Money Can Buy Anything

March 18, 2019

Re: "UT coach, celebrities charged — Parents paid $25M to get kids into top schools, officials say," Wednesday news story.

An incredible admissions scandal was exposed on Tuesday by the Department of Justice that implicates many of the nation's premier institutions of higher learning. Sadly, this story hit very close to home, including my own university, the University of Texas at Austin. Aside from the obvious magnitude of this story, perhaps unparalleled in the history of university admissions, we should be concerned about the larger and more endemic problem underscored by this scandal.

First, the charges of admissions fraud come at a time when many accuse the practice of race-based admissions of being unfair and discriminatory. Ironically, unlike the latest admissions scandals, race can be used as only one factor among many in reviewing an applicant's credentials — something the Supreme Court ruled is perfectly legal.

Second, as Robert Reich and others observe, the overarching crisis revealed Tuesday is economic — a "concentration of wealth in America." It now appears that buying admissions is merely one symptom of the larger problem of how those with money can buy elections, health care, justice and citizenship — privileges often beyond the reach of those without sufficient assets.
It's time for this country to have a serious conversation about the distribution of wealth, entitlement, inequality and personal responsibility.

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