Academic Integrity:
A Letter to My Students[1]

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Here at the beginning of the semester I want to say something to you about academic integrity.[2]

I'm deeply convinced that integrity is an essential part of any true educational experience, integrity on my part as a faculty member and integrity on your part as a student.

To take an easy example, would you want to be operated on by a doctor who cheated his way through medical school? Or would you feel comfortable on a bridge designed by an engineer who cheated her way through engineering school. Would you trust your tax return to an accountant who copied his exam answers from his neighbor?

Those are easy examples, but what difference does it make if you as a student or I as a faculty member violate the principles of academic integrity in a political science course, especially if it's not in your major?

For me, the answer is that integrity is important in this course precisely because integrity is important in all areas of life. If we don't have integrity in the small things, if we find it possible to justify plagiarism or cheating or shoddy work in things that don't seem important, how will we resist doing the same in areas that really do matter, in areas where money might be at stake, or the possibility of advancement, or our esteem in the eyes of others?

Personal integrity is not a quality we're born to naturally. It's a quality of character we need to nurture, and this requires practice in both meanings of that word (as in practice the piano and practice a profession). We can only be a person of integrity if we practice it every day.

What does that involve for each of us in this course? Let's find out by going through each stage in the course. As you'll see, academic integrity basically requires the same things of you as a student as it requires of me as a teacher.

I. Preparation for Class

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[1] This letter grows out of, and is based upon, ideas contained in the first draft of, "The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity," a document that was developed by, and is available from, the Center for Academic Integrity (*http://www.academicintegrity.org*).

[2] The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines integrity as the "steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code."

What Academic Integrity Requires of Me in This Area

With regard to coming prepared for class, the principles of academic integrity require that I come having done the things necessary to make the class a worthwhile educational experience for you. This requires that I:
* reread the text (even when I've written it myself),
* clarify information I might not be clear about,
* prepare the class with an eye toward what is current today (that is, not simply rely on past notes), and
* plan the session so that it will make it worth your while to be there.

What Academic Integrity Requires of You in This Area

With regard to coming prepared for class, the principles of academic integrity suggest that you have a responsibility to yourself, to me, and to the other students to do the things necessary to put yourself in a position to make fruitful contributions to class discussion. This will require you to:
* read the text before coming to class,
* clarify anything you're unsure of (including looking up words you don't understand),
* formulate questions you might have so you can ask them in class, and
* think about the issues raised in the directed reading guide.

II. In Class

What Academic Integrity Requires of Me in This Area

With regard to class sessions, the principles of academic integrity require that I take you seriously and treat you with respect. This requires that I:
* show up for all class sessions, unless I'm simply unable to do so,
* come to class on time, and not leave early,
* not waste class time, but use it well to fulfil the objectives of the course
* do my best to answer your questions,
* honestly acknowledge when I don't have an answer or don't know something, and then go out and get an answer by the next class,
* both encourage you, and give you an equal opportunity, to participate in class discussions,
* contain you if your enthusiasm for participating in the discussions makes it difficult for others to participate,
* assume that you are prepared for class and that I won't embarrass you if I call on you, even if your hand isn't up,
* respect the views you express and not make fun of you or of them,
* not allow others to ridicule you or your ideas, or you to do the same to them, and
* make clear when I am expressing an opinion, and not impose on you my views on controversial issues.

What Academic Integrity Requires of You in This Area

With regard to class sessions, the principles of academic integrity require you to take both me and your fellow students seriously and to treat us with respect. This requires that you:

- show up for all class sessions, unless you are simply unable to do so,
- come to class on time and not leave early,
- make good use of class time by being engaged in what's going on,
- ask questions about anything you don't understand, and not just for your own sake but because other students might not realize that they also don't understand,
- participate in the class discussions so as to contribute your thinking to the shared effort to develop understanding and insight (remember that even something that's clearly wrong can contribute to the discussion by stimulating an idea in another student that s/he might not otherwise have had),
- monitor your own participation so as to allow for and encourage the participation of others,
- respect the other students by not making fun of them or their ideas, and by not holding side-conversations that distract them (and me) from the class discussion.

III. With Regard to Exams

What Academic Integrity Requires of Me in This Area

With regard to exams, the principles of academic integrity require that I:
- do my best during class time to prepare you for the exams,
- be available during office hours or at arranged times to work with you individually to help you get ready for the exams,
- develop exam questions that will be a meaningful test not only of the course content, but also of your ability to express and defend intelligent judgments about that content,
- carefully monitor the exam so that honest students will not be disadvantaged by other students who might choose to cheat if given the opportunity, and
- give due and careful consideration to your answers when evaluating them and assigning a grade.

What Academic Integrity Requires of You in This Area

With regard to exams, the principles of academic integrity require you to:
- come to class having done your best to prepare for the exam, including seeking my help if you need it,
- make full use of the time available to write the best answers you can,
- accept your limitations and not try to get around them by using cheat sheets, copying, or seeking help from another student,
- not giving help to other students, or making it easy for them to copy off of you.

