
 YARMUTH WILSDON PLLC

**INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
RE: BELLEVUE HIGH SCHOOL
FOOTBALL PROGRAM**

**Carl
Blackstone**

**Robert
Westinghouse**

attending BHS.⁶⁶ The single transcript which we were initially shown reflected that a student-athlete who attended BHS during his freshman year and struggled academically, saw a dramatic improvement in his grades after he transferred to the Academic Institute. Other transcripts which we have now been provided reflect similar dramatic improvements in players' grade point averages for the Academic Institute coursework. (Exhibit 115). Whether such improvement is best attributed to the small class size and individualized teaching which the Academic Institute claims to offer or some other reason is unknown. Our effort to sort out truth from fiction in this area has also been hampered by the refusal of several BHS student who previously attended the Academic Institute to speak to us or to authorize us to review their transcripts. Whether these players who have attended the Academic Institute hold it in similar low esteem is not known. Such a characterization, especially when taken in concert with the NCAA's Extended Evaluation and former teachers' challenges to the Academic Institute's course work more particularly described below, does give us pause.

b. Teacher Complaints about the Academic Institute

The *Seattle Times*, in an article dated August 22, 2015, quotes two former teachers at the Academic Institute as labeling it a "diploma mill" that doesn't adhere to basic educational standards.⁶⁷ (Exhibit 1). One of these teachers, Jason Gardner, prepared a detailed complaint against the Academic Institute which alleged among other things that he quit in part because Ms. Vice directed him to "cut back on the work [and] the difficulty of the work [assigned to students]." (Exhibit 98). Ms. Vice maintains that Mr. Gardner quit after she had offered a critical evaluation of his teaching and attempted to work with him to modify his approach. (Exhibit 111 at pages 7-9). An administrative hearing examiner considering Mr. Gardner's appeal from a decision requiring him to pay back certain unemployment benefits he had received from the State of Washington found his explanation for his departure did not support a finding that he had left work for good cause. (Exhibit 111 at Exhibit 16). Regardless of Mr. Gardner's credibility, when questioned about this episode, Ms. Vice stated that she intervened because she thought it was necessary to teach one or more students reading and note taking techniques. Although she insisted that this digression from the course subject matter did not distract from the course content, it does leave room for some doubt as to the academic quality of this particular high school social studies class.

Ms. Vice has declined to provide us with the names of other teachers at the school, citing privacy concerns. Our attempt to reach out to former teachers who may have information regarding the Academic Institute, including Mr. Gardner, have been unsuccessful because none of these former teachers have returned our calls.

⁶⁶ Often in past years, players appear to have attended BHS for a year or two, encountered academic problems, and transferred to the Academic Institute. In many such instances, the player has returned to BHS for their last semester so that they can graduate from BHS.

⁶⁷ The apparent source for much of the information in the article relating to the Academic Institute was Jason Gardner, a former teacher who quit in the fall of 2011 and later filed a complaint against the school with OSPI. (Exhibit 98).