

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences

Academic Integrity Statement

This statement was developed by the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Academic Integrity and endorsed by vote of the CEBS Curriculum Committee on 10/30/2012. The subcommittee was chaired by Dr. Ric Keaster, and the members included Dr. Janet Applin, Mr. Michael Armstrong, Dr. Reagan Brown, Dr. Lance Hahn, Dr. Gail Kirby, Dr. Sally Kuhlenschmidt, Dr. Stephen Miller, Ms. Tiffany Polite, Dr. Vernon Sheeley, and Ms. Loren Westerfield.

Academic Integrity

Institutions of higher learning were founded on the fundamental purpose of effectively preparing their graduates for what they would be facing in the world of work and citizenship beyond the college or university. Regardless of the field of endeavor, the “credential” supplied by the institution – a degree or certification – was that entity’s stamp of approval suggesting at least a threshold competence level of the graduate had been met, with the transcript providing the quantitative and qualitative appraisal of accomplishment for the particular student. Grades were assigned based on the performance of students in classes listed on the document; instructors used a variety of means to determine those final grades. From these, a grade point average was calculated that indicated the composite success of the student in his or her effort during that portion of the academic career. This reality is still true today.

At the heart of this certifying credential is the *assumption* that the process has transpired following moral and ethical behaviors on the parts of all involved. When the integrity of the process has been compromised in some way, the integrity of the credential, the student, and the faculty member itself has been compromised. When the integrity of the credential has been compromised, the integrity of the institution has been likewise compromised. When this happens, society rightly can call into question the real worth of an academic degree or certification. Thus, preserving the integrity of the credentialing process in postsecondary education is of prime importance.

The following statement is an outgrowth of this fundamental belief by the faculty, administration, and staff of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. It will attempt to inform its readers concerning the importance of academic integrity, enumerate the various ways this integrity can be compromised, and provide guidelines for dealing with those who violate the tenets fundamental to preserving the integrity of higher learning.

Personal Integrity

Aside from the foregoing argument concerning the institution and the academic enterprise itself when integrity is compromised, there are the personal costs that need to be considered as well.

1. One of the few things that are in one’s total control is his or her personal integrity and the reputation that goes with it. Who one is, what one is, and what one stands for should be intensely protected, especially in today’s world of technology where evidence of poor

judgment is potentially maintained online indefinitely. Once reputation has been compromised, it is difficult, if not impossible, to restore. The assumption by others is that if one will cheat in one arena (academics), then that person will cheat in another arena (life). On the other hand, preserving your reputation is an essential tool for success in life.

2. Like any breach of personal conscience, the first time is the most difficult. Once that barrier is broken, subsequent breaches seem less significant. Subtle trends develop and ultimately habits become engrained. Self-concept suffers in one of two ways: we think less of ourselves or we think more highly of ourselves than we should due to tainted success. When we know we have done all tasks to the best of our ability, we will gain confidence and self-respect that no one can take from us.
3. Regardless of the course or assignment under consideration – or how useless it might seem to the one completing it – that task contributes to one’s preparation for work and for life. We simply cannot determine the ultimate usefulness of any particular piece of information or any experience we encounter in college. Students should treat every assignment as that one piece that will better qualify them than the person next to them in the line for job interviews. Assuming an assignment/test/project is not important in the larger picture is no justification for using illegitimate means of completing it.
4. All of us want to be good at what we do in life. No one sets out to be bad at his or her chosen profession – or even mediocre. It is natural to want to be respected for what you do professionally. If you cheat in your professional preparation, you simply will not be as good as you could be. Those who are best at what they do, get ahead in life. Prepare yourself fully; assume responsibility.
5. Finally, something should be said concerning the protection of students who do not engage in these illegitimate behaviors to gain an advantage. Adoption and enforcement of policies that discourage unethical behavior has the additional benefit of protecting honest students, motivating them to persist in their honor, and promoting a larger environment of integrity on campus.

