

**Task Force on Academic Honesty**  
**White Paper**  
**May 1, 2008**

This White Paper details and evaluates the current situation at MUW regarding academic integrity and suggests courses of action based on that analysis, on an examination of best practices at other institutions of higher learning, and on academic research concerning academic integrity. The analysis of the situation at MUW draws on multiple sources: anonymous surveys of MUW students and faculty conducted by the Task Force; data regarding cases of academic dishonesty reported to the provost's office over the past nine years; and interviews with deans, chairs, and members of the Academic Standards Board regarding the strengths and weaknesses of current policies and procedures.

**Academic Integrity at MUW: The Present Landscape**

*I. Current Policies and Procedures*

At present, MUW has systematic and ad hoc policies and practices to encourage academic honesty and discourage dishonesty. To summarize: PS 3534 in conjunction with the "Academic Dishonesty Policy" laid out on pp. 53-55 of the present Bulletin establishes that faculty are required to report all cases of academic dishonesty. Such dishonesty is to result in a "zero" for the pertinent graded item. No credit is earned for work completed in a dishonest manner. And, if the incident is "flagrant" or if the student's file contains documentation of a previous incident, the Academic Standards Board will consider additional consequences after a review of the case. In "flagrant" cases, the faculty member can elect to have the case sent (via the provost's office) to the Academic Standards Board, a University committee, for possible further action. Otherwise, the complaint is sent to the provost's office to be recorded only until the student is graduated, with no further action taken unless there has been a previous complaint or a subsequent complaint is made. A second complaint is automatically (via the provost's office) sent to the Academic Standards Board for further action. In all cases, students have the opportunity to meet with the Board if a review of the case is necessary (i.e., when the incident constitutes a "flagrant" or repeated offense) and can contest the decision of the instructor.

In addition, faculty currently engage in a range of ad hoc measures to encourage honesty and discourage dishonesty across campus. The results of our survey of MUW faculty indicate that they employ strategies such as including statements about academic dishonesty on syllabi, explaining MUW's policy on academic dishonesty to students, discussing with students specific behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty, requiring students to complete exercises in how not to plagiarize, designing assignments that make successful plagiarism more difficult, and tailoring and monitoring the exam-taking environment to deter cheating. (For a summary of the results of our faculty survey, see Appendix A. The survey results in full are included under separate cover.)

There is, however, very little consistency in such matters. In addition, because participation in our survey was self-selected (volunteer after a general call by e-mail) rather than random, it

remains unclear exactly how widespread these faculty behaviors are. Thirty-six percent of full-time faculty did take the survey, indicating an impressive number who are motivated on this issue, but this also means 64% chose not to, and it is difficult to assess these faculty members' motivation and actions to deter academic dishonesty.

Finally, MUW has an "Honor Code." This seems a little known fact (including among members of the Task Force, several of whom were not aware of it before they began their work). The Code appears—or is at least alluded to—at the outset of the section on the Academic Dishonesty Policy in the MUW Bulletin: "Students enrolled at Mississippi University for Women agree to abide by the MUW Honor Code, which is 'to uphold the highest standards of honesty in all phases of university life,' and, therefore, they agree to refrain from any dishonest academic behavior" (p. 53). The full Honor Code is included in the current Student Handbook: "I pledge myself to uphold the highest standards in all phases of university life both alone and with many and accept my responsibility for helping others to live up to such standards. All this I will do that my University may become greater, better and more beautiful than when I entered it" (p. 25).

Lack of familiarity with this Honor Code is indicated in our faculty survey results, in which no faculty mention an existing code and a number actually suggest creating and promoting such a code. In addition, while three-quarters of respondents in our student survey say their instructors adequately inform them about the Academic Dishonesty Policy and over four-fifths say they are aware of the policy, none mention the existing Honor Code in their responses to our open-ended question about what MUW could do to further discourage students from engaging in academic dishonesty.

## *II. Salient Issues*

**Consistent Application of Policy.** Department chairs and deans who deal with the Academic Dishonesty Policy generally consider it a sound one. There is great concern among deans and department chairs, however, that faculty do not apply the policy consistently—that is, some faculty report cases each time they occur, whereas others do not do so at all. (For a summary of our qualitative research with department chairs and deans, see Appendix B.) Indeed, our faculty survey results support the conclusion that this may be the single greatest weakness of MUW's current approach. Over one-third of the 36% of full-time faculty respondents indicate that they have never reported cases to their department chair, over one-third indicate they have never reported cases to Academic Affairs, and almost one-fifth say they handle dishonesty informally without filing an official report. These respondents are, as noted before, self-selected rather than randomly chosen, so we should note that it is possible that the rate of unreported offenses is actually even higher among those faculty not motivated to participate in the survey.

It is also important to note that these rates of reporting offenses do not seem to correspond with knowledge of the policy, as most faculty respondents report being aware of and using and addressing the policy in their classes. This correlates with research showing that many administrators believe faculty have idiosyncratic methods of handling incidents (rather than following policy) even when they do address the policy in class (Aaron & Georgia, 1994). Most of our faculty respondents also say they do not think the policy is too strict, so the policy's stated

definition of and consequences for dishonesty do not seem to be at issue. These data lead the Task Force to speculate about other possibilities for why these faculty do not report all offenses—they do not understand that the policy mandates reporting, they fear reporting will result in negative student evaluations, they are hesitant to be pulled into higher-level disciplinary proceedings, or they simply prefer to avoid confrontation. Discussions with department chairs lend substance to these possibilities.

