

4-1-2010

Academic Integrity Office: A Proposal

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Recommended Citation

Stewart, Brian and Faires, Charles (2010) "Academic Integrity Office: A Proposal," *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*: Vol. 8 : Iss. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/alj/vol8/iss2/4>

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Academic Leadership Journal

In higher education, the topic of plagiarism and the issues surrounding this topic are ever present. However, the larger umbrella issue of academic integrity, of which plagiarism is encompassed, is not present. To formally address the larger umbrella issue, the School of Education (SOE) at a private non-profit University, located in the Southeastern United States, proposed the creation of an Academic Integrity Office. This paper provides background information related to academic integrity gathered from the SOE, a review of literature, summarized data collected from faculty members of the SOE, and a proposal. Sections of this paper are based upon a study conducted by Stewart in 2008.

Background Information

In 2002 a former adjunct program professor for the SOE, in a document written for the use of doctoral program faculty, wrote:

People admitted to the EDL program are primarily practitioners; they do not normally work in academic settings. It is possible that until the present time they have not had much of the exposure to the concept of plagiarism that academic people have had. Thus, EDL faculty should take each opportunity possible to provide instruction on the concept of plagiarism, and to help students understand precisely what are their responsibilities in footnoting or citing other people's works when they prepare their own papers and reports. (Achilles, p. 1)

Program faculty formally addressed and identified the issue of plagiarism, in a doctoral program at the SOE, in year 2002. This document is no longer disseminated to the SOE students, faculty, or administrators. The document is merely archived on an obsolete version of the program's website.

In 2004, the SOE, in conjunction with an educational media company, produced an interactive educational module addressing the subject of academic integrity. The module contains two hours of streaming video. Along with the video content, the module was designed to contain lecture notes, an evaluation module, the ability for students to be interactive with speakers, and a tracking device to determine how many students accessed the module. Currently, only the streaming video content is available for student use. As well, no system was implemented to determine the effectiveness of the module and no formal process is in place to implement the module on a school wide basis.

During the 2003-2004 school year, the SOE developed an onsite orientation session for all new doctoral students. The first Doctoral Student Orientation (DSO) session was held in 2004. According to the agenda, posted on the DSO website, the subject of academic integrity was not addressed. The interactive educational module created to address academic integrity is not referenced.

The SOE catalog contains policies and guidelines related to plagiarism and student academic responsibility. Although these guidelines and policies are formally written in the catalog, school officials can not determine the number of students that read, review, or make any attempt to comprehend the policies and guidelines. The SOE catalog does not contain information related to a school honor code. A search of the phrase "honor code" on the University website revealed results only related to the

University's law school and library. The lack of an honor code at the SOE might indicate students are not part of, or actively engaged in, the dissemination of an academic integrity policy, guide, or program.

The minutes of the various curriculum committee meetings of the SOE note numerous concerns related to plagiarism. However, no minutes directly relate to the larger umbrella issue of academic integrity. The School Wide Curriculum Committee addressed the issue of plagiarism during June, September, and December of 2008 and during March 2009. During these meetings, the committee's conversations addressed the number of instances of student plagiarism, student attitudes toward plagiarism, conducting a faculty survey to reveal the number of instances of student plagiarism, faculty and adjunct faculty training, faculty support, the provision of a plagiarism educational tool, and the need to include senior administration in the discussion.

The Doctoral Curriculum Committee addressed plagiarism during their meeting in November 2008. The discussion revolved around the use of a plagiarism detection tool and the number of instances per month being reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. One professor reported dealing with plagiarism issues at least two to three times per semester.

During the October 2009 meeting of the Undergraduate Teacher Education Program Curriculum Committee, a plagiarism proposal was approved with the recommendation for modifications. It was also noted that not all students in a remote location have Internet access. The MS and EdS Curriculum Committee addressed the issue of plagiarism eight times during years 2008 and 2009. The major theme of all meetings addressed the usage of a plagiarism detection tool and the possible use of an educational tutorial to reduce instances of plagiarism.

The above reveals the SOE identified a need to instruct, actively engage students, in the concept of and their responsibility related to, academic integrity. As well, the SOE indicated the need for policy directly related to academic integrity.