IV. With Regard to Written Assignments

What Academic Integrity Requires of Me in This Area

With regard to written assignments, the principles of academic integrity require that I:
- devise meaningful assignments that grow out of and further the work done in the classroom,
- provide you with a clear description of that assignment so that you know what is expected of you and what I'll be looking for when I grade it,
- give due and careful consideration to your paper when evaluating it and assigning a grade, and
- confront you if I suspect that you have plagiarized or in other ways not handed in work that is entirely your own.

What Academic Integrity Requires of You in This Area

With regard to written assignments, the principles of academic integrity require you to:
- start your research and writing early enough to ensure that you have the time you need to do your best work,
- hand in a paper which you yourself have done specifically for this course and not borrowed from someone else or recycled from an earlier course,
- not be satisfied with a paper that is less than your best work,
- seek only appropriate help from others (such as proof-reading, or discussing your ideas with someone else to gain clarity in your thinking), and
- give full and proper credit to your sources.

Let me expand on this last point, since it applies to both you and me.

By its very nature, education and the accumulation of knowledge is a shared enterprise. None of us has the time, let alone the background knowledge required, to learn everything on our own. Virtually everything we know has come to us because someone else has taken the time to think about something, research it, and then share what s/he's learned with us in a class lecture or, more likely, in an article or book. This is every bit as true for me as a teacher as it is for you as students. I'd have very little to teach if all I could talk about is what I've learned solely on my own.

In a class lecture it would be too disruptive if I stopped to cite all of my sources, but I know, and you need to know, that I am sharing with you the things I've learned from hundreds of different authors. What I contribute is the way I bring their ideas together into a coherent whole so that it makes sense to you.

If this is true for me, how much more so for you. I have many more years of education and reading behind me than you do. I don't expect you to do original research. Instead, I expect you to read about the research of others, and to bring together their ideas in such a way that makes sense to you and will make sense to me. Therefore, it's essential for you to cite your sources in any research paper you write. The academic reasons for doing so

are to give credit to those who have done the original research and written the article or book, and to allow me to look at them if I needed to find out if you have properly understood what the author was trying to say.

But at a practical level, citing your sources is a way to show that you've done the assignment. If your paper contains no citations, the implication is that you have done a piece of original research, but that wasn't the assignment. Citations (along with the bibliography) show that you have consulted a variety of resources as the assignment required. They're also an acknowledgement of your indebtedness to those authors.

So don't feel you need to hide the fact that you're drawing from one of your sources. That's what it's all about.

V. With Regard to Your Final Grade

What Academic Integrity Requires of Me in This Area

With regard to your final grade, the principles of academic integrity require that I carefully weigh all of your grades during the course, as well as the other factors that affect the final grade as spelled out in the syllabus, before assigning a final grade.

What Academic Integrity Requires of You in This Area

With regard to your final grade, the principles of academic integrity require that, if you feel I've made a mistake in computing that grade, you have a responsibility to come to me as soon as possible prepared to show why you think I've made a mistake.

VI. Failures to Live up to Our Responsibilities

In all of the areas listed above, I will do my best to live up to my responsibilities. If you feel I've failed to do so, you have every right to call me on it. If you do, I have a responsibility to give you respectful consideration. If you feel that I do not do these things, you have the right (and I would say the responsibility) to bring this to the attention of my dean.

At the same time, I have a right to expect that you will live up to your responsibilities. If I get a sense that you're not doing so, I consider it a matter of my academic integrity that I call you on it.

Indeed, in certain circumstances (such as cheating or plagiarism) I may be required to charge you with a violation of the College's Code of Academic Conduct. For the College is every bit as committed to academic integrity as I am.

You should familiarize yourself with that Code. You can find it in the student handbook; it's also summarized on page 39 in the College Catalog. Be sure to notice that there's a procedure that's designed to protect your rights. But that procedure might also result in

one or another sanction being imposed on you if you're found guilty of violating the Code of Academic Integrity.

Which brings me to the most difficult question with regard to academic integrity; what if you become aware of a fellow classmate who is not living up to the principles of academic integrity, but you sense that I'm not aware of it? What should you do? I'll give you the answer, but I'll acknowledge up front that it's a hard one. Nevertheless, I would hope that you would at least grapple with it if you are ever confronted with the situation. The answer is that you should say something to that student, and if worse comes to worse, you should tell me. But why?

Academic integrity, as with so much in life, involves a system of interconnected rights and responsibilities that reflect our mutual dependence upon one another. The success of our individual efforts in this course, as with so much in life, depends on all of us conscientiously exercising our rights and living up to our responsibilities. And the failure of any of us—even just one of us—to do what is required will diminish, however slightly, the opportunity for the rest to achieve their goals. That is why it's essential for all of us in this class to practice academic integrity, in both senses of the word practice. For practice today will lay a solid foundation for practice tomorrow, and the day after that, and the day after that, so that through daily practice integrity will come to be woven throughout the fabric of our lives, and thus through at least a part of the fabric of society.

Note: Permission is granted to use any or all of the material in this letter in any way that is consistent with its purpose of promoting academic integrity.