The Task Force is concerned about this inconsistency in reporting. Academic research suggests that this inconsistency only encourages academic dishonesty: that students are more likely to engage in dishonesty when faculty enforce standards haphazardly or not at all. As McCabe and Trevino (1993) and others have suggested, students are more likely to rationalize dishonest behavior—to conclude that they need to cheat to keep up—when they see their peers cheating without penalty and they feel their professors or university as a whole are not consistently enforcing existing policy. (For the full citation for this and other research used in this White Paper, see Appendix C.)

**Student and Faculty Understanding of Plagiarism and Cheating.** One issue of particular concern to the Task Force is the overwhelming predominance of plagiarism among offenses reported to the provost, which raises a number of questions about student and faculty perceptions and behaviors. First, many students may have some trouble understanding exactly what constitutes plagiarism, a problem compounded by how easy it is to cut and paste from Internet and other electronic sources. Another possibility is that the high rate of reported offenses is related to the fact that faculty generally find plagiarism easier to prove than other forms of academic dishonesty and so are more likely to report it. Finally, faculty may perceive the incidence of plagiarism to be high and the incidence of cheating to be relatively low and therefore are less likely to monitor for and report cheating behaviors.

Based on the evidence, we believe that the observation that students do not understand what constitutes plagiarism is an especially salient one. It is supported in research like that of Roig (1997), which indicates that students often do not consider copied text to be plagiarized if they provide a citation. Our survey results also speak to this lack of understanding. Only about one-third of faculty say they think students often share answers during an exam, and only about half think students often share exam answers with someone in another section of the class, but 80% think students often plagiarize. In contrast, students report roughly comparable rates for each of these three behaviors—6-12% for themselves and 27-39% for their peers. (For a summary of responses to the MUW student survey, see Appendix D. The survey results in full are included under separate cover.) This could indicate that students do indeed engage relatively equally in these behaviors, but more likely it suggests that they have a less clear understanding of exactly what constitutes plagiarism.

The student survey results also indicate, however, that students' misunderstanding of what constitutes academic dishonesty extends beyond plagiarism. The survey shows that students often do not consider themselves to be committing acts of academic dishonesty when their professors would say that they are. Most telling is the fact only 7% of student respondents say they have cheated or plagiarized at MUW, but over a third say they sometimes or often copy homework or collaborate on an assignment given as individual work, and over 10% say they

have sometimes or often cheated in an exam, shared exam questions with students in another section, plagiarized, and used a paper or exam completed by a student in a previous semester. These results correspond roughly to the results of surveys at other institutions, in which students are twice as likely to report that they have copied or paraphrased without citation than to report that they have plagiarized (McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes, & Armstead, 1996).

The numbers suggesting our students do not fully understand what constitutes academic dishonesty are even more striking when students are reporting their peers' behaviors—over half then say they have sometimes or often seen others copy homework or collaborate on an assignment given as individual work, while over one-fourth say they have sometimes or often seen others cheat in an exam, share exam questions with students in another section, plagiarize, or use a paper or exam completed by a student in a previous semester. In contrast, almost all faculty agree or strongly agree that all of these behaviors constitute academic dishonesty.

One statistic emerging from the student survey that appears notable is that roughly three-quarters of students estimate that fewer than one-third of MUW students cheat or plagiarize, a sign that—even if our students are somewhat under-reporting behaviors—their rate of dishonest behaviors is relatively low. This is encouraging. Roughly three-fourths or more of students also report that they are aware of the policy, understand the consequences of violating it, and are adequately informed about it by their professors, all results that point to an existing level of awareness and an openness to learning about and understanding the policy. Less than two-thirds, however, report being informed about the policy as new students. This last result indicates that MUW could still explore opening up other avenues to introducing the policy to students, along with ensuring that they understand exactly what behaviors constitute academic dishonesty.

The survey also provides some data on student motivations, another important factor when considering additional ways to promote honesty and deter dishonesty. Students who say they have not engaged in academic dishonesty name the following four as their top reasons for not doing so: their belief that it is immoral or dishonest, their belief that it would devalue their achievement, their personal pride, and their fear of detection or punishment. While the fourth of these results suggests the need for faculty consistency in enforcing the policy, the first three indicate that MUW may be able to promote honesty by reinforcing students' existing ethical values and encouraging them to reinforce the same values in their peers. McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield (2002) suggest the promise of such an approach; their research shows that when students see peers pledging to practice integrity, promoting integrity, and acting with integrity, they may be less likely to cheat themselves.

Students who say they have engaged in academic dishonesty name the following four as their top reasons for doing so: the desire to increase their grades, time pressure, the desire to help a friend, and fear of failure. This set of motivations is reflected in student comments to the survey's open-ended question about what MUW could do to further discourage students from engaging in academic dishonesty—many said that their work loads are too great and that time pressures on students need to be eased. Fifty-six percent of student respondents also said they would use a just-in-time service in which they could call a tutor any time of day or night for help in properly quoting, paraphrasing, or citing in a paper. These responses indicate that MUW may

also be able to deter dishonesty by providing more faculty support for students as well as just-in-time aid for those working under scheduling pressures and tight deadlines.

### *III. The Academic Standards Board*

The operations of the Academic Standards Board suffer from a degree of discontinuity. New members are almost entirely dependent on more experienced members for an understanding of the procedures of the Board itself. Even then, new members have sometimes asked inappropriate questions (e.g., about previous complaints rather than the complaint before the Board) or accessed student information and brought it to the committee without authorization. These members discover they have erred only after the fact. (For a summary of the Task Force's qualitative research with the Academic Standards Board, see Appendix B.)