Review of Literature

Bushway and Nash (as cited in *Academic Dishonesty*, 2004), pointed out that academic dishonesty could be dated back to the first tests and that scholars recorded incidents of cheating on Chinese civil service exams thousands of years ago. Thus, it might be assumed that the study of academic dishonesty started roughly around the same time if not earlier. According to Lambert, Barton, and Hogan (2003), H. C. Brownell, in 1928, documented academic dishonesty in an article in *School and Society*. More recently, McCabe (2007), founder of the Center for Academic Integrity at Clemson University, has extensively studied academic dishonesty for over 18 years, first publishing findings in 1992.

According to undergraduate, nondiscipline-specific studies conducted by Bowers (as cited in McCabe & Trevino, 1996), cheating among students in higher education is not only prevalent, but also increasing. In 1963, Bowers conducted a study involving more than 5,000 students on 99 college and university campuses. In 1991, McCabe and Trevino conducted a similar study involving 6,000 students on 31 college and university campuses. Despite a 30-year difference between the studies, the results were similar. The Bowers' study revealed that 3 of 4 students had committed at least 1 of 13 behaviors related to cheating. The later McCabe and Trevino study revealed that 2 of 3 students had committed at least 1 of 14 behaviors related to cheating.

In a study cited by Risacher and Slonaker (1996), 37% of 1st-year college students reported cheating on high school exams, and 57% reported plagiarizing another student's work. In a different study, 78 students, or one third of an undergraduate anthropology course, reported cheating and 45% reported that they had cheated in one or to two courses. The studies cited by Risacher and Slonaker were not based on an academic honor code being a factor in cheating.

Lambert et al. (2003) cited a single study indicating that over two thirds of students reported cheating. In addition, Lambert et al., when comparing numerous studies, reported that an estimated 50-60% of students cheated and that "in a meta-analysis, the mean prevalence of cheating was 70%" (p. 13).

In a comparative cross-national study of academic dishonesty among business students, with 443 surveys collected from American students, 55.4% of American students reported cheating at some point while in college, with 2.9% cheating in their current enrolled course (Lupton et al., 2000). Seventy-seven percent of those American students surveyed knew a student who had cheated on an exam and 6.3% knew a student who had cheated on an exam in a course in which they were currently enrolled. The most prevalent act of academic dishonesty among American students was using past exam answers to study for a current exam, with 88.7% reporting having exhibited this behavior. The second most prevalent act of academic dishonesty for the American students, with 77.5% reporting, was the sharing of articles (i.e., not doing one's own research) for research purposes.

LeClercq (1999) found that of 152 law schools surveyed, 120, or 79%, simply provide a notice of plagiarism in a general program bulletin. Likewise, it was found that only 86 of these schools provided a policy with a definition of plagiarism, 42 provided a policy with no definition, and 15 provided neither. LeClercq pointed out the following:

Law schools do not explicitly teach their students what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. Instead, most schools simply offer up a blanket prohibition buried in an honor code distributed on, and forgotten after, the first day of class. (p. 236)

The SOE and the University referenced in this paper provides both a policy and a definition regarding plagiarism.

In a study of schools and colleges of pharmacy, 51 of 57 schools surveyed reported incidences of academic dishonesty (Vines, 1996). When surveying 1st-year graduate social-work students, it was found that 18 of 45 (40%) exhibited a behavior of academic dishonesty on at least 1 of 3 examinations (Zastrow, 1970). Harding, Carpenter, Montgomery, and Steneck (2001) reported, in a study conducted in 1992, that 74% of engineering students practiced some sort of academic dishonesty while in college. In another study, Bailey (2001) found that 197 nursing school administrators and 160 nursing school faculty reported that plagiarism and cheating were the most common forms of academic dishonesty, representing 83% of described academic dishonesty incidences.

Most research has been centered on either undergraduate students, almost always combining academic majors and disciplines, or a single academic discipline (Wajda-Johnston et al., 2001). Wajda-Johnston (2001) conducted a study that centered on gaining feedback from administrators, faculty, and graduate students at a private Midwestern university. Wajda-Johnston received 345 completed surveys from administrators, faculty, and students. When asked if they had cheated in

graduate school, 28.7% of students reported that they had. Of those who responded affirmatively, the majority did so in their first year of study, with reported cheating declining with more years of graduate study. When faculty and students were asked to determine the severity rating of 40 items containing examples of academic dishonesty, all items were rated with some level of severity. In addition, 14 of the items revealed statistically significant differences between faculty and students but were not necessarily meaningful. A significant difference was also revealed among faculty and students when asked to estimate the percentage of students engaged in academically dishonest behaviors. Although both faculty and students perceived the occurrence of cheating to be low, it should be noted that neither faculty nor student populations reported no perceived percentage of cheating.

