Academic Integrity in Higher Education

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The literature in this area appears to fall into three categories: research, literature review, and opinion/news articles. In his book “Cheating on Tests: How to Do It, Detect It, and Prevent It,” Cizek (1999) presents data that suggest an increase in student academic dishonesty over the past several decades. More recent studies, however, have suggested that while some forms of cheating have increased, other forms have declined (Vandehey, Diekhoff, LaBeff, 2007). The following points summarize the current themes found in the literature on academic integrity as indexed by student cheating.

**What is cheating? How does cheating in online courses differ from cheating in face-to-face courses?**

* Surveys indicate that students found the following behaviors to be acceptable: using an open book, relying on print reference sources, and using class notes during an online test. The behaviors that were viewed as clearly inappropriate involved relying on another student to complete exam questions (King, Guyette, & Piotrowski, 2009).
* Academic dishonesty is not more frequent in online classes but differs from behavior in face-to-face courses. Students in online courses are more likely to receive answers from someone during a test (Watson & Sottile, 2010).
* Academic dishonesty can fall into two categories: planned cheating and panic cheating (Baron & Crooks, 2004).
* Many students misunderstand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Only 58% of students identified obtaining information about an exam from someone previously enrolled when prohibited by the instructor to do so as cheating (“Cheating: Friends,” 2005).
* Case studies show that cheating can involve obtaining past copies of exam questions and finding the test bank online (Kitahara & Westfall, 2007).
* Faculty members perceive the following as the most serious cheating violations: sabotaging someone else’s work , forging a university document, stealing a test, using crib sheets, obtaining answers from someone else during an exam and using a term paper or exam from a fraternity or sorority test file. Lesser violations include studying from someone else’s notes, failing to report a grading error, not contributing a fair share to a group project, delaying taking an exam due to false excuse, and utilizing a tutor or writing center inappropriately (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003).
* Plagiarism includes using group work and claiming it to be one’s own, submitting coursework written by someone else, using one’s own piece for multiple courses, copying another student’s work and submitting as one’s own, use of online paper mills, and copying text without proper citation (Kenny, 2007).
* More students report having been involved in conventional cheating than digital cheating. Copying of homework is three times more likely to occur in person rather than digitally though digital “cheat sheets” are more frequently used than handwritten “cheat sheets.” The majority of students who cheat using digital methods also cheat using conventional methods. Student’s beliefs about the seriousness of cheating are a strong negative predictor of cheating behavior (Stephens, Young, & Calabrese, 2007).
* Self-interest cheating occurs when the person doing the cheating benefits while social-interest cheating occurs when a student cheats to assist a fellow student. Students are much more likely to cheat with a friend rather than an acquaintance (Chapman, Davis, Toy, & Wright, 2004).

**Why do students cheat? What are the demographics/characteristics of those who cheat versus those who do not cheat?**

* Students who are more likely to cheat are those who perceive that their instructor is less concerned about them and those who are physically father away from the classroom. Students in face-to-face classes are more likely to cheat than those in online classes (Stuber-McEwen, Winseley, & Hoggatt, 2009).
* Students who cheated in high school are more likely to cheat while non-traditional students are less likely to cheat (Stuber-McEwen, Winseley, & Hoggatt, 2009).
* Above-average college bound students are most likely to cheat in high school. Fraternity and sorority members, younger students, and those with lower or very high GPAs are more likely to cheat (“Cheating is a personal foul,” 1999).
* Students who are less mature, more involved in nonacademic activities (excluding employment), are more likely to cheat. Fear of embarrassment is the strongest deterrent for both cheaters and non-cheaters followed by fear of being dropped from the course while non-cheaters ranked guilt as a strong deterrent (Diekhoff, LaBeff, Clark, Williams, Francis, & Haines, 1996).
* Perceptions of peer behavior has the most influence on cheating frequency –when students perceive high levels of cheating by their peers, they are more likely to cheat themselves (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002).
* Students with larger credit loads and taking classes taught by GTAs were more likely to cheat while students whose teachers verbally warned them before exams that cheating was prohibited were less likely to cheat. Students whose instructors used multiple test versions and more proctors were less likely to cheat. Students with higher GPAs were less likely to cheat while students who are further along in their academic careers are slightly more likely to cheat (Kerkvliet, 1999).
* Students at honor code institutions are less likely to cheat (McCabe & Trevino, 1993).
* Those who reported plagiarizing often were more likely to be frequent Internet users yet those who used the Internet to look for information in relation to academic assignments were less likely to copy whole assignments from the Internet than those who used the Internet for playing online games, shopping, emailing, and participating in online courses. Online plagiarism was found to be as prevalent as offline plagiarism (Selwyn, 2008).
* Students who score high on measures of psychopathy and low on measures of conscientiousness and agreeableness are more likely to commit acts of academic dishonesty. Those with low verbal ability were more likely to plagiarize. Students cheat because of two motivations: unrestrained achievement and moral inhibitions (Williams, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2010).
* There is a negative relationship between conscientiousness and agreeableness and Internet triggered academic dishonesty (Karim, Zamzuri, & Nor, 2009).
* Students scoring high on measures of narcissism and exhibitionism are more likely to self-report academic dishonesty. Those who display greater exhibitionism report lower levels of guilt associated with cheating (Brunell, Staats, Barden, & Hupp, 2011).
* A survey of business students from 36 countries indicates that males are more likely to cheat and are more tolerant of cheating and unethical behavior, students from countries that are perceived as being corrupt are more likely to cheat than those who do not, and morality does play a role in the decision to cheat (Crittenden, Hanna & Peterson, 2009).
* Male accounting majors were more likely to admit to cheating, but female students were more likely to justify cheating. The researchers suggest that age is not a strong indicator of cheating behavior, but class standing is, indicating that as students mature they are less likely to cheat. Students who had cheated in the past were more likely to respond that they would cheat again in the future (Smith, Davy, Rosenberg, & Haight, 2002).