Some faculty—and perhaps some students—are also unaware of the procedure followed should they meet with the Board—for example, of whether they will actually speak with each other directly before the Board, or separately. (The Board interviews all parties individually.)

## **Promoting Academic Integrity at MUW: Courses of Action**

### *I. Faculty*

To address problems discussed above, MUW should consider instituting workshops for faculty regarding academic dishonesty. The Task Force envisions workshops of two types:

1. Workshops on policy and procedure. These workshops would acquaint MUW faculty with the policy and procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. Such workshops should be available for current faculty and also be required for new faculty, presumably as part of orientation for new faculty. Adjunct faculty, if they do not have an orientation, should at least receive a handout explaining the policy, accompanied by some discussion with the chair of the appointing department. Such workshops should also include reassurance that reporting cases of dishonesty will not result in lower annual evaluations of faculty and explain the procedure of the Academic Standards Board.
2. Workshops on preventing and identifying plagiarism. Topics should include:
  - what to look for to detect dishonesty
  - sharing tools to discourage plagiarism in the first place (e.g., structuring assignments, etc.)
  - definitions of what level of borrowing reaches the bar of plagiarism
  - definitions and examples of cheating
  - discussion of the definition of “flagrant” cases of dishonesty mentioned in the Academic Dishonesty Policy

Perhaps material from the workshop on the policies and procedures would also be presented in the latter type of workshop. The Task Force also believes it would be helpful to explain to faculty the procedure (and their role in it) when cases are sent to the Academic Standards Board,

as well as to stress to them that reporting cases of dishonesty will not negatively affect their annual evaluations.

Before instituting these workshops for current faculty, a brief survey should be conducted to determine the level and direction of faculty interest in such workshops. Annual departmental retreats might also be an appropriate venue for such workshops. Workshops should be offered on an ongoing basis at intervals that will give all faculty a chance to participate. If workshops are offered at least annually, most adjuncts would also be able to attend.

Perhaps a written explanation of the policy, or even a flow-chart version of it, could also be developed for faculty. It may also be that a form could be devised for faculty to use when reporting cases of academic dishonesty. Both moves might clarify for faculty what their options are and so encourage them to report cases of academic dishonesty.

In addition, department chairs should be encouraged to consider the promotion of academic integrity and the enforcement of the Academic Dishonesty Policy when conducting annual evaluations of faculty. A demonstrated willingness to enforce should be noticed. And chairs should be sensitive to possible student response to such enforcement when weighing student evaluations.

It may be that one way of cultivating faculty awareness of these issues would be for a year or semester to be devoted to a special initiative to promote and implement these measures. Such “packaging” may draw greater attention.

Finally, the procedure for handling cases of Academic Dishonesty could be modified in a way so as to make faculty more likely to report cases (a suggestion appears below, sub *III. Students*).

## *II. The Academic Standards Board*

Privacy concerns mean that the Board is not informed of the ultimate decision by the provost and the president regarding its recommendations. Some sort of feedback mechanism, however, is desirable, in order for the Board to gauge its own effectiveness. Steps should be taken in order to ensure the Board’s institutional memory from year to year. A beginning orientation for new Board members would be a solution. Even then, this measure, it should be noted, would not address the problem posed by proxies; perhaps a brief written description of procedure and dos and don’ts would. A basic description would also be useful for faculty and students who are called before the Board.

## *III. Students*

**Educational Intervention.** Some students who engage in plagiarism do so inadvertently or do so on a very small scale (e.g., plagiarizing individual sentences rather than paragraphs). In such cases (which may indeed be a majority of those that take place, if not a majority of those reported), however, a fairly dramatic intervention is often necessary to nip the problem in the bud. Yet, MUW faculty too often fail to report such instances and, even when they do report, it

is left to the faculty member to instruct the student on what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. Given that the act of reporting can set up some antagonism between faculty member and student on this very point, such instruction may not be effective. And certainly there is no systematic effort to make sure these students get the instruction they evidently need.

MUW should consider adopting some version of the procedure developed by the University of Maryland, now adopted by Mississippi State University. (For a full account of the best practices the Task Force gathered, see Appendix E.) Under this procedure, should students be reported for academic dishonesty, they receive a letter stressing the importance of academic integrity and its components. Such a student also receives an “XF” grade recorded on the transcript and is put on academic probation. The “F” is the grade for the course. The “X” denotes that the student has committed an act of academic dishonesty. The “X” can be removed only by enrolling in a special seminar offered by the university on academic honesty that covers topics such as plagiarism and how to avoid it, time management, ethics, and so on. The student also meets with an academic counselor to help pinpoint what issues may have triggered the behavior (e.g., problems with time management? poor writing skills?).

The Task Force concludes that MUW students who have engaged in academic dishonesty should receive support of the kind provided by the above counseling and seminar. The Task Force is concerned, however, that the “XF” grade is problematic: too punitive in some first cases, it also is draconian enough to deter faculty from reporting all instances of academic dishonesty, already a problem on campus. It also may pose problems of administration for the registrar’s office, including insuring that MUW complies with AACRO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) standards for including disciplinary probations/expulsions on transcripts.

