January 24, 2001

Members of the Legislative Audit Committee:

The Public Integrity Unit at the Travis County District Attorney’s Office obtained indictments for Brenda Francis and Christopher Abrego on December 13, 2000, after the Special Investigations Unit investigated allegations of forged College Access Loan (CAL) applications. The Higher Education Coordinating Board requested the investigation of these two separate offenses. The forged applications led to the fraudulent disbursement of more than $13,000 for tuition, fees, and personal expenses for former students of Baylor University and Texas Lutheran University. Brenda Francis is a former student of Baylor University, and Christopher Abrego is a former student of Texas Lutheran University.

Brenda Francis faces one count of forgery and one count of securing execution of a document by deception. Christopher Abrego faces two counts of forgery, two counts of securing execution of a document by deception, two counts of theft, and two counts of tampering with a governmental record. These offenses are state jail felony charges that carry a maximum penalty of two years in a state jail and a $10,000 fine.

Between August 1994 and January 1995, Brenda Francis allegedly forged the signature of her ex-husband on two CAL applications without her ex-husband’s knowledge. She then allegedly submitted the forged CAL applications to the Higher Education Coordinating Board, which resulted in the illegal disbursement of more than $6,100.

Between January 1, 1999, and January 31, 1999, Christopher Abrego allegedly altered the loan amount on his CAL application without the knowledge of the co-signer, a family friend, which resulted in the illegal disbursement of more than $7,200.

Combined, Brenda Francis and Christopher Abrego intended to deprive the Higher Education Coordinating Board of more than $13,000.
If you have any questions, you may contact Ralph Disher or John Weber, Special Investigations Unit, at (512) 936-9500.

Sincerely,

Lawrence F. Alwin, CPA  
State Auditor

cc: Dr. Don W. Brown, Commissioner,  
Higher Education Coordinating Board  
The Honorable Ronnie Earle,  
Travis County District Attorney