When asked to rate the strength of justifications for cheating, faculty and students agreed on the strength of all but two justifications. Statistical analysis of the two nonagreed-upon justifications determined a significant difference between faculty and students and their responses. The two items of significant difference pertained to (a) students cheating because of the need to get a good job or to enter graduate school and (b) students cheating because of panic, pressure, and stress. When responding to ideal and real responses to academic dishonesty, both faculty and students agreed that ideally a cheater should be immediately confronted. Realistically, faculty responded that the cheater should be confronted, and students responded that they would warn a university official about the cheating (Wajda-Johnston, 2001).

Institutions of higher education have started to review their policies and procedures related to academic dishonesty and to implement changes to curb cheating. Since 1991, Duke University, George Washington University, and the Harvard Business School have adopted academic honor codes. Honor codes, adopted by colleges and universities, must include at least one of the following elements: (a) a written contract that affirms the student's work is his own, (b) students constituting a majority of the panel that oversees the hearing process for alleged cheating, (c) unproctored examinations, and (d) the mandated reporting of cheating by students (McCabe et al., 2001).

The honor code system is normally found at private schools because it is more difficult to develop a sense of community at larger public universities. The honor code system communicates to the student that the institution values academic honesty and that students must take an active part in preserving this value through their own leadership. In a 1995 study of more than 4,000 students on 31 college and university campuses, McCabe and Trevino (1996) found that 54% of students who attended an institution with a honor code system admitted to one or more actions of serious cheating, as compared to 71% of students who attended an institution without a honor code system (McCabe & Pavela, 2000).

During 2003, the University of California, San Diego (USCD), conducted a pilot study of a tutorial used to educate students about plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Findings of the study concluded that it was appropriate for the institution to implement the tutorial for all incoming students and that over time the institution would be able to further examine their objective of reducing acts of academic dishonesty (Fricker, Armstrong, & Carty, 2003). In 2006, USCD launched an academic integrity initiative and created the Academic Integrity Office (AIO). The AIO is responsible for providing support and training to faculty, the provision of an academic integrity tutorial for students, the investigation of academic misconduct allegations, and provides expertise and assistance in the development of policies, regulations, and procedures, related to academic integrity (University of California, San Diego, 2007-08).

During the 2007-2008 school year, allegations of academic misconduct increased by 23.1% (103) from the previous year (343) with 87% of allegations being pursued by the instructor with the assistance of the AIO. During the same year, the AIO reduced the time it took to resolve allegations by 10 business days (down from 23 days to 12) with 69% of students accepting responsibility for the allegation and 80% of students being held accountable for the allegation by the AIO. The AIO provided workshops and presentations to over 900 USCD community members and has been able to bridge the gap between the offices of academic affairs, student affairs, and the academic senate (University of California, San Diego, 2007-08).

As described in a 2010 working paper for the National Bureau of Economic Research, Dee and Jacob found that students who were assigned to an antiplagiarism tutorial were at a significant lesser risk (two-thirds less) of committing plagiarism than students not assigned. Dee and Jacob collected 1,200 papers of which half of the students were assigned to the antiplagiarism tutorial before submission of their papers. A post survey suggested that students were at a lesser risk of committing plagiarism because of knowledge obtained from participating in an educational undertaking (the tutorial) rather than the negative consequences of detection (Dee & Jacob, 2010).

Dee and Jacob, from the findings, relate that students have a poor understanding of what plagiarism is and may also have little incentive to learn about plagiarism as professors and educators may feel it is outside of their job duties. However, Dee and Jacob suggest that interventions, derived from an educational vantage, can be a meaningful tool in addressing academic integrity for both students and faculty; "Our results indicate that an easily replicable, scalable, and virtually costless educational intervention can be highly effective at reducing the prevalence of student plagiarism" (p. 3).

School of Education Faculty Data Collected

Over a period of 26 days, starting September 5, 2007, e-mails were sent to 677 faculty members (including adjunct) of the School of Education (SOE) inviting participation in an online survey regarding the topic of academic dishonesty (Stewart, 2008). Of the 677 faculty invitations sent, 252 (37.2%) faculty members initiated the online survey with 156 (23%) faculty members completing the survey (Stewart, 2008).

