.

Although the standardized testing services flag suspicious jumps in scores, there is no similar alarm for grade-point averages that suddenly go up. Assuring the legitimacy of high school credentials is one reason Brand says he is forming the N.C.A.A. panel, which will make recommendations by June 1.

"We see the problem accelerating," he said. "We want to stop it as soon as possible."

Doing Something About It

When Morley was preparing to enter college, Tennessee and the Southeastern Conference questioned his University High transcript. Brad Bertani, the associate athletic director for compliance at Tennessee, went to Miami to investigate.

Bertani, who met with Simmons for three hours, said he determined that Morley had done his own work. But Bertani refused to comment on University High's curriculum.

"There's all kinds of schooling out there, whether you think it's legitimate or not," Bertani said. "That's for the admissions people at each school to evaluate."

Copies of Bertani's handwritten notes from the visit, obtained through a freedom of information request, say that there were no records of University's teachers and that no lab was required for the chemistry course for which Morley received a B.

Tennessee's research showed that University High School sent transcripts from 28 athletes to the N.C.A.A. Clearinghouse, according to documents obtained through the freedom of information request.

Bertani also spent weeks investigating Morley's connection to Wright, who accompanied Morley on his recruiting trip to Knoxville and kept in contact with Trooper Taylor, an assistant football coach at Tennessee. Bertani said he found no improprieties with Wright or any connection between him and University High.

Morley, who played defensive back and returned kicks this season, did not respond to repeated attempts for comment by e-mail and through Tennessee officials. His mother, Felicia Henry, demanded to know who had told a reporter he had attended University High and said she knew nothing about the school's academics.

Morley took a full course load at Killian while playing football, along with seven other core courses - half the N.C.A.A. minimum for a high school career - at University.

Transcripts obtained by The New York Times show he received four A's and three B's from University. At Killian, he received C's in English all four years, but he got an A in classical literature from University. Grades like that helped his G.P.A. in core courses improve to 2.75 from 2.09 from August to December.

Three of the four members of Tennessee's admissions panel expressed reservations.

"I didn't see anything fraudulent or out of line," Richard Baer, the dean of enrollment at Tennessee, said of his initial reaction to Morley's transcript. "It looked like it could have been another student's transcript from another institution. I didn't see anything that struck me as saying: 'You know what? We need to look carefully at this.' "

The other panelists reacted differently.

"All of this was in my mind very, very questionable," Anne Mayhew, the vice chancellor for academic affairs, said.

Todd Diacon, the head of the history department, said, "Anytime I see a transcript like a University High School, it concerns me."

Ruth Darling, an assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs, said, "I always had reservations about this type of school, if students are actually learning."

In the end, the panel never voted, accepting the transcript because the N.C.A.A. approved University High and Bertani found that Morley had done his own work there. But when told of Simmons's fraud conviction, Mayhew said Tennessee should have been more careful.

"I think we need to add a new layer of caution to deal with high school diploma mills," she said.

Tennessee Coach Phillip Fulmer lauded the university, pointing out that no other college had visited University High.

"I'm a Tennessee graduate as well," he said. "I want the university to be represented in the right way."

At What Cost a Degree?

When describing his reasons for transferring to University High, Simpson recalled a Southridge basketball player with Division I potential who failed his last chance at Florida's mandatory graduation exam.

"I still remember to this day him walking around the hallways crying," he said. "He was

ready to fight every principal and teacher in Miami."

That image stuck with him as he struggled academically. Simpson said he still has his ninth-grade report card showing a 0.6 grade point average. He said he relied heavily on others to do his work.

"The basic skills I'm supposed to have from way back then," he said, "none of them are there."

Mark Eyerly, Temple's chief communications officer, said, "It is in the best interests of our students and of the university for us to offer admission to students whom we believe can succeed here academically."

Simpson said that his problems at Temple have made him more determined.

As a freshman, Simpson played defensive end and made seven tackles for a 2-9 team. Temple completed an 0-11 season this month.

When his football career ends, he said, he sees himself in only one place.

"I believe that my fate is to go back to Miami and change things," he said. "My job is to go into school systems like Miami and be a coach and teach kids right from wrong."

New York Times

Students Ace State Tests, but Earn D's From U.S.

By **SAM DILLON**

Published: November 26, 2005

After [Tennessee](#) tested its eighth-grade students in math this year, state officials at a jubilant news conference called the results a "cause for celebration." Eighty-seven percent of students performed at or above the proficiency level.

But when the federal government made public the findings of its own tests last month, the results were startlingly different: only 21 percent of Tennessee's eighth graders were considered proficient in math.

Such discrepancies have intensified the national debate over testing and accountability, with some educators saying that numerous states have created easy exams to avoid the sanctions that President Bush's centerpiece education law, No Child Left Behind, imposes on consistently low-scoring schools.

A comparison of state test results against the latest National Assessment of Educational

Progress, a federal test mandated by the No Child Left Behind law, shows that wide discrepancies between the state and federal findings were commonplace.

In Mississippi, 89 percent of fourth graders performed at or above proficiency on state reading tests, while only 18 percent of fourth graders demonstrated proficiency on the federal test. Oklahoma, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Alaska, Texas and more than a dozen other states all showed students doing far better on their own reading and math tests than on the federal one.

The chasm is significant because of the compromises behind the No Child Left Behind law. The law requires states to participate in the National Assessment - known to educators as NAEP (pronounced nape) - the most important federal measure of student proficiency.

But in a bow to states' rights, states are allowed to use their own tests in meeting the law's central mandate - that schools increase the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency each year. The law requires 100 percent of the nation's students to reach proficiency - as each state defines it - by 2014.

