Promoting a Climate of Academic Integrity:

A Literature Review for the Harvard College Academic Integrity Committee (AIC)

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January 2013

Table of Contents

Abstract

In this literature review, I introduce key theories about student cheating and provide an overview of possible administrative responses to this problematic behavior. First, I offer a look at the emergence of a cheating culture among high-achieving secondary school students. Since these students often matriculate to elite tertiary institutions, understanding the behavior and attitudes that they bring to campus is an important step towards developing a plan to interrupt this cycle. Next, I provide an overview of two methods of addressing cheating at the institutional level: honor codes and plagiarism detection software. Both approaches are analyzed in light of limitations that could impede their success at a small liberal arts institution and recommendations are made about how to consider these data before implementation. Finally, I offer suggestions for using additional insight from the literature in order to best introduce strategies for creating a culture of academic integrity on campus.

Keywords: cheating, college students, academic integrity, honor codes, achievement culture

Background

In this section, I examine cheating behavior in high school settings, with a particular focus on academic dishonesty among high-achieving, college-bound students. Cheating behavior often begins at the secondary level and may be intensified once students reach college (McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2012; McCabe & Pavela, 2005). Therefore, identifying the roots of academic dishonesty prior to college matriculation is an important step towards not only understanding the attitudes that students bring to campus, but also towards determining how to interrupt the cycle of academic dishonesty once students arrive at college.

Concerns about High-Achieving High School Students

Conventionally, it has been argued that students with low grade point averages (GPAs) are most likely to cheat in school (Bennett, 2005). Researchers have either asserted or assumed that students who perform poorly in school would have the most to gain from dishonest behavior (Cizek, 1999; Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, & Clark, 1986; McCabe & Treviño, 1997). However, more recent studies have taken a closer look at cheating behaviors among high-achieving students and discovered significant levels of academic dishonesty in this population as well (Taylor, Pogrebin, & Dodge, 2002).

In fact, a U-shaped relationship between GPA and cheating demonstrates that students with high-GPAs are turning to dishonest means in their competition for grades at levels similar to those with the lowest-GPAs (McCabe *et al.*, 2012; Stephens & Gelbach, 2007; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). These findings have lead to an acknowledgement that "top [students are] cheating to thrive in an increasingly competitive academic

climate" (Collins, 2012) and a re-evaluation of the personal characteristics that are correlated with academic dishonesty. Galloway (2012) posits that these findings show students that previously believed to be inoculated from cheating behavior by their high academic performance may actually be at a heightened risk for dishonesty due to their perceived need to demonstrate continued academic excellence.

Part of the explanation for the why students are cheating in high school has been attributed to the increasing level of competition for a small number of spaces at selective colleges and universities (Callahan, 2004; Davis, Drinan, & Gallant, 2009; Palmer, 2005; Pérez-Peña, 2012). The data show almost 40% of high school students (*n*=24,763) surveyed by the Josephson Institute (2002) said that they would be willing to cheat in order to 'get into a good college.' The belief that grades and scores will help students stand out to an admissions committee is now understood to be an integral part of the pursuit of elite admissions.

Cheating among high-achievers is much more commonplace than previously understood. In a *Who's Who Among American High School Students* study (1995), 80% of students with an A average admitted to cheating in high school specifically to maintain or improve their academic record. Carter (2009) explains how "college-bound students are the most likely to cheat as they struggle to reach the seemingly super-heroic levels of achievement required for college admissions." The high concentration of cheating behavior observed in students who are enrolled in college-preparatory Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses supports this hypothesis (Taylor *et al.*, 2002).

Parental expectations, cultural expectations, and peer pressure associated with today's achievement culture have all been blamed for encouraging cheating (Blum, 2009a; Levine & Dean, 2012; McCabe, Treviño, Butterfield, 1999; Hanson, 2005; McCabe *et al.*, 2012; Pope, 2001). Indeed, Brandes' (1986) found that fear of failure and disappointing parents was ranked second as a motivation for academic dishonesty, behind cheating due to a lack of preparation.