**How can faculty/institutions minimize cheating?**

* Technologically based countermeasures include supervised finals, personalized assignments, practical application exams, required interactive with instructor via email (Kennedy, Nowak, Raghuraman, Thomas, & Davis, 2000)
* Defining cheating and encouraging honesty through policy statement, know the test takers, informal discussion, maintain assessment security, proctor tests, control the test situation, do not make overly difficult or easy tests, vary test formats, use entrapment (Rowe, 2004)
* Studies show that receiving a tutorial on the methods of plagiarism and alternatives reduces plagiarism (“I didn’t know,” 2010).
* Define objectives and inappropriate behavior in the syllabus, present information well and emphasize what is important, communicate with students often, vary the type of assessment and use questions that cannot be easily researched, use time limits on tests, use a Webcam during assessments, use statistics for tracking activity, create a student to monitor any communication among students (Christe, 2003)
* Most faculty members are reluctant to pursue cheaters due to the time consuming process. Reframing a cultural change at the institution including vocal support from the president, implementation of integrity code, commitment from faculty members in the form of explaining guidelines to students, student involvement from the outset, and greater support from faculty when putting a case together against an alleged cheater (Alschuler & Blimling, 1995).
* Familiarize yourself with students’ writing ability by having them write a paper early in the semester, make students turn in papers in stages, interview students regarding their paper, keep copies of past papers, read all papers on same topic together, assign a style format requirement for references to the class, require use of a webcam, deliver questions orally through online chat, interview students regarding test, have different versions of the test, require students to turn in tests to you personally (“Beating Cheating,” 1999)
* Create quality assessment items, detect cheating through technology and manual systems, personal vigilance, exam supervision (Dick, Sheard, Bareiss, Carter, Joyce, Harding, & Laxer, 2002)
* Define what plagiarism is and isn’t, guide the research paper process –don’t let students get into a time crunch, focus on the process of writing (have sections due at different times, have conferences with students, etc.), have students turn in any or all of the following: a thesis statement, written proposal, working bibliography, rough draft, outlines, copies of cited references, have students reflect personally on the topic they are writing, make sure students know you read the papers that are turned in, tie the topics into class experience (Fain & Bates, 2009)
* Use of webcams, lock down the browser so computer resources cannot be used, look out for suspicious text such as unusual margins or inconsistent quotations marks, use of antiplagiarism software (Krsak, 2007)
* Implement academic integrity policies, interaction with students to gauge writing style, modify assignments such as requiring submission of outlines and rough drafts, and curriculum rotation (Baron & Crooks, 2004)
* Use of Secureexam Remote Proctor that connects to USB port of the student’s computer and includes a fingerprint detecting device, webcam, and software that prohibits access to unauthorized material online (Kitahara & Westfall, 2007)
* Use randomized question pools, tracking the time and number of attempts each student makes for an online assessment, take the time to develop quality assessments, assign original assignments and readings instead of reusing curriculum from previous years, and provide students with an academic integrity/academic dishonesty policy (Olt, 2002)
* Studies shows a 12% reduction in cheating when the instructor announces verbally that honesty is enforced by the university or the instructor uses an additional proctor. An additional test version reduces the probability of cheating by 25% and faculty teaching a class instead of GTAs reduces the probability by 32% (Kerkvliet & Sigmund, 1999).
* Use scrambled test forms, small classes, numerous proctors, different make-up exams, distinct test forms (“Cheating prevention,” 2010)
* Proctor the tests through regional campuses or professional testing companies, open book tests with time limitations, make paper topics current and specific, require that all discussions take place in recorded sessions, require that all steps of an assignment be turned in, use of case books, use of plagiarism detection sites, continual interaction, and problem-based learning (Kasprzak & Nixon, 2004)
* Plagiarism can be combated through raising awareness and updating policies on academic honesty to include definitions of cyber-plagiarism. The use of plagiarism detection software is discouraged because it creates an element of mutual distrust and does not emphasize why plagiarism is bad or encourage faculty engagement with the ethical issues involved (Scanlon, 2003).
* Discuss the academic honesty policy, design written assignments with specific goals and instructions, encourage higher order thinking, know what is online before assigning a paper, give students enough time to complete the assignment, require oral presentations of papers, and have students submit essays electronically (McMurty, 2001)
* Disseminating information to distant students (notify students that cheating will not be tolerated, provide link to student honor code document, inform them of professor’s qualifications, post learning objectives, reduce pressure to get good grades)
* Change process used by students to turn in written assignments (require submission to plagiarism recognition software)
* Change the process by which exams are administered (select tightest time frame possible, show one question at a time, no backtracking, randomize questions, create large number of exams, set low point value for each exam, allow multiple attempts)
* Create a nonsequential chapter assortment of questions

(Chiesl, 2007)

* Require integrity training for students, reinforcement by faculty at the course level (clear statements regarding academic integrity in syllabus), faculty as role models, decreasing opportunities for cheating (proctoring, random seating, alternate test forms), and honor pledges (Scanlan, 2006).
* The authors present ways to prevent academic dishonesty such as: personality assessments of incoming students to determine their attitudes toward cheating and dishonesty, a campus wide academic integrity week, a written policy of prohibited behaviors, teaching of ethical v. unethical behavior, and asking students to sign a contract stating that they will not cheat and that they are aware of the rules and penalties of cheating. They also cite professors acting as role models (properly citing their sources in any work presented in class, showing concern for students, and honest communication with students.

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