The Task Force recommends maintaining MUW’s current policy with one of the two following modifications:

1. In all cases of a first complaint (assuming it is not successfully contested), the student earns a grade for the assignment and thus the course at the discretion of the instructor (and, of course, in line with the syllabus). The grade in the transcript will be this course grade preceded by an “X.” The “X” can be removed only if the student receives the academic counseling and completes in an Academic Integrity seminar as described above. (The Task Force does not envision such a seminar running an entire semester or being offered for academic credit. Perhaps the seminar could be completed in a six week period.) Some guidelines should be developed for how soon a student has to enroll in the semester after the complaint has been made.
2. In all cases of a first complaint (assuming it is not successfully contested), the student earns a grade for the assignment and the course at the discretion of the instructor (and, of course, in line with the syllabus). The student then has a choice: to come before the Academic Standards Board or to receive the academic counseling and enroll in an Academic Integrity seminar described above. (The Task Force does not envision such a seminar running an entire semester or being offered for academic credit.) Some guidelines should be developed for how soon a student has to enroll in the semester after the complaint has been made. The Task Force suspects that most students would prefer to choose the counseling and enroll in the seminar. This

procedure has the advantage of presenting help and supporting the student's needs but leaves getting that help more at the choice of the student. (Students might also be able to opt to take the seminar even after going through disciplinary proceedings, though they would still be subject to the Academic Standard Board's disciplinary recommendations.) This also means that faculty can avoid assigning punitive grades for academic dishonesty (especially in cases where the student has not meant to deceive) while still reporting the student and so getting the student appropriate support. Hence, faculty who do not now report may be more likely to do so under this regime.

In order to bolster the credibility of the seminar with students, the seminar should draw on the student members of the Academic Standards Board to present some material or lead some discussion in the seminar.

Some topics covered by the Task Force on Academic Honesty might be farmed out to offices and programs that already offer such instruction.

- Time management, for example, is already handled by Academic Support Services. Or perhaps that office should coordinate the seminar.
- Matters of academic integrity—at least the policy governing them—should be introduced to new students during orientation. Should a user-friendly handout on the policy be developed for faculty, it or an adapted version could also be distributed to students at that point.
- MUW may also want to require a statement regarding academic integrity, addressing plagiarism and cheating, on all syllabi.
- MUW should also examine ways to systematize instruction for students on what constitutes plagiarism. EN 101 seems a natural vehicle for this instruction, and the Task Force recommends that the faculty responsible for that course develop a standard unit on plagiarism and implement it across all sections of the course.

These measures, it should be noted, will not address transfer students, a large portion of MUW's student body. A diagnostic exam for incoming transfer students from the community colleges on such matters as proper citation has been suggested to the Task Force. That measure may be desirable. But it is not clear, however, whether articulation agreements would permit such an assessment. It may be that the campus-wide writing assessment now being implemented could in some way serve as a vehicle for such an assessment of students' understanding of when citations or quotation marks are necessary.

**“Just In Time” Assistance.** Given the constraints on their time that students listed in the survey, the Task Force also recommends exploring “just in time” help for students who think they might be about to commit plagiarism. Since many students write their papers the day or even night before they are due, they may well not have time to consult their instructors as to the specifics of what borrowing they are contemplating is licit. While MUW could (and should) put some guidance on such matters online, the student who needs this help is probably going to have some trouble applying that guidance to the specifics of his or her situation. So a help line or a place to come for assistance (or both) is desirable. Again, in theory Academic Support Service would be one venue for such help. The planned MUW Writing Center is, however, probably

going to be better situated to help students with plagiarism advice: it will have experts in helping students with their writing, and is a place where students will be coming for writing help in the first place. Plans to open the Writing Center should include a consideration of this issue.

**Publicity.** As per the practice at Mississippi State University, the administration should also publicize enforcement of policy against academic dishonesty in the student newspaper (with names withheld). Students who do not see a policy enforced are liable either to be less aware of the policy or conclude it has no teeth.

**Honor Code.** MUW has an honor code—little publicized—in the current Bulletin. This code is simply aspirational. While the Task Force has considered measures taken at other institutions, such as having this code inserted in all syllabi, posted in classrooms, and so on, the members are divided over whether such measures will be effective. Some research (Hawley, 1984) does indicate the success of focusing on integrity rather than punishment to change attitudes and behaviors. If used as an educational tool to initiate student conversations about and commitments to integrity, it remains possible that the honor code statement (many schools now call such a statement a “creed”) could help build a campus climate in which integrity is highly valued. At any rate, an Honor Code that is not known has no chance at being effective. MUW’s Honor Code is little known, and so requires some publicizing of the kind done at other institutions if it is to be effective.

One issue that has attracted some attention from the Task Force is whether MUW should consider adopting an honor code such as that in force at the University of Virginia: that is, where students are on their own recognizance, taking unproctored examinations, and so on, this code being enforced by student tribunals. This kind of code, often referred to as a “traditional honor code,” has obvious attractions, not the least of which is research showing traditional honor code schools have the lowest rates of academic dishonesty (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002).

The problem is how to create such an academic culture in the first place, as most universities with such codes have had them in place for a very long time and maintain them as a matter of pride and tradition. The Task Force has been able to come to no clear conclusion on this score. A possibility might be a sort of trial run with certain classes or even the whole campus for a semester. One feature of current campus life that suggests this approach might be feasible at MUW is the student members of the Academic Standards Board; those students are some of the Board’s most effective members.

On a related “packaging” issue—one that might help MUW create the kind of atmosphere present at schools with traditional honor codes—the Task Force also recommends stressing the phrase “Academic Integrity” rather than “Academic Honesty” in all matters now going under the label “Academic Honesty,” which at this point may appear to stress virtue rather than a pragmatic sense of the importance of honesty to the university. The term “Academic Integrity” refers to the centrality of honesty to the academic endeavor: without it, academe cannot function. Thus, the Task Force recommends, for example, renaming the “Academic Honesty Policy” the “Academic Integrity Policy.”