Students who are extrinsically motivated by grades display significantly higher rates of academic cheating (Davis *et al.,* 2009; Jordan, 2001). Stephens and Gelbach (2007) found that adolescents in high-achieving high schools are indeed likely to be "under-engaged" in the learning process due to this hyper-focus on grades. McCabe *et al.* (2012) support this finding, explaining how "[m]any students view the primary goal of high school as gaining admission to the college of their choice. They seem to find their academic work in high school somewhat irrelevant – more of an obstacle to college admission than a true learning experience" (p. 33).

The combination of the high-stakes achievement culture with this lower level of engagement in schoolwork appears to be at the core of why this previously unrecognized group of high-achieving students feels compelled to cheat. With declining admissions rates and increasing pressure for coveted spots in elite institutions, some students appear to feel that they have no other option than to engage in academic dishonesty in order to keep up with or outshine their peers during the application process.

A Closer Look at the Stuyvesant High School Cheating Scandal

A recent scandal at Stuyvesant High School in New York City (Baker, 2012; Barnard & Newcomer, 2012; Yee, 2012) highlighted the issue of cheating among high-performing students at the secondary school level. Stuyvesant is a public high school in New York that is known for its strong pre-collegiate preparation for students who excel on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test used for entry (Stuyvesant High School, 2012). Despite their demonstrated academic excellence, Stuyvesant students describe a school culture rife with cheating (Callahan, 2004). Findings of an internal school survey that shows 80% of the student respondents (n=2,045) admitting to cheating at least once backs up this assertion (Yee, 2012).

Studying in an environment where students believe that the majority of their peers are cheating can lead to an acceptance of academic dishonesty as the norm. Stephens & Gelbach (2007) found that students who cheat in these high-pressure academic environments are more likely to justify their behavior by their perceived need to keep up with peers who are benefitting through dishonest measures. Similar to the findings of *Making good: How Young People Cope with Moral Dilemmas at Work* (Fischman, Solomon, Greenspan, & Gardner, 2004), Stuyvesant students acknowledged their fear that *not* engaging in the culture of dishonesty that they saw around them would cause them to fall behind their peers (Hartmann, 2012; Yee, 2012). As in the Fischman *et al.* (2004) research, these students assert that they plan to behave honestly in the future, but feel that they have no choice but to cut corners in the present in order to remain competitive.

Implications for Elite Colleges & Universities

The culture of cheating that starts in high school appears to be following students into the college classroom (Kaufman, 2008; McCabe *et al.*, 2012; McCabe & Pavela, 2005). Since so many high-achieving students who cheat are focused on selective college admissions, instances of academic dishonesty have the potential to become concentrated in elite tertiary institutions. In fact, according to McCabe *et al.* (2012), "cheating among high-achieving [college] students was actually most pronounced at campuses with the most selective admissions processes" (p. 84). For this reason, college administrators at elite institutions need to be aware of how and why cheating behaviors develop in secondary school in order to combat them at the tertiary level.

Due to the cultural focus on success at all costs, these students may not have developed a strategy for handling failure, making them more risk averse (Bronson, 2007). The combination of these factors, understandably, puts students in a situation where they may feel that continuing to cheat is their only option. Arrival at an elite college will present students with a concentration of the 'best and the brightest' and increased concerns about academic performance. Incoming students may, for the first time in their lives, not shine among a peer group of other equally high-achievers (Kolker, 2012). In this context, students can rationalize cheating as a necessity for keeping up with their classmates. Additionally, ongoing cheating during high school may cost students important knowledge and skills that they need to succeed in college (McCabe *et al.*, 2012), putting them further behind more honest peers and fueling continued cheating behavior.

By understanding what compels some students to cheat in high school and the link that has been found to elite college admissions, administrators can think critically about how to acclimate these incoming students to a college climate that prioritizes academic integrity. (See *The Transition to College: An Opportunity to Break the Cycle* on page 24 for more information.)

Evaluation of Measures Designed to Promote Academic Integrity

In this section, I examine two popular methods for promoting academic integrity and monitoring student conduct on college campuses: honor codes and plagiarism-detection software. My focus is on potential shortcomings of each approach, in order to highlight the necessary considerations that should be made before introducing these measures into a college community. By understanding the limitations and pitfalls of each method, administrators can look closely at the suitability of each approach and determine how to modify it to best fit their academic climate and increase the likelihood of curbing academic dishonesty.