States set the stringency of their own tests as well as the number of questions students must answer correctly to be labeled proficient. And because states that fail to raise scores over time face serious sanctions, there is little incentive to make the exams difficult, some educators say.

"Under No Child Left Behind, the states get to set the proficiency bar wherever they like, and unfortunately most are setting it quite low," said Michael J. Petrilli, a vice president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, which generally supports the federal law.

"They're telling the public in their states that huge numbers of students are proficient, but the NAEP results show that's not the case," Mr. Petrilli said.

Other educators and experts give different reasons for the discrepancy between state and federal test results. A Standard & Poor's report this fall listed many reasons for such differences, among them that the National Assessment is a no-stakes test, while low scores on state tests lead to sanctions against schools.

The report noted that the National Assessment is given to a sampling of students, whereas schools administer state tests to nearly all students. The tests serve different purposes, with the federal one giving policy makers a snapshot of student performance across the nation, while state tests provide data about individual performance. Because of these differences, some state officials say it is unfair to compare the test results.

But the report by Standard & Poor's, which has a division that analyzes educational data, also noted some states' tests are just easier.

G. Gage Kingsbury, director of research at the Northwest Evaluation Association, a nonprofit group that administers tests in 1,500 districts nationwide, said states that set their proficiency standards before No Child Left Behind became law had tended to set them high.

"The idea back then was that we needed to be competitive with nations like Hong Kong and Singapore," he said. "But our research shows that since N.C.L.B. took effect, states have set lower standards."

Not all have a low bar. In South Carolina, Missouri, Wyoming and Maine, state results tracked closely with the federal exam.

South Carolina is a state that set world-class standards, Mr. Kingsbury said. The math tests there are so difficult that only 23 percent of eighth graders scored at or above the proficiency level this year, compared with 30 percent on the federal math test. South Carolina officials now fear that such rigor is coming back to haunt them.

"We set very high standards for our tests, and unfortunately it's put us at a great disadvantage," said Inez M. Tenenbaum, the state superintendent of education. "We thought other states would be high-minded too, but we were mistaken."

South Carolina's tough exams make it harder for schools there to show the annual testing gains demanded by the federal law.

This year less than half of the state's 1,109 schools met the federal law's benchmark for the percentage of students showing proficiency, a challenge that will get tougher each year. As a result, legislators are pushing to lower the state's proficiency standard, Ms. Tenenbaum said, an idea she opposes.

Because of the discrepancies, several prominent educators are now calling for a system of national testing that counts, like those at the heart of educational systems in England, France and Japan.

"We need national standards and national tests," said Diane Ravitch, a professor at New York University who is a former member of the National Assessment's board. "I conclude that states are just looking to make everybody feel good."

Ms. Tenenbaum too says the differences among states have convinced her of the need for a national test. "I think we should all just take the NAEP," she said. "Get it out of the states' hands."

But Representative John A. Boehner, chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Work Force, defended states' rights to define proficiency as they see fit and said that over time comparisons with the federal test would force them to draw up better tests.

"The bright lights of accountability are going to shine on the states who are kidding themselves," said Mr. Boehner, Republican of Ohio.

The battle lines have long been sharp in the testing debate. Most corporate leaders favor national testing, said Susan Traiman, a director at the Business Roundtable, a group that represents corporate executives.

Opponents include liberal groups that dislike all standardized testing; the testing industry itself, which has found lucrative profits in writing new exams for all 50 states; and political conservatives who fiercely resist any intrusion on states' rights to control curricula and tests.

Margaret Spellings, the secretary of education, says that the comparison of state and federal tests provides useful information. "It allows us to shine a light," she said. "This is a truth-in-advertising type deal."

But Ms. Spellings has declined to criticize states whose tests appear to overstate the percentage of their students who are proficient. The law leaves it to states to calibrate their accountability systems, including how difficult they make their exams, she said. "We're not going to sit up in Washington and look at all those moving parts," Ms. Spellings said.

The National Assessment uses three performance levels to classify student results: advanced, which denotes superior performance; proficient, which indicates that students have "demonstrated competency" and basic, which indicates students have attained only "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills." Many students also score below basic, which the National Assessment's governing board does not classify as an achievement level.

On Oct. 19, the day the federal results were released, Ms. Spellings urged reporters to compare the percentage of students performing at the proficiency level on state tests with the percentage of students performing at the basic level on the federal test.

Many state officials said they also preferred that comparison, which greatly softens the discrepancies. In Tennessee, for instance, the 66-point gap between the federal and state results in eighth-grade math shrinks to just 26 points if the state results are compared with the federal measure of basic skills.

"NAEP's basic is comparable to our proficient," said Kim Karesh, a spokeswoman for the Tennessee Department of Education. "Now whether Tennessee's test is stringent enough is something that we're reviewing constantly. Nobody here would say we have a perfect test."

Officials in many other states whose scores differed sharply from those of the National Assessment cried foul over the very idea of comparing the results.

"The comparison to NAEP is not fair," said Mitch Edwards, a spokesman for the Department of Education in Alabama, where 83 percent of fourth-grade students scored at or above proficient on the state's reading test while only 22 percent demonstrated proficiency on the federal reading test. "Making comparisons to the NAEP becomes very difficult without giving the impression that some states are not measuring up to others or to the nation."

In Georgia, 83 percent of eighth graders scored at or above proficient on state reading tests, compared with just 24 percent on the federal test. "Kids know the federal test doesn't really count," said Dana Tofig, a spokesman for the State Department of Education. "So it's not a fair comparison; it's not apples to apples."