Taken as a whole, the recommendations of the Task Force would actually move MUW closer to a modified honor code model. Modified honor codes take various shapes across American universities, but most typically involve two elements: first, programs and strategies that strongly convey to students the high value faculty and the institution as a whole place on academic integrity and, second, central roles for students themselves in reporting dishonest behavior, participating in disciplinary proceedings, and informing and educating their peers about the importance of academic integrity on campus (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002).

While MUW may not at this point be positioned to adopt what has been called a “traditional honor code model,” which has been shown to have the lowest rates of academic dishonesty, institutions that follow a modified code still have lower rates of academic dishonesty than institutions lacking such codes at all (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). In practical terms, MUW at present nearly falls into that last category.

Putting a modified code in place now would combine existing faculty commitment to ethical behavior with the potential for students to take an even more active role in self-monitoring and promoting such behavior. Indeed, if they fit the general profile of the Millennial Generation, our students may be especially receptive to a new/renewed campus-wide emphasis on ethical behavior both in and out of the classroom.

## Appendix A. Summary of Responses to Faculty Survey

### *I. Statistical Results*

Nearly all of our participants were full-time faculty.

Participants in the survey were self-selected (rather than selected at random). It should be noted, then, that the faculty who chose to participate in the survey are more likely to have a prior interest in this issue and to have acted on it in the past. This is confirmed by the fact that almost all of them say they are aware of and use the policy. So, while this survey does give us valuable information about what faculty who use this policy think and do, it does not give us a completely accurate picture of how many faculty on campus do not in fact know enough about or use the policy, since those with less interest in or experience with the policy may not have been predisposed to participate in the survey.

The survey results indicate that faculty believe MUW promotes academic integrity. Although they report being aware of the policy, over a third note that they were not adequately informed when they began teaching at the W.

Almost all faculty respondents report using the policy, and over four-fifths say they address it in their classes. Half think the policy should be more detailed. (Whether the other 50% believe it is okay as is or should be less detailed is unclear due to question format.)

Almost all faculty do not believe the policy is too strict. (Whether they think it is okay as is or that it should be more strict is unclear because of how we asked the question.)

Faculty are split on whether they think students are aware of the policy, with just over half thinking they are. And only a third think students understand the policy.

Faculty pretty much agree that all of the behaviors listed constitute cheating. Some areas, do seem to be gray areas, however; fewer faculty, for example, strongly agree that delaying taking an exam/turning in a paper using a false excuse and copying homework/collaborating on individual assignments constitute academic dishonesty. Also, only four-fifths strongly agree that copying material without using quotation marks or using sources without citing them constitutes dishonesty, while almost all strongly agree that giving answers to or receiving answers from someone else in an exam constitutes dishonesty, which may indicate that even some of these self-selected faculty consider plagiarism less questionable than cheating.

More than half our respondents believe that students frequently fabricate excuses to delay due dates, copy others' work and collaborate when it isn't allowed, and plagiarize. Most of our respondents believe that students share exam answers and recycle papers (their own or another student's) at least occasionally.

Faculty say they believe that students engage in dishonest behavior most frequently to increase a grade, but also (in descending order) due to fear of failure, laziness, and time pressure. They say they believe students do not engage in dishonest behavior because of fear of

detection/punishment, because the behavior is immoral/dishonest, because they would feel shame or embarrassment if caught, and because of personal pride.

Nearly all of our respondents have had a student engage in dishonest behavior. Most (i.e., 60-70%) of our respondents report applying grading penalties, discussing the incident with the student, reporting the incident to their supervisor, and reporting the incident to Academic Affairs. And finally, less than 15% report having used turnitin.com.

## *II. Qualitative Results*

Faculty provided a range of responses to an open-ended question about what they do **in the classroom** to discourage students from engaging in academic dishonesty. The following is a summary list of faculty responses by category.

In the general category of practical steps to discourage academic dishonesty, faculty say they

- use multiple forms of one exam
- change questions on major exams every year
- refrain from using multiple choice exams
- arrange seating for exams
- prohibit cell phones during exams
- prohibit use of other papers during exams
- require all books, purses, etc. be left away from exam area
- have only scantron on desk during exam
- proctor their own exams (carefully)
- provide study guides for exams
- give online classes timed, randomized multiple choice tests that limit the possibilities for collaboration
- give different topics to students/groups
- break complex projects into sections
- provide specific rules for collaboration in groups
- give the same grade to all group participants
- assign paper topics rather than let students choose their own
- assign “unique” or “idiosyncratic” paper topics so that plagiarism is more difficult
- structure paper topics so it is difficult to find material on the internet
- require personal, insightful responses that are more difficult to copy from others/fake
- give detailed, topic-specific feedback at interim deadlines
- require students to discuss projects with faculty before due date
- encourage students to ask questions if they are unsure of how to use sources
- require peer critiques
- require submission of all research notes
- check reference lists on major papers
- check with other faculty to see if they recognize the work
- require submission of papers in WebCT and saving them in searchable database
- require that most course work be done in class
- explain to students how faculty detect plagiarism

Faculty say that, to inform students about MUW’s policy on academic dishonesty, they

- go over the policy in class orientation

- put the policy on the syllabus
- discuss the policy before specific assignments

Faculty say that, to emphasize with students the consequences of violating the policy, they

- tell students that all violations will be reported
- tell students they can be suspended for dishonesty
- tell students any offense will be reported to the dean and VPAA
- frequently remind students about the policy
- occasionally remind students about the policy
- mention the policy when handing out exams

A number of faculty also report having students sign a statement saying they have read and understand the policy, either once at the beginning of the semester or each time an assignment is submitted.

