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TEACHING & LEARNING AT MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PURDY CRAWFORD TEACHING CENTRE

SPECIAL EDITION . . .

CREATING AN ETHOS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AT MOUNT ALLISON

“More than half of university students admit to cheating.”

Headlines like this one (from the October 2nd *Winnipeg Free Press*) have blared out across Canada in recent weeks in anticipation of a study co-authored by Dr. Julia Christensen Hughes, University of Guelph. When it is published later this year in the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, this study will reveal that—despite our best intentions to teach them—students’ perceptions of plagiarism often differ from professors’.

Ask a structural engineer about integrity and you will quickly discover that without it buildings on which we depend and rely are unstable, dangerous, essentially worthless—and if they do not collapse, they will likely be condemned.

As an academic community, integrity is at the heart of everything we do: it ensures that the marks we give students reward their actual learning, that our research is ethical, and that the papers we publish are reliable and authoritative. It avers that the degrees

we confer are valid and valuable. Without it, *we* are condemned.

Like universities across North America, Mount Allison is grappling with how to encourage integrity and educate our students to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of dishonesty.

Technology has increased the choices for those who want to cheat or plagiarize; now many universities are turning to that same technology to detect dishonesty, using software such as turnitin.com or search engines like Google.

Yet academic integrity is more than just catching cheaters, and overemphasizing detection tools encourages an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Instead, many professors, like Mount Allison’s Dr. Andrew Nurse, want to create an ethos or culture of honour, trust, responsibility, and honesty (page 6).

Is the seductiveness of the internet the reason for increased dishonesty or should we blame mounting pressures on students to get good grades rather than actually acquire learning? This issue of PAIDEIA will examine these and some of the many questions that swirl around our notion of academic integrity.



Why Do Students Cheat?

The Centre for Academic Integrity at Duke University has undertaken research related to students' reasons for cheating. A recent investigation, conducted by CAI Founding President Dr. Donald McCabe,[§] surveyed almost 50,000 undergraduates from 60 universities in the United States. The results, published in June 2005 and quoted here, are disturbing:

On most campuses, 70% of students admitted to some cheating. Close to one-quarter of the participating students admitted to serious test cheating in the past year, and half admitted to one or more instances of serious cheating on written assignments.

Most students have concluded that 'cut & paste' plagiarism—using a sentence or two (or more) from different sources on the Internet and weaving this information together into a paper without appropriate citation—is not a serious issue.

Students suggest that cheating is higher in courses where it is well known that faculty members are likely to ignore cheating.

Surprisingly, in a related study, McCabe found that “faculty are reluctant to take action against suspected cheaters.” In surveys involving almost 10,000 faculty in the last three years, “44% of those who were aware of student cheating. . . have never reported [it] to the appropriate campus authority.”

[§]Excerpted from the Centre for Academic Integrity
http://www.academicintegrity.org/cai_research.ch.asp

(Accessed on October 3, 2006)

Are students cheating simply because they are lazy or ill-prepared? A number of recent studies suggest that the causes of cheating and plagiarism are insidious and complex. Of course, the desire to achieve high grades is important, and many of our students are facing the additional pressures of maintaining scholarships, pleasing their families, and participating in extra- or co-curricular activities.

Other factors may also contribute to students' cheating, for example:

- The desire to help a friend;
- Confusion about the difference between collaborative or group learning, which many teachers promote, and collusion, which all teachers abhor;
- Credentialism—the perception that learning has no intrinsic value, but that a degree is merely a form of currency in the knowledge economy.

Whatever the causes, professors agree that they must both model ethical behaviour and enforce standards, reminding their students of what it means to be part of the academic community.

Academic integrity is the quintessential moral value of the academic community When students or faculty violate this moral standard, they jeopardize the core integrity of the learning enterprise. No college or university can tolerate the loss of its fundamental ethical credibility.

Dalton, J. (1998) *Creating a Campus Climate for Academic Integrity*. In D. Burnett et al. *Academic Integrity Matters*. NASPA. Washington, DC.

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Practical Tips for Preventing Plagiarism

The United Kingdom's Learning & Teaching Support Network published a short report on plagiarism in 2001. Co-authored by Lorraine Stefani and Jude Carroll, *A Briefing on Plagiarism* offers some practical suggestions; for example, it argues for clearer, more complete definitions of plagiarism and makes a case for accepting the research on assessment for student-centred learning as a significant help in lessening the impact of plagiarism.