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The
Principled Pursuit
of
Academic Integrity

By Donald L. McCabe and Gary Pavela

The Center for Academic Integrity is a consortium of two hundred colleges and universities in the United States, Canada and Mexico that ahs as its mission to provide

> *A forum to identify, affirm, and promote the values of academic integrity among students. This mission is achieved primarily through the involvement of students, faculty, and administrators from the member institutions, who share with peers and colleagues the Centers' collective experience, expertise, and creative energy. There is no single path to academic integrity, and the Center respects the values campus differences in traditions, values, and student and faculty characteristics.*

Founded in 1992 – and first introduced to readers of the AAHE Bulletin in the November 1995 article "Student Collaboration: Not Always What the Instructor Wants" – the Center has in the last two years more than doubled in size and moved ins headquarters to Duke University, where it now enjoys an affiliation with the Kenan Ethics Program.

At its seventh annual conference, held at Babson College in November 1997, the Center launched a three-year project to define fundamental principles of academic integrity.

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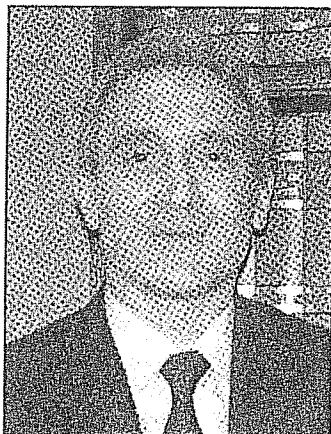
Gary Pavela, a past president of the Center, is director of judicial programs at the University of Maryland-College Park, 2118 Mitchell Building, College Park, MD 20742-5221; gpavela@oz.umd.edu

As described to college presidents in a recent membership drive, the Center intends to promote a national discourse about academic integrity and to establish benchmarks for accreditation, assessment, intellectual discourse, and professional ethics.

Supported by a major grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the project will promote such discourse through a series of regional and national conferences involving students, faculty, and administrators from member institutions, as well as other concerned individuals and groups. In addition to identifying these fundamental principles, the project will specify ways in which they can be brought to life on difference campuses.

The board of directors of the Center for Academic Integrity has been working in this "Fundamental Principles Project" for more than a year now. An early product of that effort is the guidelines on the following page, prepared for faculty who want to enhance the environment for academic integrity in their classrooms.

Anyone interested in joining the Center and becoming part of this discourse can obtain membership information from Sally Cole, the Center's executive director, at 919/660-3045 or srcole@duke.edu. Further information about the Center is available from its website at www.nwu.edu/uacc/cai.

Center for Academic Integrity
Ten Principles of Academic Integrity for Faculty

1 Affirm the importance of academic integrity.
Institutions of higher education are dedicated to the pursuit of truth. Faculty members need to affirm that the pursuit of truth is grounded in certain core values, including diligence, civility, and honesty.

2 Foster a love of learning.
A commitment to academic integrity is reinforced by high academic standards. Most students will thrive in an atmosphere where academic work is seen as challenging, relevant, useful, and fair.

3 Treat students as ends in themselves.
Faculty members should treat their students as ends in themselves – deserving individual attention and consideration. Students will generally reciprocate by respecting the best values of their teachers, including a commitment to academic integrity.

4 Foster and environment of trust in the classroom.
Most students are mature adults, and value an environment free of arbitrary rules and trivial assignments, where trust is earned, and given.

5 Encourage student responsibilities for academic integrity.
With proper guidance, students can be given significant responsibility to help promote and protect the highest standards of academic integrity. Students want to work in communities where competition is fair, integrity is respected, and cheating is punished. They understand that one of the greatest inducements to engaging in academic dishonesty is the perception that academic dishonesty is rampant.

6 Clarify Expectations for students.
Faculty members have primary responsibility for designing and cultivating the educational environment and experience. They must clarify their expectations in advance regarding honesty in academic work, including the nature and scope of student collaboration. Most students want such guidance, and welcome it in course syllabi, carefully reviewed by their teachers in class.

7 Develop fair and relevant forms of assessment.
Students expect their academic work to be fairly and fully assessed. Faculty members should use—and continuously evaluate and revise – forms of assessment that require active and creative thought, and promote learning opportunities for students.

8 Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty.
Prevention is a critical line of defense against academic dishonesty. Students should not be tempted or induced to engage in acts of academic dishonesty by ambiguous policies, undefined or unrealistic standards for collaboration, inadequate classroom management, or poor examination security.

9 Challenge academic dishonesty when it occurs.
Students observe how faculty members behave, and what values they embrace. Faculty members who ignore or trivialize academic dishonesty send the message that the core values of academic life, and community life in general, are not worth any signigicant effort to enforce.

10. Help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.
Acts of academic dishonesty by individual students can occur across artificial divisions of departments and schools. Although faculty members should be the primary role models for academic integrity, responsibility for defining, promoting, and protecting academic integrity must be a community-wide concern—not only to identify repeat offenders and apply consistent due process procedures but also to affirm the shared values that make colleges and universities true commodities.

Some Good News About Academic Integrity
By Donald McCabe and Gary Pavela

The press frequently reports instances of academic dishonesty in our schools and colleges. The news is usually alarming – like the cover proclamation on the November 22, 1999 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* that "a new epidemic of fraud is sweeping through our schools." Both of us have contributed to such stories, and we certainly don't dispute them.

But what's missing, in our view, is an appropriate emphasis on some surprisingly good news hidden behind such headlines: effective strategies are being increasingly implemented to reduce high rates of cheating, even at large universities. Those strategies – emphasizing student leadership and intensive programming about the importance of academic integrity – suggest that faculty and administrators can influence student behavior and enhance the ethical development of students.