Other faculty say they give students specific instruction in how to avoid plagiarism. This may involve

- looking at examples of correct and incorrect handling of sources
- completing exercises in recognizing plagiarism
- completing exercises in correctly handling sources

Faculty also provided a range of responses to an open-ended question about what MUW could do **outside the classroom** to discourage students from engaging in academic dishonesty. The following is a summary list of faculty responses by category.

Faculty suggest that, to increase student understanding of the policy, MUW

- go over the policy in freshman orientation
- require students attend a seminar on the issue every year
- make sure students understand what constitutes dishonesty
- make sure students understand all cases in which the policy applies
- encourage the development of faculty- and student-led education programs to be presented in classrooms, social clubs, and residence halls

Many faculty suggest that MUW more effectively publicize the policy. They say MUW could

- have an ad campaign or hang posters in high-traffic areas/on bulletin boards
- place examples in the newspaper and on posters
- update students on the policy by e-mail two-three times each semester
- publicize cases (anonymously) that have led to discipline

Some faculty stress a positive approach to academic honesty. They say MUW could

- reframe the issue to show that academic honesty leads to academic success
- create the expectation that academic dishonesty should never happen
- develop/publicize a university honor code and integrate it into campus life
- stress the importance of integrity to students' self-worth
- encourage student organizations to follow ethical standards and refrain from maintaining files of course work

Some faculty also suggest that students should be required to sign a statement saying they have read and understand the policy, either upon admission to MUW or once a year.

Some faculty state that the policy is only effective if all faculty are enforcing it and stress that students will only take it seriously if faculty do. They suggest that

- faculty and departments should report cases consistently
- new faculty should be trained in how to enforce the policy and how to teach students about it
- faculty should be informed that they are not on trial in cases that go before the Academic Standards Board

A couple of faculty did suggest a campus subscription to Turnitin.com, to which faculty could submit all papers and about which students would be informed, but one faculty member argued against this given pending legal cases involving copyright infringement on the part of such services.

Finally, a few faculty suggested doing nothing, either because all that could be done is already being done or because of intransigent student attitudes/behaviors.

**Appendix B. Summary of Qualitative Research with Deans,  
Department Chairs, and the Academic Standards Board**

Department chairs and the members of the Academic Standards Board expressed various concerns with the current policies and procedures concerning academic dishonesty. There was little criticism of the policy: one member of the group argued that the current policy leaves too little discretion to individual faculty regarding how to handle cases of dishonesty. By and large, deans, department chairs, and members of the academic standards board said that the policy is a good one. There was, however, a general concern that some faculty are following it much more consistently than others. This concern centers in particular on whether all faculty are reporting instances of dishonesty. A specific concern in this category is that by not reporting lesser cases of dishonesty, some faculty are unwittingly encouraging students to engage in greater acts of dishonesty. Some steps suggested to remedy this problem are as follows.

1. Steps aimed at faculty:

- a discussion of the policy during orientation of new faculty, including adjunct faculty
- workshops for all faculty concerning:
  - the policy itself
  - what to look for to detect dishonesty
  - reassurance that reporting cases of dishonesty will not negatively affect the evaluation of faculty
  - sharing tools to discourage plagiarism in the first place
  - definitions of what borrowing reaches the bar of plagiarism
  - defining “flagrant” cases of dishonesty mentioned in the Policy Statement

2. Steps aimed at students:

- ensuring that statement on dishonesty be included in syllabi and appropriate exams/paper handouts
- finding ways to support students so they do not cheat/plagiarize out of frustration when they are indeed capable of doing the work (one measure in this regard: faculty should provide clear guidelines for projects, asking for drafts, meeting regularly to check progress, and giving students criticism as they go)
- publicizing enforcement of policy against academic dishonesty (with names withheld). Students who don't see a policy enforced are liable either to be less aware of the policy or conclude it has no teeth.

3. The Academic Standards Board:

Privacy concerns mean that the Board is not informed of the ultimate decision by the provost and the president regarding its recommendations. Some sort of feedback mechanism, however, is desirable, in order for the Board to gauge its own effectiveness.

**Appendix C: References**

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## Appendix D. Summary of Responses to Student Survey

### *I. Statistical Results*

Most of our respondents were juniors, though some were sophomores or seniors. Selection of student participants was random in that faculty across campus volunteered to administer the survey in classes they teach.

The survey results indicate that almost all students are aware that MUW has an Academic Dishonesty policy, believe that it discourages cheating and plagiarism at MUW, and themselves know the consequences of cheating and plagiarizing at MUW. However, while nine-tenths say their instructors adequately inform them about the policy, only three-fourths say they were adequately informed about it at new student orientation.

When asked if they have engaged in dishonest behaviors at MUW, less than one-tenth (7.1%) say yes, while over half (53.6%) say they have observed peers committing dishonesty. This discrepancy also appears in their reports of specific behaviors. For example, while all students say they have never or seldom given answers to or received answers from someone else in an exam, many more say they have seen others engaging in this behavior either occasionally or often. Similarly, while all say they have never or seldom given answers to or received answers from someone in a later section of the class, many more say they have seen others doing so occasionally or often. Students reported similar rates of their own and their peers' behavior for using a cell phone or calculator to retrieve information during an exam, stealing or copying an exam, and plagiarizing material in papers.

Students do report higher rates of copying homework or collaborating on individual assignment, both for themselves and their peers. In contrast, they report lower (though still notable) incidence of using a paper or exam from a social club/student organization test file and writing a paper for someone else or having someone else write a paper for them.

The top answers given by students when asked why they have engaged in academic dishonesty include the desire to increase their grade, time pressure, and fear of failure. The top answers given by students when asked why they have not engaged in academic dishonesty include the belief that it is immoral or dishonest, the belief that it would devalue their achievement, and fear of detection or punishment.