Honor Codes

McCabe *et al.* (2012) point to an increase in the number of schools adopting the principles of an honor code to combat student cheating. Honor codes are a deterrent to academic misconduct that give students an active role in rule enforcement. According to Whitley & Keith-Spiegel (2002), a traditional honor code school has "unproctored examinations, an honor pledge, a requirement for student reporting of honor code violations, and the existence of a student court or peer judiciary board that rules on alleged honor code violations" (p. 7).

Historically, honor codes have been shown to be effective in reducing cheating in academic settings (Bowers, 1964; McCabe & Treviño, 1993; McCabe & Treviño, 1997). In studies spanning more than three decades, students at schools with an honor code have proven "less likely to cheat, were less likely to rationalize or justify cheating behavior that they did admit to, and were more likely to talk about the importance of integrity and

about how a moral community can minimize cheating" (McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield, 2001a, p. 226).

Effectiveness

Other research has revealed less clear-cut conclusions about the benefits of an honor code (Cole & McCabe, 1996; May & Loyd, 1993). Additionally, in McCabe & Treviño's 1993 study, the researchers were surprised to discover that the school with the highest incidence of cheating had a long-standing honor code while the school with the lowest rate of reported cheating did not have any honor code in place. Other research acknowledges that academic misconduct not only takes place in honor code environments (McCabe *et al.*, 1999) but that it may also occur at high levels despite the presence of the honor code (Cole & McCabe, 1996). In fact, Whitley & Keith-Spiegel (2002) found that more than half of students who attended a school with an honor code admitted to violating the policy at least once, though many admitted to repeat cheating behavior over time and in multiple contexts.

The persistence of cheating in honor code institutions suggests that it is not simply the presence of an honor code that creates a culture of academic integrity on campus. How the code is introduced, communicated to students, and enforced all play important roles in its ultimate effectiveness (McCabe *et al.*, 2012). In schools where the honor code is not an integrated part of the school climate, it is unlikely to make a significant difference in cheating behavior among students.

Cheating Scandals at Honor Code Institutions

With these results in mind, it is perhaps less surprising that highly publicized cheating scandals at schools with long-standing honor code traditions have become commonplace. These stories call into question the effectiveness of traditional implementation of honor codes (Gallant, 2012), but may actually demonstrate the potential shortcomings of an honor code environment where a true "culture of integrity" (McCabe *et al.*, 2012) has not been fostered.

Stories about cheating at schools with a strong honor code tradition reinforce the conclusion that the existence of an honor code alone is not enough to promote a climate of academic integrity (McCabe *et al.*, 2012; McCabe & Treviño, 1993). The University of Virginia, known for its strict honor code with zero-tolerance for dishonesty (Petric, 2001), was confronted by a cheating scandal that revealed that 158 students potentially plagiarized papers submitted for an introductory physics course in 2001 (Blum, 2012; Schemo, 2001; Trex, 2009). Four years later, the university faced a new round of challenges when "an alarmingly high fraction" of students in a graduate-level course were found to be using an online answer key to complete their economics assignments (Epstein, 2005). Similarly, the U.S. Air Force Academy was confronted with a scandal of its own when 31 students were found to have cheated on a multiple-choice test in 2007 (Frosch, 2007) and another 78 cadets were suspected of similar cheating behavior on a calculus test last year (Rodgers, 2012; Steiner, 2012). These stories, and many others from the past two decades, highlight the challenges that may face administrators when enforcing an honor code on a college campus in order to create a context in which academic integrity is indeed a core value of the student body.

Peer Reporting Challenges

A significant issue facing the effective implementation of a traditional honor code environment is the fact that students are required to report their peers. McCabe *et al.* (2001b) acknowledge that the peer-reporting requirement remains the most controversial aspect of traditional honor codes and Melendez (1985) found that concerns about the peer reporting requirement played a significant role in many schools' decisions not to adopt an honor code all together.