TRADITIONAL VERSUS MODIFIED HONOR CODES

Strong traditional academic honor codes typically include provisions such as unproctored exams, a written pledge that students are asked to sign attesting to the integrity of their work, and a strong (often exclusive) student role in the judicial system that addresses allegations of academic dishonesty. Some traditional codes also include non-toleration provisions that encourage or require students to report any cheating they see among other students. Modified honor codes typically include a strong role for students in the judicial process but generally do not mandate unproctored exams or the use of a pledge, although these can often be used at an instructor's option in selected courses.

THE HONOR CODE TRADITION

We've shown on other occasions that schools with traditional academic honor codes have lower rates of academic dishonesty than schools without such codes. In 1996, Donald McCabe and Linda Trevino talked about this issue in a *Change* article, "What We Know About Cheating in College: Longitudinal Trends ad Recent Developments" (see *Resources*). They concluded that "the climate or culture of academic integrity found on a campus may be the most important determinant of the level of student cheating on that campus." The article suggested that traditional academic honor codes are one effective way to achieve a positive and supportive campus culture regarding academic integrity. Their work, as well as that of Bill Bowers in the 1960s, provides important empirical support for the effectiveness of such codes.

Donald McCabe is a professor of organization management at Rutgers University. Over the past 10 years, he has done extensive research on college cheating, and he is the founding president of the Center for Academic Integrity. Gary Pavela is director of judicial programs and student ethical development at the University of Maryland at College Park, and edits the national quarterly Synthesis: Law and Policy in Higher Education.

For example, in a 1995 study of more than 4,000 students on 31 campuses, McCabe and Trevino reported that 54 percent of the students on honor-code campuses admitted to one or more incidents of serious cheating compared to 71 percent on campuses with no code. The influence of codes was even more evident in the number of students who admitted to repeated instances of serious cheating on tests/exams; while 7 percent of the students at honor-code schools admitted to such cheating, more than twice that number (17 percent) did so at schools without an honor code.

MODIFIED HONOR CODES

With a few notable exceptions, such as the University of Virginia, traditional honor codes are typically found at private school with small to moderate enrollments. Conventional wisdom suggests it is more difficult to develop and nurture a strong sense of campus community at large universities – an important foundation upon which an honor code tradition can be built.

In their *Change* article, however, McCabe and Trevino suggested that the modified honor code approach then being implemented at the University of Maryland at College Park might be a viable alternative for schools that feel a traditional academic honor code would not work on their campus. While the Maryland code lacks such traditional elements as unproctored exams and a non-toleration clause, it mandates a major student role in the judicial system. Perhaps more importantly, it encourages significant student involvement in promoting academic integrity through such strategies as working with faculty to reduce student cheating, serving on judicial panels, and making presentations to their peers about the importance of integrity.

Interest in such approaches has grown significantly in the last five to 10 years, and elements of a modified code approach have been introduced on a number of campuses, including Kansas State University, the University of Tennessee, and the University of Georgia. Also, the University of Minnesota faculty senate recently endorsed a modified code in response to concerns raised by incidents of cheating involving the school's men's basketball team.

THE CENTER FOR ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The Center for Academic Integrity is a consortium of 200 schools joined together in a common effort to help member institutions develop more effective academic integrity programs. The center's activities include:

- An annual conference that provides a forum for schools to showcase successful approaches to enhancing academic integrity;
- Encouraging and supporting research on academic integrity and student cheating;
- Developing "fundamental principles" that define the level of integrity that should be expected of all students in their academic work; and
- Providing guidance to faculty members on strategies to encourage student integrity in their courses.

For more information, contact –
The Center for Academic Integrity
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Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634
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DO MODIFIED CODES WORK?

While we strongly support this movement, until now, much of the data about the success of modified codes has been almost completely anecdotal. That changed this past fall, however, when three large state universities with modified honor codes – Kansas State University, the University of California – Davis, and the University of Maryland at College Park – participated in a survey of academic integrity involving over 2,100 students on 21 campuses. This project, conducted under the auspices of the Center for Academic Integrity and funded by the John Templeton Foundation, included a cross-section of schools – one community college, seven state universities, and 13 private institutions. In addition to the modified codes at Kansas State, UC-Davis, and Maryland, there were nice private institutions with academic honor codes (eight were traditional codes). The remaining nine schools did not employ any form of honor code.

The major finding of this new research was empirical confirmation of a relationship between modified honor codes and lower levels of student cheating, even on large campuses where student cheating is generally higher. While the survey showed cheating on the three large campuses with modified codes was more prevalent than on the smaller traditional-honor-code campuses (as prior research would predict), it was significantly less pronounced than the level found on campuses with no honor code. This result can be seen in the following survey data, which show the number of students who admitted to one or more instances of serious cheating.

A similar pattern was observed in the number of students who admit to more than three incidents of serious test cheating – students who may be labeled "repetitive" test cheaters. At private schools with an honor code, 6 percent of respondents admitted to repetitive cheating, versus the 17 percent at campuses with no code. Once again, students at the large public universities with modified codes reported an intermediate level of cheating – 10 percent in this case.