Types of Academic Dishonesty

In stark terms, the subject here is “cheating” in its wide variety of forms. It is necessary at this point to detail these types somewhat, as there seems to be a culture developing among students where definitions and distinctions of what is and is not acceptable are becoming blurred. A quick engine search can provide one with a complete list of what qualifies as “academic dishonesty” (e.g., plagiarism, fabrication, deception, collaboration, copying, cribbing, bribery, sabotage, and personation/substitution). The outline below lays out three categories under which all of these most logically might occur. **Essentially, students are expected to do work that is assigned to them and submit products that represent personal and individual effort only.** This principle generally applies to all work done for a class, regardless of the nature of the assignment, and instructors will stipulate when this is not the case. When students breach this fundamental guideline, it can be safely assumed that academic dishonesty has occurred.

1. In an exam setting
 - a. Presenting as your work, test answers that are not your work, including the following:

- i. Using resources other than those specifically allowed by the instructor (e.g., notes or another person)
 - ii. Copying from another student's test
 - iii. Using notes from any source during a test when notes are not allowed
 - iv. Using materials that the instructor is not making available to the whole class (Exception: students with disabilities needing accommodations)
 - v. Recycling an assignment that has been used in another course (unless approved by the instructor)
 - b. Acquiring a copy of the exam without permission
 - c. Providing answers for or soliciting answers from another student with or without permission of the other student
(Note: This may either be an attempt to help or harm the targeted student)
- 2. On a written assignment
 - a. Presenting as your own work duplicated work that you did not create
 - i. Purchasing written work from an external source
 - ii. Copying work from a free external source (online or otherwise)
 - iii. Presenting as your work something another person has created
 - b. Altering text from another source
 - i. Altering select words of some original text in order to conceal plagiarism
- 3. (Note: More detail on this particular violation is provided below) Academic dishonesty that is possible in various settings
 - a. Providing money or favors in order to gain academic advantage
 - b. Falsely stating that work was given to the instructor at a certain time when it was not
 - c. Correcting the responses of a graded assignment and presenting them to the instructor as incorrectly graded material
 - d. Pretending to be someone you are not; taking the place of another
- 4. Or any other behavior that violates the basic principles of integrity and [honesty](#)

College Guidelines for Violations/Punishments

There are several sources of information already in existence that speak to the topic at hand. *The Western Creed* includes the phrase, "practicing personal and academic integrity." The *Student Handbook* includes the following: "Dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, misrepresenting of oneself or an organization, knowingly furnishing false information to the University, or omitting relevant or necessary information to gain a benefit, to injure, or to defraud is prohibited." Other specific and more detailed sections in the *Handbook* include *Academic Integrity*, *Academic Dishonesty*, *Plagiarism*, and *Cheating*. Also, there is a section in the *Faculty Handbook* dealing with this issue on page 58. Serious consequences are attendant to such violations, including the possibility of dismissal from the university. Faculty are encouraged to report violations of these policies to the Office of Judicial Affairs in order to track these violations effectively and make sure that serial violators are treated accordingly.

The College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, in creating the current document, is making an assertive statement about the importance of this issue and is attempting to educate both students and faculty in CEBS on its stance when violations occur. The administration is reluctant

to prescribe detailed and conclusive actions on the part of faculty or departmental administrators when violations of this statement occur. Individual situations need to be evaluated at the time, based on the evidence presented, and these decisions rightly lie within the academic department. There may be mitigating circumstances that prevent the establishment of “absolutes” in these types of serious violations. That said, the following are presented as strongly recommended guidelines and principles:

1. Faculty and administrators should be extremely diligent in protecting the academic integrity of programs and processes that transpire within departments. Violations of the type noted above mar the integrity of the academic enterprise which should be protected against those whose behavior damages it.
2. Faculty should consult resources provided by the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching (FaCET) that are intended to equip them adequately for this challenge. Resources there provide strategies to help reduce the incidence of academic dishonesty as well as ways to detect when these violations occur.
3. Violators should be punished and properly educated on the issue if a lack of understanding is what caused the violation. When a student “cheats” in one form or another and escapes what should be natural consequences, this encourages the student (and possibly others) to engage in the activity again. As the philosophy of most penal systems would suggest, punishment – fair, yet decisive – acts as a deterrent to violations. The more sure and severe the punishment, the fewer there should be who will attempt to game the system.
4. Faculty consensus should be the goal on this issue. Departments should have discussions that help faculty understand departmental expectations for enforcing academic integrity guidelines. Department personnel should require that faculty include sections in their syllabi every semester that deal with this topic, laying out the possible penalties for violations. In the absence of such statements (i.e., a policy), faculty not only send the message about the perceived unimportance of this issue, but they also leave themselves open to inconsistencies in applying any punishments for violations. Departments and individual faculty are encouraged to view examples of policies included in syllabi found on the *Schedule of Classes* site. Also, FaCET has some PowerPoint presentations designed to encourage discussion within a department found at the following site: (<http://www.wku.edu/teaching/facets/index.php>). Departments are free to use or adapt these materials or invite FaCET staff to lead the discussion.
5. Departments should develop a system for educating the uninformed concerning the details of plagiarism. See the next section.