Concerns about forcing students to turn in their peers are well founded. As Bowman (2006) explains, "[h]onor codes have never been quite successful in persuading young people that it is honorable to inform on their fellow students who have committed infractions" (p. 5). Researchers believe that these challenges may be intensifying, as "[t]oday's students appear to be increasingly reluctant to accept a peer reporting requirement, even in institutions with traditionally strong environments of academic integrity" (McCabe *et al.*, 2012, p. 179). Further, low levels of peer reporting may represent the fact that "students are not willing to take full responsibility for creating and maintaining a community of trust. They prefer to rely on the authority structure (faculty and/or proctors) to identify cheating when it occurs" (McCabe *et al.*, 2012, p. 106). In McCabe *et al.* (1999), some students reported that being a 'would actually be *worse* than being a cheater, causing them to avoid peer reporting whenever possible.

Studies have shown that, in practice, students do indeed shirk the peer reporting responsibility. Jendrek (1992) found that while 61% of the students in her study (n=776) had seen another student cheat, only 1% actually reported it as required by their school as required by the honor code. Similar findings come from a 2005 study where only 7% of

students in a school with an honor code said that they had reported a friend for cheating (McCabe *et al.*, 2012). While this represented almost twice as many students than those who said that they reported a friend at non-honor code school, the percentage of students was still surprisingly small, especially when considering that not reporting a peer is a violation of the honor code in itself. In theory, students appear more willing to embrace this requirement. Cole & McCabe (1996) found that the 56% of students at schools with a peer-reporting requirement would be *likely* to inform an instructor or administrator about the violation. However, students seem to be unwilling to take this step when an incident has actually occurred and their reporting has real world implications.

Not only have students been socialized to the fact that people in authority mete out punishment for violating group norms, but they may also be afraid of the consequences of reporting on a peer, especially someone in their circle of friends. Students may fear social repercussions from peer reporting (Pickhardt, 2009), including ostracism or retaliation (Feldman, 1984; Treviño & Victor, 1991). Students concerns are sometimes more altruistic in nature, as students describe feeling guilty that their report could cause another student to be expelled. These doubts may lead them to question their own observations and frequently choosing to believe that what they witnessed may not have technically against the rules, ultimately justifying their failure to report (McCabe *et al.*, 1999).

Hollinger and Lanza-Kaduce (2009) found that it is not only concerns about being seen as a ‘snitch’ or disloyal by peers that prevent students from reporting cheating when they see it. In their study of a large, public university in the Southeast, they determined that introducing anonymous hotlines for informing on peers at would not encourage a

dramatic increase in reporting on peer misconduct. Even though the large-student body would make it easy for the student to truly remain anonymous, additional concerns prevented peer reporting. This may support Miethe & Rothschild's (1994) argument that some students worry that reporting cheating may ultimately tarnish the institution as a whole.

The only instances where peer reporting appeared likely occurred when a student would directly benefit from reporting a student in a course because they were being graded on a curve and the offending student is not a friend. Worries that their grade might suffer due to the other student's inflated performance appear to drive this decision (McCabe *et al.,* 2012). This finding also suggests an opportunity for dishonest students to abuse the peer reporting process to manipulate the grading process and obtain an academic boost.

Most important for administrators is the fact that maintaining a peer-reporting requirement, when it is clear that students may not uphold this part of the honor code, may ultimately undermine the culture of academic integrity at an institution. While some researchers believe that reinforcing the peer reporting requirement is the key to turning around the cheating culture in college (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009), the dominant opinion is that this requirement is unlikely to yield the positive results that are needed to make a difference.

The peer-reporting requirement may ultimately undermine the honor code environment by highlighting weakness in the honor code and creating a norm of violating its standards of behavior. As McCabe *et al.* (2012) explain, "if we 'require' reporting when we know that most students will ignore the 'requirement,' we are probably just

giving students a rationale to ignore other important aspects of the policy or to be cynical about the entire academic integrity culture" (p. 180). Concerns about these mixed messages have, in part, fueled the movement away from traditional honor codes towards modified codes that encourage student reporting but do not require it. By giving students the option to report in situations where they feel it is merited, this may consequently strengthen the motivation to report cheating behavior and enhance the principles behind the creation of the honor code.