Of course, we should not lose sight of the fact that they majority of students, even at schools with honor codes, admit they have cheated in college. Perhaps equally disturbing is the ease with which many students are able to justify or rationalize cheating. In particular, they often find a convenient way to place the blame on others – citing other students who cheat, faculty who do a poor job in the classroom, institutional indifference to cheating, and a society that supplies few positive role models when it comes to personal integrity.

Although their systems are far from perfect, honor-code schools differ from their peer institutions in that they actively communicate to students the importance of academic integrity as a core institutional value and the major role of students must play in achieving this institutional goal. But it's important that institutional efforts to address cheating be aimed at the entire campus community, not just students. In the ideal case, all students, faculty, and administrators should feel some responsibility for academic integrity, since it lies at the very core of the academic enterprise.

As suggested earlier, however, many people have been concerned about the ability of large campuses to communicate this message effectively to all members of the campus community. While these new survey data provide empirical support for the effectiveness of modified honor codes, the fact remains that implementing an effective modified code at a large public university – with its many part-time and commuter students – is a difficult challenge. Many students at these institutions can easily remain

	Private Campuses With an Honor Code	Large Public Universities With Modified Codes	Campuses With No Code
Test Cheating	23%	33%	45%
Cheating on written work	45%	50%	56%
Any serious cheating	53%	58%	68%

anonymous, dissociating themselves from other students and resulting peer pressures to adopt the community's standards.

DEVELOPING A MODIFIED HONOR CODE

Perhaps the most important element of a modified honor code is significant student involvement in designing and enforcing campuswide academic integrity policies, and in educating other students about the importance of academic integrity. Such an approach not only communicates to students that they institution is committed to academic integrity, it also encourages students to take responsibility for their own behavior.

Some institutions use honor pledges as part of a modified code – usually in conjunction with related programming in orientation and "first-year" classes – but they are not essential. Penalties tend to be comparatively strict (often including some kind of temporary transcript notation), but have an educational rather than punitive emphasis. Students are assumed to be capable of ethical development, and are engaged in substantive discussions about the importance of trust and honesty in academic life, and in the careers they plan to pursue. Most professors at modified-honor-code schools proctor examinations, and students are encouraged to challenge – but generally are not required to report – offenders.

A sense of how modified honor code systems work (and the educational emphasis associate with them) can be found in the February 15, 2000, *Los Angeles Times* story about the University of California – Davis ("Focus on the Ethics Can Curb Cheating, Colleges Find"):

> Under UC-Davis's modified honor code, the student-run Campus Judicial Board decides the fate of students in the thorniest cheating cases. The board members – and often the students who come before them – also become campus cheerleaders for academic honesty. "The university takes pride in catching people early on and turning them around," said John McCann, an engineering student. "I know because I was one of those cases." McCann was caught two years ago lifting another student's homework… "I knew I made a mistake and I admitted it," he said… "I had to take my punches." McCann, now a graduate student and teaching assistant, has found himself turning in undergraduates for copying each other's homework. "In my classes," McCann said, "I make an announcement: 'You do not cheat…'"

HOW A MODIFIED CODE CAN BE IMPLEMENTED

The beauty of modified honor codes is that they can be implemented at a broad range of colleges and universities. The following suggestions are designed to help those contemplating such an effort.

- **Ask students to explain the nature and extent of campus cheating.** A simple starting point is to listen to students. Create an informal "Academic Integrity Advisory Council" consisting of a diverse group of student leaders. Ask the students to discuss the nature and extent of academic dishonesty on campus. They'll probably be candid, as long as they're not asked to name offenders. Be prepared to hear bad news. Invite key faculty members to participate, and solicit their advice.

- **Give interested students and faculty members a voice in setting campus policy.** Key students leaders and faculty members who are troubled by widespread academic dishonesty will want to take action. The administration and campus governing bodies may then be encouraged to give the Academic Integrity Advisory Council – expanded to include faculty representatives – the authority to review current policies and devise new ones. The experiences of other schools should be studied and considered. A guiding document might be the "Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity" developed by the Center for Academic Integrity (academicintegrity.org).

- **Allow students to play a major role in the resolution of contested cases.** There are many components of effective academic integrity systems (for more information, see the articles by McCabe and Pavela, listed in the *Resources* box on page 37), including clear, consistent definitions of academic dishonesty. An especially important feature of honor codes, however, is the delegation of significant authority to students to resolve contested cases. A grant of such authority produces better decision-making, since students have practical insights into campus like that administrators and faculty members often lack. Student participation also promotes higher standards since students tend to be strict with their peers, especially when they encounter deception or evasion. Properly trained students who help resolve cases see the personal issues involved – including a full range of emotions – from multiple perspectives. Students feel a heightened sense of responsibility for the process, and are better able to explain it to other students in ways likely to have they greatest educational impact.

  Faculty members can also make important contributions on hearing panels (preferably composed mostly of students), especially at schools that do not have a tradition or history of all-student panels. Faculty members' experience and accumulated wisdom help them ask more probing questions, and they can also be less inhibited than student about raising and exploring broader ethical issues and engaging in ethical dialogue. Faculty participation can also be valuable because faculty panel members educate their colleagues about the academic integrity process – including the valuable contributions of students – and can sometimes allay grievances associated with perceived "unfavorable" outcomes.