The literature on teaching and learning shows that making it less likely that students plagiarize will also make it more likely they will learn. (Stefani & Carroll)

A Briefing on Plagiarism suggests starting with student learning and, in particular, with ensuring students receive clear and complete guidelines about what constitutes plagiarism, how it is defined at disciplinary level and what actions are taken in the event of an offence. The paper also advocates that teachers review the links between plagiarism, assessment and classroom actions and offers suggestions as to how this might be done:

“As student diversity in Higher Education increases, so too does our certainty that students bring different conceptions, expectations and cultural mores. It follows, therefore, that we need to present and explain ‘the rules’ of engagement in the learning process and prepare students for the experience of assessment.”

This report lays some of the responsibility at the feet of professors:

“It is possible to cite a number of things academics currently do quite unwittingly and unintentionally that make plagiarism seem a

pragmatic option for the student. Why *not* cheat when offered essays that ask them to gather and present information that they know is just sitting there on the Web? Why should an individual student do their own work when asked to do the same problem as others in the class, or when asked to solve the same case study that was used last year? Why make an effort when everyone in the group gets the same mark regardless of who does the work? These things are not difficult to change.”



Students are also less likely to cheat or falsify results if they feel they have a connection with their professors and that the professor is also taking the class seriously.

“The classroom environment established by the instructor can have significant impact on integrity. Students who are actively involved in the learning process and who perceive instructors to be concerned about them are much less likely to engage in dishonest behaviour. If, on the other hand, a professor seems indifferent or if the subject matter seems unimportant or uninteresting, students feel less moral obligation to behave honestly.” (Gerdeman, 2000).

References

Gerdeman, R.D. (2000). *Academic Dishonesty and the Community College*. ERIC Digest. http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed447840.html

Stefani, L. & J. Carroll. (2001). *A Briefing on Plagiarism*. The Learning and Teaching Support Network, York, UK. http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/projects/assessment/assessment_series.asp

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Ten Principles of Academic Integrity

By Donald L. McCabe and Gary Pavela

Affirm the importance of academic integrity.

Institutions of higher education are dedicated to the pursuit of truth: affirm that the pursuit of truth is grounded in certain core values, including diligence, civility, and *honesty*

Foster a love of learning.

A commitment to academic integrity is reinforced by high academic standards. Most students will thrive in an atmosphere where academic work is seen as challenging, relevant, useful, and fair.

Treat students as ends in themselves.

Students deserve individual attention and consideration. They will generally reciprocate by respecting the best values of their teachers, including a commitment to academic integrity.

Promote an environment of trust in the classroom.

Most students are mature adults; they value an environment free of arbitrary rules and trivial assignments, where trust is earned, and given.

Encourage student responsibility for academic integrity.

With proper guidance, students can be given significant responsibility to help protect and promote the highest standards of academic integrity. Students want to work in communities where competition is fair, integrity is respected, and cheating is punished. They understand that one of the greatest inducements to engaging in academic dishonesty is the perception that academic dishonesty is rampant.

Clarify expectations for students.

Teachers have primary responsibility for designing and cultivating the educational environment and experience. They must clarify their expectations in advance regarding honesty in academic work, including the nature and scope of student collaboration. Most students want such guidance, and welcome it in course syllabi, carefully reviewed by their teachers in class.

Develop fair and relevant forms of assessment.

Students expect their academic work to be fairly and fully assessed. Teachers should use--and continuously revise--forms of assessment that require active and creative thought, and promote learning opportunities for students.

Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty.

Prevention is a critical line of defense against academic dishonesty. Students should not be tempted or induced to engage in acts of academic dishonesty by ambiguous policies, undefined or unrealistic standards for collaboration, inadequate classroom management, or poor examination security.

Challenge academic dishonesty when it occurs.

Students observe how teachers behave, and what values they embrace. Teachers who ignore or trivialize academic dishonesty send the message that the core values of academic life, and community life in general, are not worth any significant effort to enforce.

Help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.

Acts of academic dishonesty by individual students can occur across artificial divisions (contd.)



Ten Principles of Academic Integrity (continued from page 4)

of departments and schools. Although teachers should be the prime role models for academic integrity, responsibility for defining, promoting, and protecting academic integrity must be a community-wide concern--not only to identify repeat offenders, and apply consistent due process procedures, but to affirm the shared values that make colleges and universities true communities.

Excerpted from **Ten Principles of Academic Integrity** (College Administration Publications) Available online at <http://www.collegepubs.com/ref/10PrinAcaInteg.shtml>

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Detecting Plagiarism: That Awful Feeling . . .