Traditional vs. Modified Honor Codes

McCabe and Pavela (2005) describe a new movement where requirements of traditional honor codes are relaxed to make them suitable for today's campus climate. In these 'modified honor code schools', a written pledge and judiciary board is usually in place to oversee and enforce its implementation (McCabe *et al.*, 2001a). However, the inclusion of unproctored exams and student reporting requirements are generally optional or absent all together (Roig & Marks, 2006). Since McCabe *et al.* (2012) found that most campuses do not have a culture that is strong enough to support a traditional honor code, such adaptations may be necessary at many institutions. No matter what the modification, student involvement is still an integral part of the school culture in all honor codes. This is particularly true with the importance of requiring student engagement in the adjudication process (McCabe & Pavela, 2005).

In a Center for Academic Integrity survey, incidents of self-reported cheating are 23% at schools with a traditional honor code, 33% at schools with a modified honor code, and 45% at schools with no honor code (McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2002, McCabe

& Pavela, 2005). However, as with any honor code implementation, the ultimate determinant of success is in the way the code is woven into the fabric of the school community (McCabe *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, a modified honor code that is deeply engrained into the culture of the institution is likely to have a more powerful effect than a loosely enforced honor code that includes all four traditional components.

Validity Questions

It is important to note that validity questions exist regarding the lower rate of cheating that has been documented at schools with honor codes. Several factors, outlined below, contribute to questions about the extent of the correlation between an honor code environment and increased academic honesty.

First and foremost, all of the studies on student cheating rely on these students to report their dishonest behavior. Dependence on self-reporting is problematic because the existence of an honor code may make students more leery of reporting their behavior, thus leading to an appearance that less cheating is taking place. Further, students do not always share institutional-level ideas about what constitutes dishonest behavior, therefore, they may not report acts that are technically defined as cheating (Ashworth, Bannister, & Thorne, 1997). For example, when it comes to collaborative cheating, which is difficult to define and that has lead to a tremendous amount of confusion over how and when violations actually occur (Blum, 2009b; Casserly, 2012; Gabriel, 2010b; Toor, 2011; Wells, 1993), issues over what students report can be dramatically influenced. Additional factors that may skew results come from the fact that students may not remember incidents of cheating behavior, may downplay their significance, or justify the

behavior as a way of excusing their action (Youmans, 2011). All of these factors may complicate our ability to understand the true levels of cheating in college and must be considered as threats to validity.

Whitley & Keith-Spiegel (2002) suggest that smaller enrollments and higher selectivity at some honor code institutions may also help to explain the differences between reported and observed cheating behavior. Cheating can be facilitated by large classrooms (Crown & Spiller, 1998), but highly-selective schools tend to have smaller class sizes. This reduces the opportunities for in-class cheating and also increases the chances that the students may form relationships with their professors. Both of these factors can help to understand lower rates of cheating behavior in some environments and this may also skew the data.

Additionally, my examination of college application supplements for schools with strong honor code traditions suggests that the admissions process may also contribute to the creation of a student body that is more likely to uphold the honor code standards. Schools like Haverford College ask for a 1-2 page essay that demonstrates both an understanding of their honor code and an acceptance of its standards of behavior (Appendix A). I hypothesize that students who are less likely to embrace the honor code may self-select out of the application pool due to requirements like this. Similarly, the importance placed on the response to this question by the admissions committee may further refine the pool of applicants and lead to a higher concentration of admitted students who demonstrate that they buy-in to this key aspect of the school culture long before they even arrive on campus.

Considerations

The stories about honor code institutions facing cheating scandals help to underscore an important point about the implementation of policies promoting academic integrity. They do not indicate a failure of honor codes to promote honest behavior. Instead, they suggest that an honor code alone is not enough to promote good behavior. An honor code needs to be part of a larger commitment to the ideals of academic integrity that are both clearly articulated and deeply embedded in the school culture (Callahan, 2004; May & Loyd, 1993; Whitley & Keith-Speigel, 2002).

