Academic Integrity Survey Highlights

The on-line survey given on the SU/ESF campus in November 2004 was developed and administered by the Center for Academic Integrity (CAI), a national organization based at the Kenan Center for Ethics at Duke University. In addition to the responses of SU/ESF undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and TAs, we were provided with comparison data: faculty and undergraduate student data from 28 higher education institutions that administered the survey during the 2003-2004 academic year ("national" samples); undergraduate student data from 17 doctoral/research extensive universities that administered the survey during academic years 2002-2003 or 2003-2004, or during the fall 2004 semester; and faculty data from 15 doctoral/research extensive universities that administered the survey during the same time frame ("doctoral extensive" samples).

The survey return rate for students was 17% (3331 respondents); for faculty, 28% (497 respondents); for TAs, 18% (132 respondents). These response rates are above the means reported by the Center for Academic Integrity for administration of this survey at large universities.

Student Academic Integrity

74% of undergraduate students and 42% of graduate students reported that they had engaged in one or more cheating behaviors during the past year.

Among undergraduates who reported that they had cheated, 84% cheated more than once. Among graduate students who reported that they had cheated, 75% cheated more than once. Most students who reported that they had cheated engaged in more than one type of cheating behavior.

Among undergraduates at schools and colleges other than University College, cheating rates ranged from 64% to 81%; the University College rate was 41%. Among graduate students, these rates ranged from 33% to 67% for all schools and colleges.

Cheating rates are comparable among sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduates. Comparative rates for first-year students are inconclusive, because the survey was administered during their first semester on campus and asked about conduct during the past year.

Among twenty cheating behaviors, undergraduate and graduate students are most likely to have participated in unauthorized collaboration and paraphrasing without citing and least likely to have turned in a paper obtained from a paper "mill" or website or submitted someone else’s work.

Perceptions of Cheating Seriousness

SU/ESF faculty rate the seriousness of all cheating behaviors higher than students.

SU/ESF, national, and doctoral extensive sample faculty agree that the most serious forms of cheating include fabricating or falsifying lab data, copying from another student during a test, submitting a paper obtained from a paper mill or website, plagiarism, and turning in work done by someone else.
SU/ESF undergraduate and graduate students agree that copying from another student during a test without his/her knowledge, submitting a paper obtained from a paper mill or website, plagiarism, and turning in someone else’s work are most serious. Undergraduates rate seventeen of twenty cheating behaviors as significantly less serious than graduate students.

SU/ESF faculty and students agree that the least serious behaviors are collaboration and receiving unpermitted help.

**Perceptions of Cheating Frequency**

Most SU/ESF students do not believe cheating is a serious problem on campus. When asked about three specific behaviors, however, SU/ESF undergraduate students reported a significantly higher perceived incidence of plagiarism, cheating during tests, and inappropriate sharing of work in group assignments than students in the national and doctoral extensive examples.

Faculty believe that cheating is more of a problem on campus than students do. Nearly half of SU/ESF faculty report they agree or strongly agree that cheating is a serious problem at SU/ESF. This is also significantly higher than the national results.

SU/ESF faculty rate the frequency of all cheating behaviors higher than undergraduates and graduate students. Faculty and students agree that collaboration and paraphrasing without citing sources are the most frequent cheating behaviors.

Graduate and undergraduate students report that submitting a paper obtained from a paper mill or website and turning in work done by someone else are least frequently seen at SU/ESF, while faculty believe these occur much more frequently.

**Impact of SU/ESF Academic Integrity Policies**

Nearly half of SU/ESF faculty rate the effectiveness of campus academic integrity policies as low or very low. National sample faculty rated their policies as significantly more effective, while doctoral extensive faculty results were comparable to SU/ESF.

SU/ESF undergraduate and graduate students agree that campus academic integrity policies have a medium level of effectiveness (undergraduates’ perception of effectiveness is significantly higher than graduates’). These groups are “unsure” as to whether the investigation of suspected cheating incidents is fair and impartial.

