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Cleveland Plain Dealer

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Section: METRO

HEAD OF TRADE SCHOOL CHAIN GIVEN JAIL AND PROBATION TIME FOR FRAUD  
MARK ROLLENHAGEN PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

AKRON

The president of a defunct chain of trade schools, including one in Cleveland, was sentenced to one year and nine months in prison yesterday for bilking the federal government out of student financial aid.

Irwin **Mautner**, 64, of Greenwich, Conn., also was fined \$25,000 and ordered to perform 1,500 hours of community service per year for three years of probation that will begin after he completes his prison sentence.

Senior U.S. District Judge Sam H. Bell said the community service - nearly 30 hours a week for 52 weeks a year - must involve educating financially disadvantaged young people.

**Mautner** was president and chief executive officer of Programming & Systems Inc. which operated the computer programming vocational schools, known as **PSI Institutes**, in 11 cities.

Prosecutors said the school improperly recruited students from welfare lines and falsified test results meant to determine whether the students would benefit from studying at the schools. The school collected federally funded Pell grants in the students' names and received payments from federally insured student loans.

From 1989 through 1992, the schools took in \$140 million in aid.

Assistant U.S. Attorney James Lynch asked Bell to increase **Mautner's** sentence because, he said, the fraud had cost the government at least \$20 million. The judge, however, said he could not do so because no one has determined how many of the students were enrolled fraudulently and how many were legitimate.

Thomas Fitzpatrick, **Mautner's** lawyer, said he will appeal the sentence. He said the government has never shown that **Mautner** directed the improper recruiting or the falsifying of test results.

**Mautner**, who started his first school nearly 30 years ago, has insisted that the only thing he did wrong was misrepresent the withdrawal rate of students so that the U.S. Department of Education would not revoke his school accreditation.

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---- INDEX REFERENCES ---

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