- **Enforce significant sanctions keyed to an academic integrity seminar.** Students involved in managing academic integrity systems understand that a simple grade penalty for academic dishonesty may not be a sufficient deterrent, especially to individuals already doing poorly in a course. A better approach may be the "XF" grade penalty on their transcript – such as that used by the University of Maryland ad elsewhere – to note "Failure Due to Academic Dishonesty". A transcript notation is a serious sanction. Done in accordance with fair and

established procedures, the notation adheres to due process and other constitutional protections.

However, it is also a good idea to create a process that allows the "XF" notation to be removed for a first offense of an accused student completes an academic integrity seminar. Such a seminar can help students examine the personal and social impact of academic integrity programming. (An academic integrity seminar syllabus used at the University of Maryland can be found at umd.edu/ethics under "integrity seminar.")

▪ **Help student leaders educate their peers.** One of the most important tasks of a student Academic Integrity Advisory Council or honor council is communication with new students before and after they arrive on campus. Students about to come to college are intensely interested in the peer culture they will encounter. A personal letter from a student leader affirming the importance of academic integrity could have lasting impact. Many forms of reiteration should occur thereafter: in orientation, classroom presentations, and course syllabi. Academic integrity policies can also be a bridge to ethical development programming, especially in upper-level courses focusing on professional ethics.

▪ **Develop fair, prompt, and efficient due process procedures.** Due process requires fundamental fairness, not procedural complexity. Faculty participation will be encouraged if individual faculty members are allowed some discretion in resolving less serious first offenses after meeting with the accused student. Proposed sanctions might be reviewed or decided by a hearing panel with majority student participation. Gary Pavela sets forth a detailed proposal along these lines in a model code of academic integrity published in the summer 1997 *Journal of College and University Law*, titled "Applying the Power of Association on Campus: A Model Code of Academic Integrity." (See *Resources*.)

▪ **Give student leaders support and guidance.** While all-student honor committees have seen successful at many schools, some have become a magnet

for litigation. Unchecked autonomy given to the student judicial committee can lead to long delays, convoluted procedures, confused opinions, or inconsistent results. Whether or not the judicial committee consists entirely of students, affirming and protecting academic integrity remain a shared community responsibility, not a burden to be borne by students alone. Students involved in the judicial system should receive appropriate guidance and support (but not interference) from the faculty and campus leadership. As noted earlier, faculty participation on judicial panels makes particularly good sense on a campus implementing any kind of honor system for the first time.

- **Keep faculty members and senior administrators informed.** Faculty members and key administrators tens to form distorted impressions of campus academic integrity systems, usually based on single incidents told by dissatisfied participants. Both need regular information with hard data (such as a yearly summary report) about the overall effectiveness of academic integrity policies, especially the likely educational impact of a modified honor code. Generally, a positive response will be engendered if deficiencies (including any pattern of delays in case resolution) are reported honestly and help is sought.

- **Encourage presidential leadership.** What presidents choose to emphasize becomes a campuswide focus, often carried over into classrooms and institutional publications. One of the best ways for student leaders to interest a president in academic integrity policies is to meet and discuss them with the president. The potential role for a student Academic Integrity Advisory Council or honor committee is as important as educating other students or the faculty.

- **Evaluate and benchmark.** Modified honor codes require significant investments in student energy, faculty time, and administrative resources. They may fail if participants don't see tangible results, influenced by good ideas and practices developed elsewhere. Careful evaluation and benchmarking are essential components of modern management and are especially important when new ideas are tested in the cautious, contentious environment of American higher education. To assist schools interested in assessing the state of academic integrity on their campuses, the Center for Academic Integrity has been engaged in a multi-year project to develop meaningful academic integrity assessment materials. The current status of this project is described in "Assessing Academic Integrity on Your Campus," on pp. 37.

CONCLUSION

Academic integrity at our schools and colleges is a matter of intense public concern. The current generation of students faces the danger of being portrayed as moral slackers, habituated to cheating. However, our research and experience tell a different story. A substantial majority of students will support stricter penalties for academic dishonesty. What students need is creative and courageous leadership, grounded in the belief that students – with proper guidance – should play a vital role in designing and enforcing standards of academic integrity.

The research data discussed above; the experience of the University of California – Davis and the University of Maryland at College Park, among others; the recent adoption of modified honor codes by the Universities of Tennessee and Georgia; the

adoption of more traditional honor systems by Georgetown University, George Washington University, and others within the last decade – all suggest students are ready for such change. We encourage faculty and campus leaders to seize this opportunity to join with their student leadership in reevaluating and revitalizing existing campus policies on academic integrity.

Author's Note: For campuses wishing to learn more about implementing an academic honor code, The National Conference on Ethics in American held annually at West Point, the annual conference of the Center for Academic Integrity, and the experience of other campuses (*including those Web sites are highlighted in the* Resources *box*) can all serve as an important first step.

RESOURCES

RESEARCH

Significant research has been conducted on this issue of academic integrity among college students over the last decade, building on the seminal work of Bill Bowers. Those interested in this research might wish to consult the following.

