Academic Integrity
Syracuse University/SUNY-ESF
Faculty Survey

Do you have any suggestions on how your campus might improve its policies concerning issues of academic integrity or any additional comments you care to make?

Two hundred twenty–four faculty provided responses to this question, with many offering multiple suggestions for improvement in a variety of areas. Four primary themes emerged from the faculty responses. The predominant theme focused on providing students and faculty with academic integrity education. Other significant themes included enhancing communication within the SU community around issues of academic integrity, providing a consistent academic integrity policy, and seeking administrative support for enforcement of the academic integrity policy.

Education

The primary theme emerging from the faculty responses, representing approximately one-third of all responses, identified the need for the education of students and faculty on issues relating to academic integrity.

Faculty suggested a range of ideas for their own ongoing academic integrity training and education. Some requested additional information on the policy itself, its enforcement, and the reporting process. There appeared to be confusion among some faculty as to when they should attempt to resolve the situation themselves and when to refer the case to an administrator. Many faculty highlighted the need for internet and software resources for detecting various forms of cheating, indicating the time required to investigate possible cases of plagiarism without this type of assistance is extremely time consuming and often simply not pursued. Some faculty called for workshops addressing best practices on preventing academic dishonesty, including specific strategies for creating written assignments, group work, and exam preparation. Additionally, adjunct faculty reported receiving very little training on academic integrity or information regarding the SU policy, recommending it becomes a primary agenda item for new faculty orientation. Full-time faculty suggested sending academic integrity reminders to faculty at the beginning of each semester/year. Representative suggestions included:

- At the beginning of each semester send an email to all faculty that gives the specific steps that should be taken if they identify a student has cheated.
- Clearer explanation of campus policies for the faculty so we are better able to enforce them.
- In the courses I teach, plagiarism from the web or other electronically available sources is a bigger problem than exam cheating. I don’t have the time to examine every suspicious paper for its source—and I don’t want to accuse a student without proof. More university support for this (software and
personnel assistance) would be greatly appreciated. I think if students saw it difficult to get away with, they might be more cautious.

Part-time instructors are in a limbo when it comes to dealing with infractions—they are uncertain of procedures, not sure where to go, and in actual cases not always encouraged to pursue the matter. So the incidence of cheating may actually be higher in classes taught by instructors least aware of rules, regulations, and policy and with the least feeling of administrative and faculty support in applying penalties.

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We should discuss teaching methods to improve student learning and decrease dishonestly. Faculty need reminders that academic honesty improves the quality of education and that academic dishonesty diminishes the quality of the education.

When providing faculty with information about rules, policies, procedures and penalties, also include an in-depth description of best practices for minimizing the opportunities for cheating (kind of assignments, etc.).

Workshops for professors to make them more aware of cheating opportunities and how to prevent them and deal with them when they occur.

Faculty also identified the need to educate students on academic integrity issues. Many faculty indicated that it is necessary to educate students and raise their awareness of academic integrity. It was suggested that a culture of academic integrity needs to be established, with that involving educating students and not just creating a policy. Faculty called for educating the incoming students during new student orientation, including an explanation of why academic honesty is important and valued by the SU community, examples of academic dishonesty, and a thorough explanation of the policy and consequences. Others recommended making academic integrity education an integral component of freshman forum, creating online academic integrity modules for students, encouraging all faculty to discuss academic integrity with students at the beginning of every semester, and having a consistent university-wide statement on academic integrity that can be placed on all syllabi. A few faculty noted that international students specifically have a need for education due to the varying academic integrity standards across countries. Faculty suggestions included:

Academic integrity is a function of culture not policies. When you set the correct expectations, educate the students about these, and create an educational culture you solve most of these problems. Policies not enforced, are useless. A culture of honesty and integrity reduces these problems.