A further modified version of LaGrange and Appleby's (1989) cheating and academic dishonesty survey, as modified and used by Wajda-Johnston (2001), was utilized as the data-collection instrument. The Tailored Design Method was utilized to convert the paper instrument to an electronic instrument for administration via the Web (Dillman, 2007). Results of the Wajda-Johnston survey have been published in the journal *Ethics and Behavior*.

Faculty members were asked to indicate the percentage of students they believe to be engaged in 22 academically dishonest behaviors. Of the 22 items (academically dishonest behaviors) only 4 items gained a majority response from faculty members indicating 0% of students engaging in those behaviors. Those 4 items (academically dishonest behaviors) are "making up or faking data results for a dissertation," "making up or faking data results for a thesis," "offering money to an instructor for a good or better grade," and "exchanging sexual favors for a good or better grade."

Faculty members were asked to rate the degree of dishonesty of 25 cheating/academically dishonest behaviors. A strong majority of faculty members (a minimum of 87.9%) rated all 25 behaviors as either

mildly, moderately, or severely dishonest.

Faculty members were asked to indicate how many times they have witnessed student cheating/academically dishonest behavior and the percentage of students they believe participate in cheating/academically dishonest behavior. Roughly three quarters of faculty members have witnessed cheating/academically dishonest behaviors with 62.4% reporting having witnessed these behaviors 1 to 10 times. Likewise, slightly over one quarter of faculty members report not having witnessed cheating/academically dishonest behaviors. A mere 6% of 199 faculty members responding believe students do not participate in cheating/academically dishonest behavior. Likewise, 94% of faculty members believe students do participate in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors. The majority of faculty members (68.9%) believe that 1-20% of students participate in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors.

Faculty members were asked to rate the strength of a justification for cheating if offered to them by a student. The majority of faculty members (a minimum of 63.2%) indicated all 21 justifications as not strong.

Faculty members were asked to rate how a situation would affect the likelihood that students would engage in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors. A majority, 77.1%, of faculty members reported that students would be less likely to engage in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors if the instructor clearly stated a definition of cheating, procedures used to detect cheating, and the consequences for cheating. A majority, 72.5%, of faculty members reported that students would be less likely to engage in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors if students were afraid to get caught cheating.

A majority, 82.9%, of faculty members reported that students would be less likely to engage in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors if the instructor has a reputation for catching and punishing cheaters. A majority, 69.2%, of faculty members reported that students would be less likely to engage in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors if other students would report a student if he/she cheated. A majority, 79.5%, of faculty members reported that students would be less likely to engage in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors if the university deals with academically dishonest behaviors severely.

Faculty members were asked to choose the ideal and realistic expectation when encountering instances of cheating. The majority of faculty members (70.6%) ideally expect students to immediately report the in class cheating of other students. However, only 21.4% realistically expect this to happen. The majority of faculty members (69.5%) ideally expect students to immediately report academically dishonest behaviors other than in class cheating. However, only 39.2% of faculty members realistically expect this to happen.

The majority of faculty members (72.6%) ideally expect other faculty members to immediately confront a student who is cheating. However, only 54% of faculty members realistically expect this to happen. When asked if they (the faculty member) would immediately confront a cheater in his/her class, 71% of faculty members indicated they ideally would and 57.7% realistically expected they would.

A strong majority of faculty members (90.2% and 92%) ideally expect to be completely supported by their colleagues, program director, dean, and president if they were to report an incident of cheating. A

majority of faculty members (72.8%, 74.8%, 69.8%, and 68.1%) realistically expect to be completely supported by their colleagues, program director, dean, and president if they were to report an incident of cheating. A lower percentage of faculty members (25.9%, 23.3%, 24.7%, and 23.1%) realistically expect to be somewhat supported by their colleagues, program director, dean, and president if they were to report an incident of cheating.

Faculty members reported that 89.1% of students, 98.8% of faculty, and 95.4% of administrators appear to be minimally to very concerned about cheating/academically dishonesty. Faculty members reported that 79.5% of students, 52.3% of faculty, and 56.2% of administrators should be more concerned about cheating than they currently appear to be.

When faculty members were asked if their school should have a policy on academic dishonesty, 100% responded that it should with 92.3% knowing their school does have a policy. When asked who is responsible for preventing cheating/academic dishonesty, the majority of faculty members (58.1%) indicated that students, staff, faculty, and administrators were responsible for the prevention of cheating/academic dishonesty.

Proposal: Academic Integrity Office

Based upon information provided in the previous sections, an opportunity is present for the creation of an Academic Integrity Office (AIO) at the School of Education (SOE). The following sections have been developed using the University's New Degree Proposal Checklist. Although it is understood this proposal is for the creation of an office and not a new degree, the checklist provides a reasonable template.

