

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A GAMBLE... SO WHY DO SOME STUDENTS CHEAT?

Students know they could fail a class or get kicked out of school if they cheat, but some still do. Why do they take the obvious risk?

Like any decision making process many things must be taken into account when we see to understand the motivation students have to cheat. Students have reported to me that they cheat because:



1. The class/assignment is not important to me or has nothing to do with what I want to be.
2. I don't have any time because all of my projects/tests are at the same time and I have so many other responsibilities.
3. My GPA is too important to me because I want to get into grad/med/law school.
4. I have gotten so far behind there is no chance that I can catch up.
5. I had a personal crisis at the time and was under too much pressure. I could not focus on the assignment.
6. Everyone else is doing it and my instructor grades on a curve.
7. I didn't know that what I did was plagiarism.

HOW TO GUARD AGAINST CHEATING IN YOUR FINAL EXAM

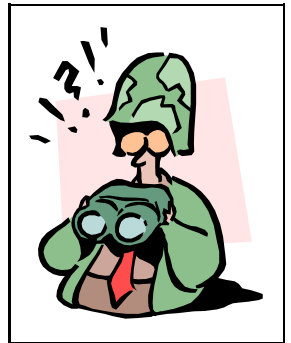
There are some simple ideas you should keep in mind as you plan for finals week.

Preparing your exam:

- Have multiple forms of an exam by alternating the order of the exam questions.
- Routinely change the questions in your exam from one semester to the next. Old test files may exist for your class.
- Provide proper guidance before your exam and office hours so your students feel comfortable with the material.

Before the exam is given:

- Talk to your students about the importance of honesty before you distribute the final exam. It takes just a few moments to remind your students of their responsibilities and your expectations. You may be surprised by the positive reaction your students have when you discuss integrity.



- Include an integrity statement on your exam. You may even have your students sign the statement affirming their commitment to integrity.

Survey the landscape:

- Ask your students to spread out or sit in every other seat if you have room. They will be more comfortable this way and there may be fewer wandering eyes.
- Do not allow students to have paper or notes on the floor under their desks.
- Do not allow any talking during the exam or when students are turning in their exams.
- Pay attention to shifting eyes or body posture. If students make unnatural gestures, they may be signaling to another student in the room. As well, if you see a student watching you periodically, they may be monitoring your proctoring and looking for a chance to cheat.
- Be aware of students who leave during an exam. Do not excuse multiple students to the restroom at the same time.
- Walk around the exam room to get a better view of students if something looks suspicious.
- Pay attention to your proctoring duties. If your students perceive that they are not being watched, they may try more risky behaviors.

Truman State University

If you encounter an incident of academic misconduct, contact your Division Head or the Campus Judicial Officer, Victoria Burke in the Dean of Student Affairs Office at 785-4111

In January, the brochure ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, a guide for Truman Students will be available at the Student Affairs Office. You are welcome to ask for copies for your students for the semester.

You may also refer your students to the Judicial Affairs website at jaffairs.truman.edu for more information about integrity.

This newsletter was developed to assist faculty in dealing with the serious issue of academic integrity.

Contributions and idea suggestions are welcome.

Please contact Victoria Burke, the Assistant to the Dean of Student Affairs, with your comments. She may be reached at 785-4111, in 112 Kirk Building or at vicburke@truman.edu

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT REPORTING INCIDENTS OF DISHONESTY

- *By reporting an incident, I will ruin the student's academic career.*

The student is responsible for their own behaviors and subsequent ramifications. By reporting the student, you are providing to them an opportunity to take responsibility for those actions. One minor instance of cheating or plagiarism will not ruin their future at Truman, but it will allow the student an opportunity to learn from their poor decision and about their personal ethics



- *A report of dishonesty will mark up the student's **Permanente Record** and their future grad school will immediately know.*

The "permanent record" fear is ungrounded in some respects. A student's disciplinary information is considered part of an educational file and therefore protected by FERPA. There are severe restrictions on who has access to that file. Students will know when they give permission for another university to have access to this file through a Dean's Certification. Generally speaking, some law school programs and a few other universities require this permission as a part of the application. Questions regarding FERPA should be referred to the Office of the Registrar or University General Council.

- *The student's academic transcript will reflect the instance of dishonesty.*

At Truman, we do not make any notations on a student's academic transcript when they are found responsible for cheating.

- *Nothing will happen anyway if I report it.*

By not reporting a student you are guaranteeing that there would be no response by the University. As our procedure stands, students will receive a letter

informing them of that they were reported for cheating. If multiple incidents of cheating have allegedly occurred, they will be subject to a judicial hearing where there is a possibility of judicial sanctions.

- *I just don't have the time to report or reporting the incident is a long and involved process.*



The Academic Dishonesty Report form, which can be found in each division office, is a half of a sheet of paper and should not take long to fill out.

- *I will have to prove to a board or something that the student cheated.*

If the student has allegedly cheated in multiple classes, there may be a Judicial Hearing. You may be invited to share the information you have collected in the case. The judicial officer/board would make the determination if a student is responsible for violating the Student Conduct Code.

- *Reporting incidents of dishonesty is not a part of my job.*

Reporting students may not have been in the position description that you read when you applied to work here, but it is an expectation. The General Catalog (2000, p. 39) states "It is the responsibility of faculty members

- 1) to inspire in their students an appreciation of and a desire for honesty in academic work;
- 2) to discourage dishonesty and to protect the honest student; and
- 3) to take appropriate action in instances of dishonesty."

If you have any questions regarding reporting please contact Victoria Burke in Judicial Affairs or your Division Head.