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### **Owner of schools that illegally allowed foreign nationals to remain in US as "students" sentenced to 15 months in federal prison**

LOS ANGELES – The owner of four schools that enrolled hundreds of foreign nationals who fraudulently obtained immigration documents allowing them to remain in the United States as “students” – even though they rarely, if ever, attended classes – was sentenced today to 15 months in federal prison and ordered to forfeit more than \$450,000.

Hee Sun Shim (also known as Leonard Shim and Leo Shim), 54, of Hancock Park, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge George H. Wu. Shim, who was ordered to begin serving his sentence in 60 days, and was further ordered to forfeit to the government \$431,508 seized from bank accounts and \$34,860 in cash seized during the execution of a federal search warrant at his former residence in Beverly Hills in March 2015.

The investigation into the Prodee schools was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), with substantial assistance from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ Fraud Detection and National Security Division.

Shim pleaded guilty last year to one count of conspiracy to commit immigration fraud and one count of immigration document fraud in relation to what prosecutors called “a sophisticated, extensive, and lucrative fraud scheme that operated for many years in the Koreatown area of Los Angeles.”

Shim, along with two co-defendants – ran a “pay-to-stay” scheme through three schools in Koreatown – Prodee University/Neo-America Language School; Walter Jay M.D. Institute, an Educational Center (WJMD); and the American College of Forensic Studies (ACFS). A fourth school in Alhambra – Likie Fashion and Technology College – was also involved in the scheme, which ran for at least five years.

Prodee and the other schools issued immigration documents to foreign nationals who were not bona fide students, had no intention of attending the schools, and sometimes lived outside of California – including in the states of Washington and New York. As part of the conspiracy, Shim created bogus student records, including transcripts, for some of the students for the purpose of deceiving immigration authorities. In exchange for the immigration documents that allowed them to remain in the United States, the purported “students” made “tuition” payments to Shim and his co-conspirators to “enroll” and remain enrolled at the schools.

The investigation in this case began in 2011 after a compliance team with HSI’s Student and Exchange Visitor Program, made an unannounced site visit to Prodee University’s main campus on

Wilshire Boulevard. During the visit, the team observed only one English language class with three students in attendance, even though records indicated nearly 1,000 foreign students were enrolled at Prodee's two campuses. That same day, an unannounced visit to ACFS found only one religion class in session with a single student present, even though the school had more than 300 foreign students in active status.

As detailed in court papers, Prodee and its affiliated schools were authorized to issue a document that certified a foreign national had been accepted to a school and would be a full-time student. The document – "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status - for Academic and Language Students," which is commonly called a Form I-20 – made a student eligible to obtain an F-1 student visa that would allow the student to enter and remain in the United States while the student was making normal progress toward completing a full course of study.

"As [Shim] and his co-conspirators knew, these Form I-20s were based on false claims, false statements, and fraud since the purported foreign students had no intention of attending school and were not bona fide students," Shim admitted in his plea agreement.

Two other defendants charged in this case – Hyung Chan Moon and Eun Young Choi – previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy and immigration document fraud. Moon is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Wu on May 17, and Choi is scheduled to be sentenced on June 7.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Wilson Park of the Violent and Organized Crime Section, Lindsey Dotson of the Public Corruption and Civil Rights Section, and Katie Schonbachler of the Asset Forfeiture Section.

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