Nearly two-thirds of SU/ESF faculty say when they referred a case of suspected cheating to the appropriate authority they were unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the way the case was handled. This is consistent with the national sample.

One-third of SU/ESF faculty believe that the severity of cheating penalties on our campus is low or very low. Only seventeen percent rated it as high or very high. These rates are comparable to the national sample.

SU/ESF undergraduates and graduate students feel that cheating penalties here are of medium-high severity (undergraduates’ perception of severity is significantly higher than graduates’).
Communication of and Support for Academic Integrity

Most SU/ESF students (89% of undergraduates and 82% of graduates) report that they have been informed about campus academic integrity policies.

SU/ESF undergraduate and graduate students agree that they were most likely to be informed about academic integrity by faculty members and student handbooks; students learned the least from the campus website, deans and administrators, and other students.

Among various academic integrity topics, our students report that SU/ESF faculty are most likely to discuss appropriate citation methods and least likely to address falsifying/fabricating lab/research data.

Faculty at SU/ESF and from the national sample learned about policies primarily from the faculty manual and from other faculty.

SU/ESF undergraduate and graduate students agree that understanding of and support for academic integrity policies is highest among faculty, followed by teaching assistants and then students. SU/ESF and national sample faculty also believe that the faculty understand and support academic integrity more than students do.

SU/ESF undergraduate students perceive a significantly lower level of support by students for academic integrity policies here than do respondents in the national and doctoral extensive samples.

Promoting Academic Integrity

One-third of SU/ESF faculty report they have ignored a suspected incident of cheating in their classes. This figure was significantly lower than the national sample. 43% of SU/ESF faculty report that they have referred a suspecting cheating case to the appropriate school/college authority.

Students believe that faculty are more vigilant in reporting cheating incidents than faculty say they are.

SU/ESF, national, and doctoral extensive sample faculty agree that they are “unsure” as to the vigilance of faculty in discovering/reporting suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

Graduate and undergraduate students do not believe that they are responsible for monitoring the academic integrity of other students, and they do not do so: just 3% of undergraduate and 4% of graduate student respondents have reported another student for cheating. About one-half of faculty feel that students should monitor each others’ conduct.

Among ten safeguards faculty might use to reduce cheating in their courses, SU/ESF faculty are most likely to change exams regularly, discuss their views on the importance of academic integrity with their students, closely monitor students taking an exam, and include in their syllabi information on cheating/plagiarism. They are least likely to use the Internet to detect or confirm plagiarism or hand out different versions of an exam. These results are comparable to those for the national sample.
In response to an open-ended question asking what changes SU/ESF could make to support academic integrity, nearly half of undergraduate and graduate responses focused on changes that faculty could make. The majority of these responses focused on preventive measures to reduce opportunities for academic dishonesty. Other respondents indicated that faculty should increase efforts to discuss academic integrity policies and issues. Students also called for faculty to strictly enforce current policies and for consistent implementation.

In response to a similar question, approximately one-third of faculty identified the need for educating both students and faculty on academic integrity issues. Approximately one-seventh of faculty called, respectively, for enhancing communication on academic integrity and increasing dissemination of academic integrity information; a clear and consistent policy; and increased administrative support for enforcing academic integrity expectations.

A majority of SU/ESF graduate and undergraduate students agrees that the amount of coursework they are expected to complete is reasonable, the degree of difficulty in exams and assignments is appropriate, and the types of assessment used to evaluate their understanding is effective.

Comparison Between SU/ESF Survey Respondents and SU/ESF Population

Among undergraduate student respondents, the home school/college and academic standing of the survey respondents was comparable to the SU/ESF population. Among graduate student respondents, IST is overrepresented, while University College is underrepresented. In both groups of student respondents, females and students with a cumulative G.P.A. of 3.50-4.00 are overrepresented.

Among faculty, the sex of the respondents was comparable to the SU population. Instructors are underrepresented and associate professors are overrepresented. Arts and Sciences faculty are overrepresented, while VPA is underrepresented. Among teaching assistants, the sex of the respondents was relatively comparable to the SU population. Newhouse is overrepresented among TA respondents.