

July 17, 2007**10 Are Accused of Scheme to Fake College Transcripts****By [KAREN W. ARENSON](#)**

Touro College's former admissions director and former computer center director and three New York City public school teachers have been indicted on charges that they took part in a scheme involving fraudulent transcripts, the Manhattan district attorney, [Robert M. Morgenthau](#), said yesterday.

He said those defendants were among 10 people indicted in a "cash for grades scheme" in which students' transcripts were altered and transcripts and degrees were created for people who had never attended the institution, including the three city teachers. The teachers were said to have bought falsified master's degrees from Touro that helped in their promotion and their certification.

Mr. Morgenthau said the former admissions director, Andrique Baron, and the former computer center director, Michael Cherner, had worked with an intermediary, Vladimir Diaquoi, who was said to have collected payments from the teachers and delivered forged transcripts to them. The district attorney said that people paid \$3,000 to \$25,000 for the false or altered transcripts.

Mr. Baron was arrested in March and Mr. Cherner was arrested this month, the district attorney said, adding that both had been suspended from their jobs. The teachers and one other defendant, a Touro student, were arrested this month. Four others, including three former students, were still being sought.

A woman who answered the phone at the home of Mr. Cherner hung up after an interview was requested. Mr. Baron's number could not immediately be located. Ron Davis, a spokesman for the [United Federation of Teachers](#), said the teachers had not contacted the union. At this reporter's request, Mr. Davis left a message for one, seeking comment, but the message was not responded to. He said he was unable to reach the other two at all.

The district attorney said that at least seven transcripts were tampered with from January through March of this year, but added that his office had found alterations affecting transcripts dating to 2003. And he said the office found indications that at least 50 other transcripts had also been tampered with this year.

Mr. Morgenthau said the investigation was continuing, adding that he believed that hundreds, maybe even thousands, of transcripts may have been fabricated or altered.

Franklyn H. Snitow, a New York lawyer representing Touro, said, "We are doing our due diligence to determine the scope of these problems," but "we don't believe that the numbers reached the hundreds or thousands."

The district attorney said Touro discovered the problem and reported it in February to the police, who referred the case to the district attorney.

Touro said in a statement yesterday that it was cooperating with the investigation.

"This conduct was confined to what appears to have been a betrayal of trust by persons with responsibility for the integrity of the record-keeping, and only because we had certain controls in place were we able to identify the wrongdoing and bring it to the attention of law enforcement," the statement said.

Touro, a Manhattan-based independent college that describes itself as operating under Jewish auspices, has more than 23,000 students, about half undergraduates.

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Margie Feinberg, a spokeswoman for the New York City Department of Education, said the three teachers charged — Florence Constant, Renee Rene and Ghislene Joseph Julmice — were still on the payroll but were not working this summer. She added that they would be reassigned to positions outside the classroom until the charges were resolved, and dismissed if found guilty. She said that Ms. Constant and Ms. Rene were both tenured and could not be dismissed without a hearing.

Ms. Constant, who taught at the Queens School for Career Development and earns \$64,333 a year, worked as a paraprofessional from 1988 to 1998, and then as an uncertified teacher from 1998 to 2003. She was appointed as a teacher in September 2003, and then had five years to earn a master's degree.

Ms. Rene, who taught at Public School 233 in Queens, started as a paraprofessional in 1987, became a regular substitute teacher in 2001 and was appointed a special education teacher in 2003. She earns \$60,889.

Ms. Julmice, who worked most recently at P.S. 243 Weeksville School in Brooklyn, was a paraprofessional from 1996 to last February, when she was appointed a special education teacher. Her salary is \$42,512.

Ms. Feinberg said the Education Department's human resources office conducts background checks, "but if the higher education officials are in collusion, it's hard to find out."

Today's News

Tuesday, July 17, 2007

2 Former Officials at Touro College Indicted in Fake-Transcript Scam

By [MATT PETRIE](#)

Two former administrators at Touro College and eight other people were indicted on Monday for their alleged roles in a cash-for-grades scheme at the college, which is in New York.