For many professors, finding that students have cheated, plagiarized, or falsified data is more than disappointing: it is literally sickening. The tell-tale signs of academic dishonesty include:

- A change in the quality of the student's work, language, or organization;
- Inconsistency in citation styles that suggests harvesting from a variety of sources; or
- Absence of logical flow or argumentation may indicate that the work is cut-and-paste.

As these signs suggest, the better you know your students' work, the easier it is to detect when it is someone else's. This increased acquaintance may necessitate more [shorter] assignments or multi-part assignments rather than a few long ones.

October at PCTC Two Special Events

Friday, October 13th, 4 pm, University Club
"Making A Difference": A Dramatic Reading

Written as a celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the 3M Teaching Fellowship, "Making a Difference / Toute la différence" is a collection of award-winning teachers' reflections complemented by student testimonials written about teachers who are not named.

Alex Fancy and students Ian Mullin and Natalie Gerum will present a 35-minute reading of student voices from the book recently published by the National Council of 3M Teaching Fellows, followed by a discussion and a cash bar.

The Teaching Professor described the book as: "a marvelous affirmation of how teaching inspires, enriches and satisfies, both teachers and students. If you need a shot in your teaching arm, this book will supply it."

Thursday, October 19th, 2:30 pm, Dunn 106
Metaphor, Analogies, & Big Pictures: Creating Frameworks for Students to Learn In
Steve Coughlan, Faculty of Law, Dalhousie University
(2005 AAU Teaching Award Recipient)

"To forget one's purpose is the commonest form of stupidity," Nietzsche said: conversely, therefore, good teaching ought to regularly remind students of what they are trying to do. In the long run, the most important skill we can teach our students is how to learn for themselves. Most university courses require students to acquire a body of knowledge or a skill, and students will understand it best and internalize it most if they learn it for themselves.

This 90-minute session will consider ways in which such frameworks can be constructed. Through exercises and activities, participants will be invited to think about and develop ways to construct explanatory frameworks, metaphors or analogies for use in their own disciplines



Student Honour Codes & Academic Integrity

Dr. Andrew Nurse, Director
Centre for Canadian Studies

Honour Codes are an important feature of the academic environment at a number of American institutions. They are far less common at Canadian colleges and universities. Over the past summer, the PCTC funded a project on which I worked (with student Harry Borlase) to establish means to promote increased knowledge of and support for the ideal of academic integrity as a guiding principle of the scholarly enterprise at Mount Allison University. An interesting aspect of that project is that it promoted some consideration of honour codes as one strategy to define and promote the values of a university as a scholarly community.

Historically, modern honour codes in North America developed first in southern US institutions and were, almost certainly, linked to ideals of genteel responsibility and propriety. Initially, these codes required students attending post-secondary institutions to commit themselves to upholding certain ideals both on and off campus, in their lives as students and as citizens. In brief, most of these codes committed students to maintaining complete honesty (refraining from lying, cheating, or stealing) as a mode of behaviour.

Recent developments in honour codes have focused more specifically on academic dishonesty and have been used, in part, as a way of addressing what faculty and university administrators viewed as a dramatic expansion of cheating over the span of the last generation. The so-called “modified honour code” promoted by the Centre for Academic Integrity at Duke

University and now adopted by a wide number of American institutions can be viewed as the physical and legal manifestation of this strategy.

Honour Codes: Traditional and Modified

Traditional honour codes are defined by several characteristics. They tend to focus on values (and not simply academic or scholarly values); their enforcement tends to be by student governance bodies; they tend to accord to students a wide range of rights in return for the responsibility of up-holding the code (for example, exams are not proctored); and penalties for infringements of codes tend to be severe (even expulsion on a “one strike you’re out” policy).

Traditional honours codes usually have formal signing procedures whereby students make a public commitment to the code.

Modified codes, by contrast, are far less formal. They can include formal signing procedures but might also take the form of university Senate regulations on conduct. They usually do not make provisions for such things as writing exams without invigilation, and they accord student governance bodies a limited role in the enforcement of the code. Their focus tends to be almost exclusively on issues related to academic dishonesty as opposed to the wider ideals of a scholarly community.

In my view, Mount Allison should not adopt the modified honour code but should, instead, commit itself to the original ideal: an honour code as a commitment to upholding certain values and ideals that bind all members of the university community.

American studies of the implementation and use of honours codes (either modified or
(contd.)



Honour Codes (continued from page 6)

traditional) suggest strongly that these codes “produce results.” Studies comparing institutions with codes to those without indicate that institutions that have either modified or traditional honours codes will have substantively fewer instances of academic dishonesty than those that don’t. Similarly, studies of institutions that have recently adopted either modified or traditional honours codes indicate that instances of academic dishonesty drop significantly after the codes are introduced. Whatever the cause of dishonest behaviour among students, the simple fact of having some sort of code seems to deter cheating by a statistically significant number of students.