Further, questions remain about the feasibility of requiring the peer reporting that is part of a traditional honor code. When considering implementation of an honor code, it is important to consider how effective this requirement might be in a given school culture and if including this caveat may ultimately undermine the goals of creating a climate of academic integrity.

Plagiarism Detection Software

Given concerns about cheating, many schools have turned to digital plagiarism detection software, including the popular Turnitin, used by nearly 10,000 high schools and college (Gabriel, 2010b). According to the Turnitin website (iParadigms, 2013), the number of colleges using the software is growing, with "[m]ore than 3,500 higher education institutions use Turnitin, including 69 percent of the top 100 colleges and universities in the *U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges list." While the company has grown and even expanded into new arenas, including 'Turnitin for Admissions' to detect plagiarism in college applications (Gordon, 2012), significant concerns exist

regarding both its effectiveness at catching plagiarists and the message that it sends to students.

Program Effectiveness

Plagiarism detection software operates by identifying strings of text that appear in another documented source available online and automatically flags the content for further inspection (Royce, 2003). However, it is only adept at identifying text that is copied verbatim from sources that are already in its database. Thus, it may miss any text that does not exist in digital form or that has not been previously screened through the system. Further, Turnitin will not flag text that has been paraphrased without attribution to the original author (Warn, 2006), a significant aspect of academic misconduct today (Blum, 2009b). In a small study, Royce (2001) found that Turnitin actually missed 15 out of 18 plagiarized passages of text. Thus, students who are savvy at adapting the material they copy or who find sources that have not been previously entered into the Turnitin database can easily submit plagiarized work that goes completely undetected. Further, students who unintentionally plagiarized (Blum, 2009b) may not be caught. Consequently, they will not have an opportunity to learn proper use of academic source material and may simply continue to plagiarize under the assumption that if they were doing anything wrong, it would have been flagged in the system.

False positives are also a problem with computer-generated detection. While some duplicate text may pass through the system undetected, it is not uncommon for original text to be flagged as suspect. Turnitin does not distinguish between text in quotations that is properly attributed to the original source and copied text that is

unattributed (Warn, 2006), though modifications to the program are ongoing. Researchers from Texas Tech University further determined that Turnitin frequently flagged technical jargon or phrases, such as "global warming" or "the prevalence of childhood obesity" (Jaschik, 2009). Thus, well-written and properly sourced material can show a high plagiarism score that may cast unfair doubt on an honest student and that has to be manually ruled out by the instructor or teaching assistant (Mulcahy & Goodacre, 2004). Further, the program may actually find matches from completely unrelated sources that have coincidental use of phrasing (Youmans, 2011), again requiring human verification to authenticate the student's work.

Plagiarism detection software is constantly evolving as problems that allow students to evade detection are identified. This leads to a situation that Gabriel (2010a) identifies as "an endless cat-and-mouse game with technologically savvy students who try to outsmart [the software]." For example, Heather (2010) demonstrated how significant loopholes in the software allowed tweaks to the text formatting and document layout that can be used by students with minimal technological savvy to outsmart the detection software without changing any of the actual text. When brought to the attention of Turnitin, the company announced that it was working on a way to detect this kind of technical manipulation in the future (Fearn, 2011). While the company is continually making these kinds of updates to its program in order to adapt to new and increasingly sophisticated ways to thwart detection, Warn (2006) cautions: "over-reliance on such software is likely to see its effectiveness quickly wane as students adapt and learn its limitations" (p. 207).

The implications the unreliability of plagiarism software go beyond simply allowing students to behave in dishonest ways without consequence. Youmans (2011) warns that "when professors fail to detect plagiarism or lightly punish its offenders, the inaction hurts student learning, risks demoralizing honest students, and may encourage further dishonest behaviors at the university level and beyond" (p. 4). Therefore, use of plagiarism detection software may ultimately have negative implications for the creation of the kind of honest academic culture that leads to a reduction in cheating behavior.

Student Responsiveness

Some believe that, independent of the program's effectiveness, simply warning students that their work may be subjected to plagiarism detection software is enough to encourage honest behavior (Blum, 2009b; Royce, 2003). However, Youman (2011) found this to be inaccurate. In tandem studies conducted at the University of California Northridge, his research team found that students who were warned about the use of anti-plagiarism software plagiarized just as frequently as those who received no such admonition. Even more surprising for the researcher, all of the students who copied text directly from another source and later admitted to intentional acts of plagiarism were all warned in advance that their papers would be scanned for plagiarized text (Youman, 2011).