According to a statement released by the Manhattan district attorney, Robert M. Morgenthau, a former director of admissions and a former director of the computer center at the college's Brooklyn campus had accepted payments of \$3,000 or more since 2003 to improve grades, delete courses never completed, or forge degrees altogether. The other eight indicted in the matter are three former Touro students, three public-school teachers in New York City, a woman who allegedly paid for a degree even though she did not attend the college, and a man accused of coordinating the deal for the teachers.

The indicted figures are charged with crimes of computer trespass, computer tampering, and falsifying business records. Conviction on those charges could result in up to four years in prison for each count. Four of the 10 indicted are still at large, the district attorney's office said.

The indicted officials used a legitimate transcript as a template to forge transcripts using their office and home computers, the district attorney's office said, and thousands of records may have been altered.

One Touro undergraduate's grade-point average increased from 1.23 to 3.63 in 2006 with the administrators' help, the district attorney said. The three public-school teachers are each alleged to have paid at least \$3,000 for transcripts indicating they had received master-of-science degrees in special education. The degrees were necessary to obtain permanent certification from the city's Department of Education.

The college first reported its suspicions to the New York police in February, according to the district attorney's office.

In a written statement, the college said the former administrators' conduct "appears to have been a betrayal of trust" by people charged with record keeping. "Only because we had certain controls in place were we able to identify the wrongdoing and bring it to the attention of law enforcement," said the college, which has 21,000 students.

The college did not immediately respond to a telephone message left Monday evening inquiring whether the administrators were fired from the college. According to the district attorney's statement, both employees have been temporarily suspended from their positions.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-forgery17jul17,1,3173664.story?coll=la-headlines-nation>

From the Los Angeles Times

Fees for degrees scheme is alleged

Two Touro College officials are charged with altering transcripts.

From Times Wire Services

July 17, 2007

NEW YORK — Administrators at Touro College took money to change grades and fabricate degrees — including degrees for physician assistants — prosecutors charged Monday.

Ten people were indicted, including the former director of admissions in Manhattan, Andrique Baron, 34; the former director of the Brooklyn campus' computer center, Michael Cherner, 50; three students whose transcripts were allegedly altered; and three teachers at New York City public schools who allegedly bought master's degrees but never attended Touro.

Baron and Cherner collected fees of \$3,000 to \$25,000 for altered grades, and faked bachelor's or master's degrees, by tampering with the private college's computer system, prosecutors said.

The two found a transcript from a legitimate Touro student on the server and used it as a template to create the forged documents, prosecutors said.

Since January, records were created or altered for at least 50 people, Dist. Atty. Robert Morgenthau said. "One dangerous thing they did was give degrees to physician's assistants," he said.

Records found in Baron's home showed that he was running the scheme as early as 2003 and possibly earlier, the district attorney said.

"We don't know how many hundreds, maybe thousands, were involved," he said.

Touro, a Jewish-sponsored college founded in 1970 and based in Manhattan, has 23,300 students in 29 locations, mostly in New York, its website says.

A middleman dubbed "Jimmy Bag" in Baron's cellphone collected money from the teachers, Morgenthau said.

Baron spent the cash on two luxury cars, high-end audio equipment and huge flat-screen TVs in almost every room in his home, Morgenthau said.

Touro told the district attorney's office of the wrongdoing and cooperated fully in the investigation, school spokeswoman Barbara Franklin said.

Lawyers for Baron and Cherner did not immediately return telephone calls seeking comment Monday.

Baron was arrested March 20, and Cherner, the three teachers and a former Touro student who had worked in the registrar's office were arrested this month, prosecutors said.

The remaining four defendants are at large. All are charged with falsifying business records.

Cherner and Baron are also charged with computer trespass, computer tampering and bribe receiving. The alleged bagman is also charged with bribe receiving.

All the charges are punishable by up to four years in prison.

The investigation is continuing, Morgenthau said.