- Bowers, W.J. *Student Dishonesty and Its Control in College*, New York: Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, 1964.
- McCabe, D.L., and L.K. Trevino. "What We Know About Cheating in College: Longitudinal Trends and Recent Developments," *Change*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1996, pp. 28-33.
- McCabe, D.L., L.K. Trevino, and K.D. Butterfield. "Academic Integrity in Honor Code and Non-Honor Code Environments: A Qualitative Investigation," *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 70, No. 2, 1999, pp. 211-234.
- Pavela, Gary. "Applying the Power of Association on Campus: A Model Code of Academic Integrity," *Journal of College and University Law*, Vol. 24, No. 1997, pp. 97-118.
- Pavela, G.R., and D.L. McCabe. "The Surprising Return of Honor Codes," *Planning for Higher Education*, Vol. 21, No. 4. 1993, pp. 27-32.

HONOR CODES

A number of schools maintain full descriptions of their honor codes on their Web sites. Interested readers may wish to consult one of the following:

- University of California-Davis at sja.ucdavis.edu/SJA/ACOC.html
- University of Maryland at College Park at umd.edu/jpo under the heading of "office branches"
- University of Virginia at student.Virginia.edu/~honor

SEMINAR INFORMATION

Information about the academic integrity seminar used at the University of Maryland at College Park may be found at umd.edu/ethics/ under the heading "integrity seminar."

Plagiarism and the Challenges of Essay Writing:
Learning from our Students

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Most of us have encountered plagiarized essays at some time in our teaching careers, and we may assume that dishonesty leads students to do this. In one common form of plagiarized essay, the student has done the research, written most of the essay, but leaves out crucial quotation marks or footnotes. In contrast to other forms of academic dishonesty, such as a purchased essay or submission of someone else's work, this type of plagiarism always strikes me as especially curious. Invariably, I can discern some measure of intelligence in students' selection of the unacknowledged facts or ideas they copied. Why would they fail to acknowledge their extensive research after they had done so much work gathering together relevant material? Rather than thinking of these students as simply dishonest and deserving of punishment, we need to try to understand what leads students to do this and how we can help transform them into competent and confident essay writers who do not need to resort to such ruses to succeed in University.

To understand this problem, I believe we should start by listening to our students and learning from them. By taking their perspective into account, we can significantly improve our ability to teach our students the basic mechanical skills of proper referencing and improve their essay-writing skills in the process. Drawing on my experience over the years and interviews with a number of students who have been charged with plariarism, I have identified four common factors that faculty can address: sloppy research methods; reliance on inappropriate reference guides; misunderstanding of the logic and rules of referecing; and weak essay-writing skills.

Research Methods:

I routinely ask students about whom I have suspicions to bring all their research notes to my office so we can discuss the entire essay-production process. Sometimes I discover that the student has collected Xeroxes or taken copious notes from library sources, with absolutely no reliable way of tracing the source or page number. I think of these students as enthusiastic vacuums who suck up all the relevant material they can find, without understanding the need for retrieval and verification of sources. Many have admitted to me that they realized the information for proper citations was missing while typing the final draft, but at 3:00 a.m. before the deadline date, they simply decided it was not worth it to track down the sources. These students understand the logic and mechanics of referencing, but decide to leave the citations out, hoping that no one will notice. Careless students are easy to identify (from a quick glance at their research notes) and easy to help. I show them how to collect the relevant bibliographic information when they are searching for sources on the library's on-line catalogue, and they can even use this from home at 3:00 a.m. if they have a computer and a modem. I offer them a one-page handout they can take to the library to guide them in collecting the proper information. Using a

sample of my own research notes, I demonstrate that good research notes can be used years later if they distinguish quotations from paraphrases and record page numbers and full bibliographic information. Finally, I require them to undertake the tedious task of tracking down their sources and re-doing the assignment. If the timing is right, I will also make a note to myself to ask to see their research notes while the next essay is in progress, just to make sure they have mastered the habit.

Choice of Reference Guides:

Another common problem is students' reliance on inappropriate sources for instruction on how to reference. Almost half of the students I interviewed acknowledged that they knew they were probably not doing it right, but instead of consulting their tutor, the required reference text in the course, or the course handouts, they turned to unsuitable sources for help: friends, parents, or old handouts from high school. In these cases, the advice they got or remembered was often misleading.

Recommending that students buy a reliable, university-level reference guide is crucial, but it is also important to ensure that the students know how to use it. When I first required my students to buy the MLA Handbook, I discovered many had no idea how to use it. Several students took the textbook approach – starting on page one, hoping as they read to find the answer they were looking for. This is like reading a dictionary from page one, hoping eventually to encounter the word you want to spell. Without understanding the concept of the reference source, I was not surprised these students gave up on the MLA Handbook. Now, I require them to bring it to class and I explain how to use the index, how the different sections work, and highlight the most useful sections so they can readily find what they need.

Understanding the Rules:

Students charged with plagiarism often claim they misunderstand the rules for proper referencing. The most common reason I have encountered is students' belief that certain types of sources are somehow "exempt" despite explicit instruction to the contrary. The range of such exemptions varies according to the student. Some believe that course texts, government documents or readings from other courses do not require referencing. Some students claim they are only required to reference limited types of sources: direct quotations but not paraphrases; statistical facts but not other people's reference the ideas used in the body of the essay. Several worry they will have "too many" footnotes, so they arbitrarily include some but leave others out. Each of these mistaken notions of "exempt" sources reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the logic of proper referencing.