Addressing this problem (really problems) requires a process that engages students as well as faculty in thinking about the implications of plagiarism and cheating. This is an important ethical issue which goes far beyond course work. Unfortunately, it needs to be addressed in the context of a culture that encourages cutting corners and often regards dishonesty in our economic and political behavior.

I think most new college students struggle with making the transition from questionable practices in high school related to academic work that are considered more serious offenses at the collegiate level. Perhaps sharing some sample case studies of actual SU situations involving students who
were accused of different types of cheating could be shared with freshmen students as part of the various first-year programs (e.g., Freshman Forum in A&S).

I think students from foreign countries need to be made aware of American standards with regard to plagiarism as soon as they arrive on campus since some may come from countries with different standards (or where the cultural norms accepted when using the words of authorities are different from ours).

I’m not sure if academic honesty is discussed in student orientation, but if not, it should be. I also think all students should receive a written copy of the university’s policy at the start of their programs.

Making it a required element of all syllabi, much as the statement concerning the accommodation of disabilities is now.

Perhaps incorporate (if not already there) discussion of honesty as a major part of Freshman Forum.

Remind students at the beginning of each course about university policies concerning issues of academic integrity.

The library needs to create standalone online modules that teach students how to properly cite, quote, and paraphrase material.

**Communication**

Approximately one-seventh of the faculty responses called for **enhancing communication on academic integrity and increasing dissemination of academic integrity information**. Faculty indicated a need for raising awareness of academic integrity through increased communication within the SU community. Their suggested avenues of discussion included *public forums and panels, faculty and college-wide meetings, annual review of the academic integrity policy, information sharing between schools/colleges to enable the identification of repeat offenders, and an annual reporting of all academic integrity hearings and their outcomes to the SU community.* Additionally, they recommended creating an *academic integrity handbook* for distribution to all constituents of the campus community and providing students with *easy access to academic integrity information* (e.g., hanging signs regarding the academic integrity policy in the library and computer labs). Faculty recommendations included:

- Disseminate the policies to faculty on a regular basis.
  - I believe establishing and maintaining standards of academic integrity is a faculty responsibility and should be a high priority of the faculty. I believe the leadership of the VCAA and the Deans in this regard is insufficient because such issues are never really discussed on a regular and intelligent basis. We should believe in academic integrity and we should discuss it in a succinct, but intelligent way pretty much every semester.

- I do not recall any organized discussion of this topic at a faculty meeting and so would encourage its inclusion at departmental and collegewide meetings.

- I do not remember ever seeing such policies…make them more public, require links to policies in course syllabi or at least school/department/program websites.
Make the system more visible, active and less secretive. Hold forums and panels for students. Post warnings on public computers, library, etc. Get students involved in a campaign to reduce cheating, “Cheaters Hurt Noncheaters.” Perhaps a regular review of the actual policy and procedures during the opening faculty meeting. Perhaps a summary of the # and type of incidents/responses within the college for the previous year. Share anonymized reports of students’ cheating and their outcomes more broadly with students and faculty.

We need to develop a means of exchanging data about students cheating across campus so that students who cheat in one place will know that such information will be available to other departments if they should cheat there. The honest students need to know that cheating is not viewed as the norm and will not be tolerated.

**Consistent Policy**

Approximately one-seventh of the faculty responses called for a **clear and consistent academic integrity policy**. Many faculty indicated that consistency, addressed at a variety of levels, was lacking within the current policy. Some faculty simply called for a **common understanding** of what constitutes cheating at a university-wide level. Others felt a need for **clearer guidelines** in reporting academic dishonesty. Some indicated that the **consequences of cheating** should be consistent. A few faculty called for **consistency across faculty** within the same school/college, noting that students are aware of which faculty enforce honesty and which do not. Some felt that this consistency could only be accomplished with a policy at the **university level**, while others argued that this could and should be handled at the **school/college level**. Comments included:

- Have a clear cut policy on what constitutes cheating and what the consequences are.
- Have a simple, clear, published list of standards and a simple, clear process for addressing this – bring these to new faculty orientation every year and to each dept. every four years to refresh faculty.
- Have uniform and tough standards that are consistently enforced across campus. The policies concerning academic integrity are not well defined in my college so it is left to the instructor. A uniform set of guidelines that can be publicized so that the students know what happens when they are caught doing certain actions would certainly be helpful.
- The university needs to recognize the different pedagogical situations that exist in various schools on campus – a “one size fits all” or a centralized process would not be appropriate.
- The University should establish a single, coherent, simple code of academic integrity, and then enforce it vigorously. The model of Arts and Sciences is a good one: two strikes and you’re out.
- The VC could give us a statement explaining violations and listing repercussions to print in our syllabi, much like disability support policy and attendance policy. It would be good to have a consistent statement about it.
Administrative Support

About one-seventh of faculty responses insisted on increased administrative support when enforcing the academic integrity policy. They noted that the enforcement of the current policy is inadequate. Some faculty attributed this to lack of understanding the system, while many more suggested that it was related to the lack of support that faculty receive from the administration in situations of academic dishonesty. Part-time faculty indicated that without administrative support, they have no protection when accusing a student of academic dishonesty. Some tenure-track faculty worried about the impact an academic dishonesty case would have on their student ratings, while others indicated that the current tenure/promotion paradigm does not support time spent pursuing academic integrity cases. Representative comments included:

Actually the policies on the SU campus lack credibility in the eyes of some faculty who have referred cases to the system. The faculty members felt they were more on trial than the alleged cheater. Proof of course must be beyond any doubt. Many incidents probably go undefined or unreported.

Faculty need to have the courage to fail students for cheating. They need to know that their departments and upper administration will back them up if needed. We need to start holding students accountable for their actions.

Faculty who discover academic integrity violations have to know that the school/university will support them even in the face of a serious challenge to disciplinary action (e.g., a lawsuit filed by the student).

Hold students responsible…. List consequences clearly for cheating and support faculty when they enforce the rules. Many students at Syracuse have been caught cheating and nothing has been done. Make it clear to both faculty and students how and why certain types of cheating can result in students getting expelled – and have the administration stand behind. I believe the administration is gun shy in expelling students for fear of law suit.

Professors and instructors are reluctant to deal with cheating because of the difficulty of investigating cheating. More importantly, with student evaluations as virtually the only measure of a teacher’s effectiveness, I am reluctant to deal with a situation that could be reflected in those evaluations.

There is only weak support for faculty who take a strong stand against plagiarism and cheating. The administrations seems to bend over backwards to be fair, which is fine, but sometime fail to see the time and courage it takes faculty, particularly junior ones, to protect integrity.

Other Suggestions

While faculty were asked to provide suggestions on how to improve the current policy, about one-fifth of the responses focused on a variety of other topics. Faculty voiced frustrations with the university, discussed poor teaching behaviors of other faculty members, claimed few students cheat, expressed dissatisfaction with using a survey to assess academic integrity, and shared varying perspectives on academic integrity.

The remaining comments represent about one-tenth of the faculty responses. This small number of responses focused on establishing an honor code at SU, recruiting better quality students, either reducing class size or increasing classroom space, and
establishing stronger sanctions. A few respondents were adjuncts or in their first year of teaching at SU and were unable to offer suggestions. Additionally, a very small number of respondents reported that cheating was not a concern for them.

**What role do you think faculty should play in promoting academic integrity and/or controlling cheating in their courses?**

This inquiry was addressed by 230 faculty respondents, with many sharing multiple roles for faculty to play in promoting academic integrity. Four primary themes emerged from their responses. The predominant theme focused on the role of faculty as they execute the various steps involved in the process of maintaining academic integrity. Other significant themes included the prominent role that faculty should play in the academic integrity arena, educating students on academic integrity, and providing an environment that prohibits academic dishonesty.