The top answers given by students when asked why their peers have engaged in academic dishonesty include the desire to increase their grade, fear of failure, and the desire to help a friend. The top answers given by students when asked why their peers have not engaged in academic dishonesty include fear of detection or punishment, their belief that it is immoral or dishonest, the belief that it would devalue their achievement, and personal pride.

Only a very small number (5.2%) of student respondents say that they have reported a student they thought was committing academic dishonesty. Less than one-tenth say that they have been caught by faculty when cheating or plagiarizing, and roughly the same number say an incident in which they have been caught cheating or plagiarizing was reported to Academic Affairs.

Finally, over half of student respondents say they would call a just-in-time service available 24 hours a day for help properly quoting, paraphrasing, or citing in a paper.

## *II. Qualitative Results*

Students' answers to the open-ended question of what MUW could do to further discourage students from engaging in academic dishonesty generally fall into three categories: reducing student workloads/time pressures, offering fewer opportunities for cheating during exams, and strengthening and emphasizing the policy. The majority of comments are in the last category.

In the category of reducing student workloads/time pressures, students' suggestions include spreading assignments out and requiring assignments that are less extensive and time-consuming.

In the category of offering fewer opportunities for cheating during exams, some students complain that faculty leave the room during exams, which they see as an open invitation for students to cheat, while others suggest that more than one version of an exam be used so that students sitting next to one another can't cheat.

In the category of strengthening and emphasizing the policy, students' suggestions include developing a stronger Academic Dishonesty policy, having faculty verbally state the policy more often (rather than just at the beginning of the semester), educating students more clearly about the consequences of dishonesty, and fining students who commit dishonesty.

## Appendix E. Select Best Practices

### *University of Maryland*

The University of Maryland (UM) implemented a seminar on Academic Integrity. This seminar is designed to stimulate more awareness about the role of honesty and trust in promoting a good life and a sustainable society. UM promotes this form of ethical development through readings, questions, and self-examination, not the study and memorization of ethical codes or precepts. The seminars consist of one novel or short story, one film, several online readings, and an optional interview. The readings include *The Death of Ivan Illyich* and *A Case of Cheating*.

UM also sends a letter to the students to reinforce the idea of academic integrity being a set of principles that binds everyone and is good for learning. The letter outlines the following:

- I. Preparation for Class
- II. In Class
- III. With Regard to Exams
- IV. With Regard to Written Assignments
- V. With Regard to Your Final Grade
- VI. Failures to Live up to Our Responsibilities

Another way UM promotes academic integrity is through ethical dialogues. This dialogue includes 21 questions ranging from pursuit of happiness to basic trait of leadership.

### *Mississippi State University*

Mississippi State University (MSU) honor code includes cheating, fabrication, falsification, multiple submission, plagiarism, and complicity. MSU discusses academic integrity at new student orientation, first meeting of every course, new faculty orientation, graduate teaching assistant training, and faculty in-service training. MSU also disseminates information about academic integrity to its students which includes the following: definition of academic integrity, expectation and responsibilities of students and faculty, as well as how to report violations of its honor code. The honor code is included in the following: catalog, admission application material, course syllabus in every course, exam booklets, faculty/staff job application materials, and faculty/staff handbook. MSU send annual correspondence to faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and student leaders on the following: efforts to reduce academic dishonesty, appropriate data on academic dishonesty, and suggested improvements in policy/practice. The honor code is posted in all classrooms. MSU places regular announcements about efforts to promote academic integrity in the campus newspaper and it will also include case results (without identifying information) in the paper regularly.

MSU's academic integrity intervention program has four parts: disciplinary intervention, evaluation/counseling intervention, educational intervention, and ethic/ethical decision making seminar. The disciplinary intervention includes XF grade penalty and probation. "X" notates academic dishonesty. The probationary period requires the student to participate in the other three interventions to remove the X and to re-enroll in the course in which the academic dishonesty occurred. The evaluation/counseling intervention includes identifying the source of

the dishonest behavior, addressing the source of the dishonest behavior, and referring students to the Educational Intervention Seminar. The educational intervention is a two part seminar. It covers what is academic integrity and why is it important, time management, study skills, test taking skills, writing skills, anxiety management, goal setting, and an assessment component. Ethics/Ethical Decision Making Seminar includes case studies, discussions, and written work regarding ethics, values, and moral development. If the student successfully completes this program he/she can petition the Honor Council for deletion of the dishonesty notation on the transcript and can be granted permission to re-take the course.

*University of Maryland: Principles of Academic Integrity*

1. Recognize and affirm academic integrity as a core institutional value.
2. Foster a lifelong commitment to learning.
3. Affirm the role of teacher as a guide and mentor.
4. Help students understand the potential of the Internet—and how that potential can be lost if online resources are used for fraud, theft, and deception.
5. Encourage student responsibility for academic integrity.
6. Clarify expectations for students.
7. Develop fair and creative forms of assessment.
8. Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty.
9. Respond to academic dishonesty when it occurs.
10. Help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.