I have trouble finding these explanations credible, because I always cover these issues explicitly in course handouts and lectures. Nonetheless, despite the abundance of material available for students to learn proper referencing, a significant minority of students seems to resist learning. When asked many acknowledge that they ignore the lectures and handouts because they believe they already know how to do this. An astonishing number

of students lack the competence to reference, but nonetheless feel confident they know how to do it.

Conducting classroom research to assess my students' prior knowledge and ability to reference, I discovered shocking results in two of my second year classes (350 students). When I administered a short, unmarked assignment, only 10 to 15 percent actually had a satisfactory working knowledge of skills I considered necessary for this level. In contrast to teaching new material, where students may listen more closely precisely because they know they know so little, when we teach familiar material, we must find ways to encourage them to assess the adequacy of their proper knowledge critically.

One solution is to integrate key components of proper referencing skills into a course assignment, letting students know they will lose grades if they do not properly master these skills. When you deduct grades for problems in referencing, you can allow students to do an error analysis and correct their mistakes to recover the lost grades. This way, you can be satisfied that even the students who did not get it right the first time actually learn the proper method by correcting their own errors. The chance to reduce the grade penalty offers an added incentive to learn. Lecturing on this topic may never be enough. Some students may require the additional impetus that comes from one-to-one instruction or written assignments.

In sum, as these problems arouse in my interviews with students, I learned to alter the way I teach. First, I emphasize that no "category" or source is exempt from referencing: books, quotations, statistics, paraphrases, government documents, speeches, and course texts all must be cited. Second, I encourage them to line up an appropriate authority to consult when in doubt; the tutor; the handout; the reference book in the course; or the appropriate writing center. Fourth, and perhaps most important, I continue to emphasize the connection between referencing and essay writing skills in general.

Essay-Writing Skills

The difficulty some students have in mastering the technical skills of proper referencing is often rooted in weak essay-writing skills. Students who lack confidence (or who have poor essay writing skills) may find the expectations of proper referencing daunting when applied to their writing process. They experience a credibility gap, finding it hard to believe you expect them to acknowledge every source – that would mean everything in their paper would be referenced. This attitude is premised on a profound lack of self-confidence and bewilderment as to how to develop their own ideas in an essay. Many of the students I spoke with were distressed when I pointed out that they had to acknowledge their source. A common puzzled response is: "But then my entire essay would be all quotations or paraphrases? Nothing comes from me." These students are very frustrated because they know on the one hand, they must do research, but on the other hand, they have been asked to develop a thesis and an argument. They are often capable of the former but terrified and bewildered at the prospects of doing the latter. I am convinced that many students, lacking the confidence and the skills to develop their

own analysis or argument, deliberately retreat to plagiarism in the desperate and naïve belief that other people's ideas will be mistaken for their own argument.

An example illustrates this point. In one-fourth year class, students prepared research papers on a current federal policy of their choice. The essay question asked them to evaluate the policy in light of different theoretical issues we had studied in the course. One student's essay thoroughly and competently surveyed the literature on pornography policy, but lacked adequate reference. The paper was further flawed, because it displayed a total absence of argument throughout. The student had simply failed to assess the evidence or make judgments as to the relative significance of the material she had collected. When I called her into my office, we discussed the problems of referencing briefly. She lamented "How can I reference everything, the whole essay comes from sources?" I agreed that this is how the essay appeared to me, and changed my tack. I explained the absence of her argument and judgment of the evidence was striking. After all, people had blown up video stores over the issue! I spent the rest of the hour pressing her research skills, for she had collected relevant and crucial material. Paragraph by paragraph, I encouraged her to explain the implications of this evidence for the essay question. I was not surprised, given her research, that it took little effort on my part for her to start making the judgments that led her to develop a cogent thesis. At this point she broke into tears, and lamented that no one in University had asked her to think and develop her own argument. Since no one had cared what she thought about the topics in her essays, she had lost interest in writing essays. Essays had become boring exercises in expressing other people's ideas. This was the last essay she would write, and she cried because she felt she had missed out on a whole dimension of learning. She said she longed to go back and re-write all those "B" essays, with her new understanding of how to relate her arguments and ideas to the research material. By taking about her own ideas, she quickly learned the importance of maintaining the distinction between other people's ideas and her own.

What can we learn from this student? I don't think she was at all unusual except in the frankness with which she disclosed her feelings. It is our job to help students through this difficult transition from repeating other people's ideas to developing their own, and I think we should expect the bulk of this transition to occur in the first and second years of University. When we insist that our students openly declare their use of sources, it becomes glaringly apparent that it is now their turn to say something. I am convinced that far from being a technical or mechanical issue, teaching proper referencing is intimately bound up with teaching studnets about thinking and developing their own ideas, arguments and judgments. Once students have clearly set out another person's ideas, they can then ask: So what? Why is this significant? How does this help answer the question? In short, teaching proper referencing can be yet another means to challenge and encourage students to think for themselves. If we keep this goal in sight, spending time teaching our students how to reference properly can be rewarding and worthwhile.