**Process**

The primary theme emerging from the faculty responses identified the roles faculty must undertake in the process of maintaining academic integrity. Approximately two-fifths of the faculty saw themselves serving in one or more of these roles.

Faculty described their role in promoting academic integrity as a process. They reinforced the necessity to set high academic standards for students, as they will rise to the occasion. Respondents indicated a need to clearly communicate to students their expectations regarding academic integrity for assignments, exams, and collaborative work. Many faculty reported diligence in monitoring student work, holding all students to the set standards, and consistently enforcing the policy. Several faculty mentioned the need for strong administrative support in both setting university-wide academic integrity expectations and supporting the enforcement of the policy. Their responses included:

Faculty definitely have a responsibility in promoting academic integrity by personal example, setting and publishing of expected standards, discussion of expectations and monitoring of students as they complete work assignments. Faculty must be responsible for establishing standards for their courses, explicitly communicating those standards to students in written and class-directed means, and most importantly – holding students to the standards. I hear too much about “letting this one go because…” instead of holding a standard. No student will respect a standard if it changes on whims or according to the student who violates the standard.

Faculty should and do play an important role in their daily work with students ‘on the frontlines’ in promoting academic integrity and controlling cheating. We do so, however, at sometimes substantial personal and professional expense because we do not have adequate support in this struggle. I can understand why people eventually grow cynical and choose to turn a blind eye.
Faculty should clearly articulate their expectations, the consequences of violating an academic integrity policy, and then follow through and support other faculty in enforcing those policies.

Faculty should discuss their expectations in the first class session and on the syllabus, and should be vigilant in monitoring tests and other assignments for suspected cheating.

Faculty should include academic integrity notices on the syllabus for the course and remind students of their responsibilities as well as the seriousness with which the faculty member takes them.

Faculty should make it very clear what's acceptable, but the university also needs to make clear what the rules are, especially with respect to plagiarism.

I strongly believe in promoting academic integrity and controlling cheating in my course. Faculty should play a major role in monitoring, preventing, and appropriately disciplining students who cheat. If we don’t do it, we are contributing to the problem. I believe it is my societal role to ensure student know they must be honest in their academic lives.

Instill in students an appreciation and expectation that the highest standards are a personal and professional obligation.

Make it clear that it won’t be tolerated, establish the consequences for it, and live up to those consequences.

Talk about it the first day of class and continue to talk about your expectations with individual assignments.

**Prominence**

Approximately one-sixth of the faculty responses indicated that faculty should **play a prominent role in promoting academic integrity**. They described this role as **primary**, **major**, **strong**, **important**, and **taking the lead** because they are “on the frontline.”

Representative descriptors included:

- A primary role. This is one of the most important aspects of the quality of education offered by a university.
- A strong role, with strong support from administration.
- A very important and active role. They are the ones in the primary prevention position.
- Essential role; we are the ones who are in the front lines – we see it and catch it.
- Faculty are at the forefront since they have direct contact with the students.
- Faculty must play a central role in promoting academic integrity.
- Faculty play a vital role – they are the primary means to safeguard against cheating and to ensure academic integrity.
- The faculty should be demanding and vigilant. Integrity is critical to the success of our students.
- We ought to be front and center, leading the discussion.

**Education**

The faculty should play a role in **providing academic integrity education for students**, according to one-sixth of the faculty responses. An ongoing dialogue with students is essential in order to convey an **understanding of plagiarism and related dishonesty**.
behaviors. Faculty noted that it is equally important to discuss the importance of honesty in an academic environment, set a serious tone regarding academic expectations, and serve as role models for students. Faculty comments included:

- Be proactively involved with communicating the cause/effect of cheating on everyone.
- Communicate a tone of seriousness about all work done in the course. Respect students and demand respect in return.
- Ethical practice demands that faculty promote academic integrity and that they control cheating in their courses. If we don’t, we’re not teaching students the proper value system by which they are to live during their time in the academy.
- Faculty are the gatekeepers for academic honesty and are obligated to not only make sure that students are regularly reminded of its importance but also the penalties for plagiarism and academic fraud. It is incumbent on faculty to not only clearly explain what does and does not constitute academic dishonesty, but to incorporate and facilitate discussions of ethics where relevant in students’ coursework.
- I think it should be part of our message to every student that we take honestly seriously and that students benefit from the experience, not the grade.
- If faculty are educators, then they must educate students and themselves on proper conduct and why anything else is wholly inappropriate and inimical to the individual students' best interest and the class, and community as a whole.
- Raising standards of excellence in the classroom and discussing the importance of honesty at the practical and philosophical level repeatedly and consistently.
- Take responsibility for what happens in their classes. Realize that they are role models, and behave accordingly.
- The faculty are the major models of honesty and integrity, and hence must be the first line of defense of these values. A model of honesty defends that honesty when it is violated.
- They need to let students know the learning reasons behind why cheating is not good (other than the threat of “you’ll fail”).
- We should not only ‘police’ against cheating, but explain why certain behaviors violate academic integrity.

**Precautions**

About one-sixth of the faculty comments reflected a sense of responsibility for being proactive and taking reasonable precautions to minimize the opportunity for academic dishonesty. Faculty suggested creating an environment in which academic integrity is valued and students are confident in their own abilities to succeed in the class. Additionally, several faculty provided practical measures for attempting to prevent cheating. These strategies included changing test questions each year, using multiple versions of an exam, and carefully proctoring exams. Pedagogical suggestions for minimizing cheating included designing assignments that foster individual reflection and creativity, reflect work that interests students, and require higher level cognitive skills.
Their strategies included:

Avoid overreliance on multiple-choice exams, and shift emphasis to written assignments accompanied by presentation or discussion of the papers so that students clearly have to own their work.

Be proactively involved with communicating the cause/effect of cheating on everyone. Also create an environment that fosters individual creativity and the desire to excel without the need for cheating. Use appropriate scheduling of exams/assignments/projects so that students know at the start of the semester what the course requirements are and when things are due so that they can plan accordingly.

Cheating becomes particularly tempting to students where memorization is asked for, and where individuals are measured in relation to one another. Where students are asked to apply knowledge (which may be provided to them on a test or exam) to situations that are new, and are asked to work together to achieve the answer, then cheating is less likely to occur.

Design assignments that are unique and process-oriented.

Design cheat-resistant exams and projects, and use internet search engines to spot-check student work.

Exams and assignments should be constructed in such ways as to make cheating difficult. The instructor should be present at exams.

Faculty owe it to their students to minimize the opportunities for cheating during tests and to follow up on suspicious term papers and assignments.

Faculty should create assignments and exams that inspire students to do their own work and that are designed to prevent cheating. Faculty should also encourage students to be good academic citizens and to think ethically about how they approach their work.

Faculty should make their assignments distinctive, specific and varied enough to render plagiarism very difficult.

I work very hard during tests to control cheating (multiple tests, separate students, etc.). These preventive measures are very necessary and all faculty should practice them. On written assignments, faculty have to be very creative in catching the cheating but once caught, the penalties need to be severe to prevent others.

One way to control cheating is to devise assessment methods that assess understanding beyond simple recall and comprehension (e.g., multiple choice exams). Combined with precise descriptions of educational outcomes, we can assess students’ ability to analyze, synthesize, and judge correctly.

Other Comments

Slightly less than one-tenth of the comments did not address the role of faculty in promoting academic integrity, but focused on a variety of other topics. A few faculty discussed the ease with which their colleagues dismiss academic dishonesty, accusing them of being lazy, ignorant, or cynical. A small number of respondents indicated that faculty have no recourse within a cheating culture. The student attitude that ‘everyone is cheating’ and ‘nothing will happen if we cheat,’ appears to render these faculty powerless.