*Questions College Faculty Members Should Ask When Designing and Teaching Their Courses*

**Why students plagiarize?**

According to University of Central Florida (UCF) (2008), students plagiarize for the following reasons:

- Poor research skills
- Confusions between plagiarism and paraphrasing
- Inability to distinguish between “common knowledge” and information that should be cited
- Careless note-taking, confusion about how to properly cite sources
- Poor time management skills and planning skills
- Confusion about assignment requirements or expectations, especially in “group” projects
- Cultural attitudes towards plagiarism
- Belief that most students do not get caught

### **Preventing Plagiarism**

- Break up major research papers into smaller assignments
- Require students to write about course-specific topics
- Choose some required source material for your students
- Incorporate assignments into class discussions and test
- Meet with students to discuss their research
- Require students to submit printouts of source materials (Sterngold, 2004)
- Schedule customized library instruction sessions with a trained librarian
- Talk with your class about plagiarism, academic honesty, and related topics in first class and include discussion of such topics in your syllabi
- Design good assignments with clear
- Follow up on likely instances of academic dishonesty (UCF, 2008)

### **Review of Process Checklist**

- Gather documentation of academic dishonesty.
- Thoroughly complete Faculty Adjudication Form.
- Call Student Judicial Affairs to determine if student has a prior academic honesty violation.
- Schedule a meeting with the student to discuss allegations. You may choose to have your supervisor in the room with you when meeting with the student.
- Share with student all documentation of academic dishonesty.
- Give copy of the completed form to student.
- Forward Faculty Adjudication Form to the Dean of Students Office whether the student agrees or not.
- If the student disagrees with the allegation(s) brought forth, he/she will have an informational meeting with Student Judicial Affairs to choose either an Honor Court or Student Conduct Committee Hearing.
- After discussion have the student sign form.
- Follow up letters are sent to the student and faculty member referencing the outcome.
- If the student is found responsible for academic dishonesty, the faculty member needs to submit the appropriate grade at the end of the semester to reflect the grade penalty (University of Florida, 2002).

### *Honor Codes*

University of Florida: “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.”

*Princeton University: Plagiarism*

Plagiarism occurs when a writer uses someone else's language and ideas without acknowledging its source. Scholarly writing must emphasize originality of analysis and interpretation. Writing must not be about compiling other people's ideas but rather presenting one's ideas based upon well referenced sources.

**Cause of plagiarism:** Students may not know how to take and correctly document notes when doing research.

**Remedy:** Instructors must teach students how to cite and acknowledge sources in their field, and allow students to practice these skills through writing, submitting drafts and suggesting revisions. This calls for a small class size in order for the instructor to be effective at this strategy.

**Cause of plagiarism:** Poor time-management skills by students, writing while tired or being rushed.

**Remedy:** The instructor must give topics early to allow students time to explore the topic slowly and help them narrow their focus. While taking notes, students must use quotation marks and indicate page numbers in the source.

**Cause of plagiarism:** students may fear failure or fear taking risks in their own work

**Remedy:** Instructors must build support for research writing such as individual or group conferences, and peer review. Administrators must provide support services or writing centers for students who need help.

**Cause of plagiarism:** students may not know how to integrate the ideas from many sources, and reading the source many times may erode the student's creative thinking because it results in committing to memory the writer's words.

**Remedy:** Assignments must be structured in such a way that they encourage students to offer analysis and interpretation of the information rather than just report of what the authors say.

**Cause of plagiarism:** paraphrasing a passage from the source by making slight changes of the words that the author used

**Remedy:** paraphrase must reflect one's own ideas and not just someone's ideas in a slightly different wording from the original

**Cause of plagiarism:** students may view the course, assignment or consequence of cheating as unimportant

**Remedy:** Instructors must write in the syllabus their policies and expectations for documenting sources and the consequence of plagiarism. Instructors must report cheating when it does occur and the appropriate penalties must be enforced.

*Princeton University: Best Practices*

**1. Explain plagiarism and develop clear policies**

- a. Talk to students about the underlying implications of plagiarism, which is plagiarism devalue the institution and the degree it offers and it rob the students of independent thinking.
- b. A syllabus must have policies for using sources and it should be discussed in the course
- c. The University must establish the honor code to which all students subscribe and there must be a judicial board to hear plagiarism cases.

**2. Improve the design and sequence of assignments**

- a. Assignments must be designed in such a way that they are enquiry based, which may include gathering and assessing the data.
- b. Assignment topics must be given early to students in order to allow enough time to explore the topics.
- c. Develop schedules for students that allow them time to explore the topic and a support must be provided to help students refine their focus on the topic.
- d. An instructor must provide support at each step of the research process such as looking at the draft, encouraging revision and polishing of the paper.
- e. Make the research process and technology used transparent. It will be useful to discuss with students how the available technology may affect the way information is gathered and how that may lead to plagiarism.

**3. Attend to sources and the use of reading**

- a. Students could be encouraged to use a variety of sources such as systematic observation, interviews and simple surveys, which could make a paper more interesting.
- b. The instructor must hold a class discussion with students on how to evaluate the sources, which would enable them to support their argument or document their research.
- c. Focus reading. The instructor must develop reading-related activities that will help students evaluate whether to use a source in their research.

**4. Work on plagiarism responsibly**

- a. Instructor must help students to distinguish between misuse of sources and plagiarism.
- b. If a student work raises suspicion, the instructor must ask for the students' in-process work such as sources and drafts, and must draw the student's attention to plagiarism as described in the syllabus.
- c. Use plagiarism detection services cautiously because they are not always reliable.

**5. Take appropriate disciplinary Actions**

- a. Pay attention to institutional guidelines for pursuing claims of academic dishonesty.

- b. When dealing with academic fraud, the disciplinary committee must first establish whether the student understood that his or her actions were in violation of the University regulations.
- c. The committee must consider the main goal as to what the student should take away from the experience.
  - A warning and/or allowing the student to start a new research process might be effective
  - A failing grade on the paper or in a course
  - Academic probation
  - Withholding degrees for a set period of time for graduating seniors
  - Suspension, required withdrawal or expulsion