Educating the Uninformed

The academic integrity violations listed above are, for the most part, widely accepted as such, although some cultures might not accept these as absolutes. What qualifies as plagiarism, on the other hand, may not be as widely known as these other methods of cheating or misrepresentation.

First, plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of students must be their own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. The manner of giving credit must be done carefully and correctly.

- To present ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism.
- To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act.
- To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is also plagiarism.

The following is an overview of the ways that students most often commit plagiarism, either ignorantly or willfully. It is taken from our College of Education and Behavioral Sciences Web site and printed with permission from Charlanne Pook, Dean of Students at the Providence School. The last bullet is the same source but another document under the same heading. It should also be mentioned that a commonly accepted standard for copying "word-for-word" is four or more consecutive words.

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not
- writer properly cites a source, but neglects to put in quotation marks any text that has been copied word-for-word, or close to it
- rewriting another author's work in your own words, but not giving credit to nor citing the page number of the original author's ideas

Because ignorance of plagiarism is a relatively common plea, it is strongly recommended that departments adopt a procedure whereby all students taking a course offered by those departments are educated and then testify that they are knowledgeable on the topic. Without this step, the plea of ignorance is too easily asserted as a call for leniency; education on the topic removes this possibility. One way to accomplish this is through online tutorials that cover what students need to know to protect themselves from plagiarism violations. The following are just two of a number of these tutorials available online as of the adoption of this document in the college:

Harvard Graduate School of Education: Principles of Paraphrasing: How to Avoid Plagiarism in Three Easy Modules. <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=paraphrasing>

Indiana University tutorial on plagiarism. <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>

Faculty should view these programs and supplement them with information they might feel is omitted. The attempt is to educate our students on this important ethical situation and to remove from the table the response that one "simply did not know." Having students submit a signed document (electronic or hard copy) that is kept on file in the department may require some effort, but having these records makes the case and circumstances much clearer at the time of a violation and how to prosecute the offender appropriately .

Summary

Citizenship, ethical behavior, and individual responsibility are core concepts that should not go uninfluenced as a part of having completed a course of study at a university. Institutions prepare *people* as well as they prepare workers. This document should also be viewed as a belief statement. The College of Education and Behavioral Sciences is attempting to merge its beliefs and practices with those of the students who *truly earn* the degrees and certifications awarded.

FaCET Resources

Periodic seminars/workshops on academic integrity issues.

Internet:

5-Minute FaCETs on Academic Dishonesty—Mini-workshops designed for discussion in an academic department. Found at <http://www.wku.edu/teaching/facets/index.php>.

Academic Integrity—Reducing Cheating & Plagiarism: Lessons from WKU Faculty. Found at <http://www.wku.edu/teaching/booklets/academicintegrity.pdf>.

Books:

Carroll, J. & Appleton, J. (2001). *Plagiarism: A good practice guide*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Brookes University.

Harris, R. A. (2002). *The plagiarism handbook: Strategies for preventing, detecting, and dealing with plagiarism*. Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing.

Whitley, Bernard & Keith-Spiegel, Patricia (2001). *Academic Dishonesty: An Educators Guide*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Journal Article:

Hansen, B. (2003). Combating plagiarism. *Congressional Quarterly*, 13(32), 773-796.

Video:

ABC News: Prime Time Thursday (2004). *Cheating crisis in American's schools*.