

## Fostering and Supporting Academic Integrity in the Classroom

The recent cheating scandal at the University of Central Florida has sparked discussions about academic integrity on college and university campuses nationwide. What can we at Penn State learn from this case? This interactive presentation will focus on how to identify and address cheating and plagiarism, with an emphasis on prevention.

### What is it?

- Define explicitly<sup>1</sup>

### Who does it and when?

- Chronic cheaters
- People who perceive that everyone does it, so why shouldn't they?
- People who actually do not know that they are cheating
- People in high stakes situations: single big exam, high achievers, low achievers
- Desperate people who feel they have no other means of succeeding
- People who cannot see the relevance of the topic to their career goals and/or learning

### How do they do it?

- All kinds of ways<sup>2</sup>

### What are strategies for addressing it?

- Students respond to moral arguments (e.g., fairness, respect for ownership rights):
- Help students to avoid desperation by:
  - Dividing assignments into graded segments (more smaller assignments/exams)
  - Have students practice the skills they need to complete assignments, such as:
    - Discipline-specific reading strategies
    - Information literacy (how to find and evaluate)
    - Discipline-specific writing styles
- When students perceive the relevance of an assignment, they have less incentive to cheat. Assignments drawn from life are perceived as “high stakes”. With these assignments, students are more likely to feel they are missing out on real-life experiences by cheating.
- Creating writing assignments which are specific to class context makes plagiarism more difficult.
- Cheating can be a response to unclear test questions, or otherwise unreasonable tests<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, Brian, 1994. Plagiarism: A Misplaced Emphasis. *Journal of Information Ethics* 3(2): 36-47.

<sup>2</sup> Shon, Phillip, 2006. “How College Students Cheat on In-Class Examinations: Creativity, Strain, and Techniques of Innovation”. *Plagiarism: Cross-Disciplinary Studies in Plagiarism, Fabrication, and Falsification* 1(10): 1-20.

- Identify and talk to struggling students before desperation sets in
- If in a larger class: learn names, be accessible—do things that help you connect with students. This makes students feel less anonymous.
- Students are less likely to cheat in situations where they are known and visible, such as smaller sections or situations where they feel less anonymous
- Have proctors project an “alert helpfulness”
- Provide alternate seats and/or versions of the test for larger or crowded classes
- Choose paper topics that are original and specific
- Emphasize application and comparison rather than collection of information
- Require that the assignment have specific elements or sources, such as graphs, tables, personal interviews
- Have students provide an annotated list of sources, including the context for each source, especially web resources
- Asking students for brief written reports on research progress, or summaries of assignments; this gets them to think about how the assignment relates to their learning.
- Collect diagnostic samples of writing from students early in the semester.

### **More resources**

<http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/G-9.pdf>

Penn State guidelines on disciplinary sanctions

<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/plagiarism/facguide/define>

Penn State information on plagiarism and detection

[http://www.academicintegrity.org/educational\\_resources/index.php](http://www.academicintegrity.org/educational_resources/index.php)

Case studies for students (as well as many other resources) on cheating and plagiarism.

<http://facpub.stjohns.edu/~roigm/plagiarism/>

Guidelines for ethical writing in science

<http://www.stu.ca/~hunt/4reasons.htm>

A critical look at the messages we send to students about scholarship.

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<sup>3</sup> MckKeachie, Wilbert and Marilla Svinicki, 2006. Chapter 10: What to Do About Cheating, pp. 113-122. *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.