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Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

Felicity Huffman, 13 Others To Plead Guilty In 'Varsity Blues'

By **Aaron Leibowitz and Chris Villani**

Law360 (April 8, 2019, 3:15 PM EDT) -- "Desperate Housewives" actress Felicity Huffman, 12 other parents and a coach have agreed to plead guilty in the "Varsity Blues" college admissions scandal, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts said Monday.



Felicity Huffman and 13 other people will plead guilty in the "Varsity Blues" scandal, in which parents are accused of paying to cheat their children's way into college, prosecutors said Monday. (AP)

In a lengthy statement, Huffman, who prosecutors said paid \$15,000 to have her daughter's SATs corrected, said she would accept guilt "with deep regret and shame over what I have done."

"I am ashamed of the pain I have caused my daughter, my family, my friends, my colleagues and the educational community," Huffman said. "I want to apologize to them and, especially, I want to apologize to the students who work hard every day to get into college, and to their parents who make tremendous sacrifices to support their children and do so honestly."

Under the terms of Huffman's plea deal, prosecutors agreed to recommend a sentence at the low end of the four to 10 months in prison she faces under federal sentencing guidelines. Huffman has also agreed to pay a \$20,000 fine plus restitution.

Huffman said her daughter knew nothing about her mother's actions to get her into the University of Southern California.

"In a misguided and profoundly wrong way, I have betrayed her," the actress said. "This transgression toward her and the public I will carry for the rest of my life. My desire to help my daughter is no excuse to break the law or engage in dishonesty."

Huffman is one of two television stars, charged in the scheme. "Full House" actress Lori Loughlin was not among the group who said they would plead guilty Monday.

Among the defendants slated to plead guilty are parents Gregory and Marcia Abbott, Jane Buckingham, Robert Flaxman, Agustin Huneeus, Marjorie Klapper, Stephen Semprevivo and Devin Sloane.

The 14 defendants in the government's announcement included several who have already publicly announced their intent to plead guilty: former Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP Co-Chair Gordon Caplan, California parents Bruce and Davina Isackson, and packaged food entrepreneur and parent Peter Sartorio.

The Isacksons said in a joint statement Monday that they have and will continue to **cooperate with prosecutors** as part of their admission of responsibility.

Former University of Texas tennis coach Michael Center will also plead guilty, according to the Monday announcement. Center, who was fired after news of the scandal broke, allegedly took nearly \$100,000 to get a student into the University of Texas at Austin by listing him as a tennis recruit.

All 14 will plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and honest services mail fraud, the U.S. attorney's office said. Bruce Isackson will also admit to money laundering conspiracy and conspiracy to defraud the United States.

The owner of a college counseling business, William "Rick" Singer, was at the center of the scheme, according to court documents. Singer, who has pled guilty, accepted payments from parents to help their children cheat on college entrance exams, prosecutors say. A Florida man, Mark Riddell, allegedly took exams for students or corrected their answers afterward.

Singer also passed some of the parents' money along to coaches at elite universities, who agreed in return to reserve slots for the children on athletic teams, even when the students didn't play the sport, according to prosecutors.

Another parent, California insurance executive Toby MacFarlane, also appears headed toward a guilty plea. The government asked for more time to indict him Monday, saying he would likely plead guilty preindictment.

According to prosecutors, the parents shelled out anywhere from \$15,000 to \$600,000 in cash or stock to help their children get into elite universities. In several cases, the amount of the bribes totaled six-figure sums, the government claims.

The defendants who improperly took tax deductions for their bribe payments have agreed to pay back taxes to the IRS, according to the government.

The government is represented by Eric S. Rosen, Justin D. O'Connell, Kristen A. Kearney and Leslie Wright of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts.

Caplan is represented by Joshua S. Levy, Michael McGovern and Christopher J. Walsh of Ropes & Gray LLP and Patrick J. Smith and Sarah Zimmer of Smith Villazor LLP.

Bruce Isackson is represented by William A. Burck and Michael T. Packard of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP.

Davina Isackson is represented by Alexander K. Parachini and Peter E. Gelhaar of Donnelly Conroy & Gelhaar LLP and David K. Willingham and Michael V. Schafler of Boies Schiller Flexner LLP.

Huffman is represented by Julia G. Amrhein and Martin F. Murphy of Foley Hoag LLP.

Gregory Abbott is represented by Daniel L. Stein of Mayer Brown LLP, and Geoffrey E. Hobart of Covington & Burling LLP.

Marcia Abbott is represented by Geoffrey E. Hobart, Katherine P. Onyshko and Arlo Devlin-Brown of Covington & Burling LLP.

Flaxman is represented by Christine M. Genaitis of Dentons, and William D. Weinreb and Michael T. Packard of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP.

Huneus is represented by Jeremy M. Sternberg of Holland & Knight LLP, and William P. Keane of

Farella Braun & Martel LLP.

Klapper is represented by Jonathan McDougall of The Law Office of Jonathan D. McDougall, and Daniel K. Gelb of Gelb & Gelb LLP.

Semprevivo is represented by Stephen C. Boozang.

Sartorio is represented by Peter K. Levitt and Nicholas Ramacher of Donnelly Conroy & Gelhaar LLP.

Sloane is represented by A. John Pappalardo of Greenberg Traurig LLP, Nathan H. Hochman of Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP and Sandra R. Brown-Bodner of Hochman Salkin Toscher Perez PC.

Center is represented by John H. Cunha Jr. of Cunha & Holcomb PC.

MacFarlane is represented by Cristina C. Arguedas, Raphael M. Goldman and Ted W. Cassman of Arguedas Cassman Headley & Goldman LLP and Maksim Nemtsev.

--Editing by Jill Coffey.

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