If Mount Allison adopts an honour code, it should not be as part of a strategy designed to address academic dishonesty. There is, in fact, little evidence that academic dishonesty is a serious problem (in the sense of widespread cheating of one sort or another) at this institution. Two matters, however, can be addressed:

- (1) Awareness of the meaning and implication of academic integrity, particularly at these relate to scholarly development;
- (2) Knowledge of the values and ideals that animate scholarly life at Mount Allison and the degree to which these differentiate this institution from others.

Academic integrity, as you are aware, is much more than a commitment not to cheat. It involves a specific approach to the scholarly enterprise that combines interaction with colleagues (either students or faculty), respect for scholarship, and respect for one’s self, among other things. For instance, a student could fulfill the technical requirements of a writing

assignment but still have acted without integrity if, with the intention of finishing the work as fast as possible, she completed the assignment at the last minute, submitted her first draft, and used the minimum number of required sources. Likewise, a faculty member could fulfill the technical requirements of his contract with the university by holding a limited number of consultation hours each week while refusing to meet students at times outside those hours.

In each of these hypothetical examples, I’ll suggest, the student’s and faculty member’s behaviours were well within the formal rules governing conduct at Mount Allison. In each instance, however, the student and faculty member demonstrated a lack of integrity and commitment to the scholarly enterprise. Exactly what academic integrity entails in the fullest understanding of the word is best left for discussion another day. What is important here is that commitment to doing more than the mere minimum requirements, and taking our own values and ideals as a scholarly community seriously. In fact, I would argue that if we do *not* take our values seriously, our behaviour becomes hypocritical.

One of the interesting results of this project has been the degree to which students appear committed to this ideal. They see an honour code as one means to develop a wider consciousness of our community’s values and a deeper individual recognition and appreciation of the same. A properly implemented honour code, in my view, involves a commitment to doing more than having students sign a document when they arrive on campus. Instead, I believe we should make an honour code a central element of a wider plan to promote knowledge of and commitment to the higher ideals that animate a community of scholars. The honour code, in this sense, is a hub, from which spokes emanate and around which a wheel turns.

Effective development of an honour code
(contd.)



Honour Codes (continued from page 7)

should involve a formal signing procedure of some sort. One intriguing model of signing ceremony is that used at Vanderbilt University in the United States. Incoming students at that institution collectively sign a class banner as a mark of their commitment to the values and codes of the university. This banner is then displayed at the university and on other formal occasions.

Academic integrity is much more than a commitment not to cheat . . . it involves a specific approach to the scholarly enterprise.

Other aspects of the honour code might include the following: orientation sessions for in-coming students, periodic public lectures, or other fora held throughout the year and jointly organized by faculty and students, distribution of information with recruitment and registration materials, support for a web site containing information relating to an honour code and academic integrity, as well as the development of an academic integrity handbook, among other things. Such a strategy, I believe, would increase knowledge of and commitment to a specific and important value structure.

An honour code could be of wider service. Students who attended a study focus group on academic integrity (a component of the research conducted for this project) expressed concern about what they saw as a disjuncture between Mount Allison's public image and the actual experiences they encountered on campus. To be sure, these students did not feel that their experiences here had been negative; quite the opposite. They *did* feel, however, that Mount A's public image did not reflect the positive

elements of their experience. They saw the ideal of an honour code as one way to specify the values that guided the university and a way to differentiate Mount A from other small liberal arts and science universities.

In important ways, I agree with the students' perspective that an honour code at Mount Allison—particularly in light of the fact that similar institutions in Canada do not have one—is a way to make a strong, on-going, and public statement about who we are. Combined with consideration of the importance of an honour code in expanding knowledge of academic integrity, the argument for adoption, in my view, becomes persuasive.

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Academic Honour Codes and Cheating

Andrew Nurse is, of course, advocating for an academic honour code in a much broader context than reduction of cheating. However, research conducted by Donald McCabe from the Centre for Academic Integrity at Duke concludes that academic honour codes are effective in reducing academic misconduct:

Surveys conducted in 1990, 1995, and 1999, involving over 12,000 students on 48 different campuses, demonstrate the impact of honor codes and student involvement in the control of academic dishonesty. Serious test cheating on campuses with honor codes is typically 1/3 to 1/2 lower than the level on campuses that do not have honor codes. The level of serious cheating on written assignments is 1/4 to 1/3 lower.

<http://www.academicintegrity.org/>