Assessment of Need

The following series (8 items), derived from the Background Information and School of Education Faculty Data Collected sections of this paper, reveal a need for an AIO based upon internal SOE recognition and acknowledgement: (a) year 2002 statement from an adjunct program professor, (b) creation of an unused SOE interactive educational module, (c) Doctoral Student Orientation lacking an academic integrity component, (d) SOE catalog plagiarism policy and lack of honor code, (e) individual curriculum committee meetings (14 total) addressing the issue of plagiarism yet not addressing the larger umbrella issue of academic integrity, (f) when rating the degree of a cheating behavior, 87.9% of faculty reported all 25 behaviors as either mildly, moderately, or severely dishonest, (g) three quarters (75%) of faculty have witnessed cheating, and (h) the majority of faculty members (94%) believe students participate in cheating/academically dishonest behaviors.

Description of Opportunity

The AIO will facilitate and support the SOE community in building and increasing the awareness and understanding of academic integrity through the provision of educational programs and support mechanisms. Educational programs will include, but not be limited to, a student academic integrity tutorial and professional development activities for faculty and staff. Support mechanisms will include, but not be limited to, creating a comfortable faculty centered process for the determination and reporting of academic misconduct and to provide expertise in the development, dissemination, and implementation of policies and approaches related to academic integrity at the SOE.

Along with the provision of educational programs and support mechanisms, the AIO will develop and refine a research agenda and an outreach agenda. Potential items for inclusion in a refined research agenda are (a) the continuation of internal surveys of the SOE to determine attitudes towards academic integrity, (b) conducting studies of the attitudes of undergraduate and high school students as related to academic integrity, (c) developing a comparison of university and/or college of education plagiarism policies, and (d) reviewing state teacher code of ethics policies as they relate to academic misconduct. Potential items for inclusion in a refined outreach agenda are (a) K-12 school consultancy, (b) University cross disciplinary collaboration with other schools such as law, medicine, and psychological, and (c) the creation of a consortium comprised of local institutions of higher education.

Faculty

No new positions need to be created. The SOE and the University currently employs faculty to staff the AIO. Staffing needs will be evaluated as the AIO progresses in the provision of services and goal achievement.

Library and Learning Resources

A minimal amount of new library resources will need to be purchased. New materials will exclusively be books to start a collection for faculty reference at the SOE. Otherwise, the University library contains a sufficient collection, in all forms, to support the AIO. Almost all learning materials for the AIO can be obtained via electronic means with no associated costs. Learning resources will include the creation of a multimedia website and the use of the University's online learning platform for instructional purposes.

Physical Resources

No new physical resources will be needed. The SOE and University have ample office space with appropriate physical equipment.

Financial Support

Minimal financial support is needed to engage the present opportunity for the creation of an AIO. As suggested by Dee and Jacob, see Review of Literature section of this document, interventions, derived from an educational vantage, can be a meaningful tool in addressing academic integrity for both students and faculty; "Our results indicate that an easily replicable, scalable, and virtually costless educational intervention can be highly effective at reducing the prevalence of student plagiarism" (p. 3). Financial support will be evaluated as the AIO progresses in the provision of services and goal achievement.

Evaluation and Assessment

The evaluation and assessment of the services and programs of the AIO will be conducted by the Academic Integrity Advisory Council (AIAC) in conjunction with the SOE administration. Using self reporting measures, participant data from the student academic integrity tutorial and faculty development programs will be collected and evaluated by the AIAC. As well, a blind study may also be utilized as an evaluation and assessment alternative, or preferred method of assessment, if deemed necessary by the AIAC, in conjunction with the SOE administration, for the student academic integrity

tutorial.

The AIAC will review the mission, vision, and progression of the AIO as related to overall fit with the University and the SOE and make recommendations for future development and change. Evaluation and assessment of the AIO will be published in an annual report and disseminated electronically to the SOE community.

Conclusion

The topic of plagiarism is ever present in higher education. However, the larger umbrella issue of academic integrity must be addressed. Through an examination of institutional documents and research, coupled with evidence reported from studies, an opportunity for the creation of an Academic Integrity Office is evident. The proposal section of this paper reveals minor costs associated with the identified need to instruct, actively engage students, in the concept of and their responsibility related to, academic integrity.

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VN:R_U [1.9.11_1134]