Since so much text goes unflagged in the Turnitin program, students may simply weigh the risks vs. rewards of plagiarizing work and opt for the dishonest route despite warnings. An earlier study at the University of Botswana (Batane, 2010) showed a minimal decrease (-4.3%) in plagiarism among students who were warned that detection

software would be used. This finding lead the researcher to conclude that, "plagiarism is a complex problem that cannot simply be solved by introducing a detection mechanism" (p. 9). Contrary to Blum's (2009b) assertion that "students are scared into following the rules because they know they will be penalized if they are caught [by Turnitin] – and caught they will be" (p. 158), use of this software does not appear to either scare students or dramatically decrease incidents of plagiarism.

Faculty Concerns

Equally troubling is a concern among some academics and administrators that the use of plagiarism detection software undermines the relationship between students and professors. Twomey (2009) explains how "by telling students we will be checking all papers for plagiarism, we are essentially calling them all cheaters before they have even begun to write" (p. 150). Emily Aronson of Princeton University echoes this sentiment, explaining how "adopting this kind of software sends a message to our students that is not one that we want to send. We don't want to presume that they aren't approaching their work honestly. We want to presume that they're behaving with integrity" (Craft, 2010).

Satterwhite & Garein (2002) caution that using programs like Turnitin undermines trust in this relationship and can ultimately lead to resentment. Peter Salovey of Yale University warns that use of anti-plagiarism software can have further unintended consequences. He explains that, "[i]f one creates a culture expecting the worst of students and underscores this attitude with a climate of vigilance, then students will act in ways to confirm these expectations by inventing clever ways of acting dishonorably and avoiding

detection" (Mihailova, 2006). Clearly, understanding how these messages may influence the relationship between faculty and students before introducing this software is important.

Considerations

Before adopting anti-plagiarism detection software, it is important to examine both the ultimate goal for adopting the program and the availability of human resources to conduct the necessary verification of suspicious text. As Royce (2003) concludes, "The bottom line is that innocent students may be falsely accused of plagiarism, and that many plagiarists may go undetected." Since McCabe *et al.* (2012) shows that failure to identify and punish plagiarists encourage a weak culture of integrity and feeds the cycle of dishonest work, Turnitin may ultimately undermine its main purpose by promoting cheating behavior. Instead of encouraging students to behave with integrity, it has the possibility to simply teach them how to escape detection by making slight modifications to plagiarized text that allow it to fall under the radar (Warn, 2006). Further, Brown & Howell (2001) found that students are less likely to see paraphrasing without attribution as a serious offence. Thus, when modified text evades detection, it may in fact reinforce this false idea that minimal adjustment to unattributed ideas is permissible in the academy.

Suggestions

There is no easy solution to growing concerns about academic integrity on college campuses. As Howard & Robillard (2008) caution: "Even when we institute what seem to be sensible, accessible plagiarism policies; even when we institute honor codes; even when we purchase and use plagiarism-detecting software; and even when we develop plagiarism-proof assignments – the problem persists" (p. 2). Success in this arena will be defined by site-specific adaptation of strategies to increase academic integrity and to reinforce these messages for students, faculty, and administrators. The creation of a strong ethical climate is at the root of whether an institution will succeed or fail and steps will succeed or fail. In this section, I outline several factors that may aid administrators in the development of a "culture of integrity" on their college campus.

Capitalizing on the transition to college for educational opportunities and enlisting peer mentors to communicate messages about academic integrity may help clarify expectations for incoming students at a time when these messages will have the greatest impact. Since McCabe *et al.* (2012) believe that "the power of an honor code today appears to be directly related to how effectively students are oriented into this tradition and how much effort and resources a campus is willing to expend in working with faculty and students to institutionalize a code within its culture and keep it alive over time" (p. 112), this section proposes two methods for beginning that important work.

The Transition to College – An Opportunity to Break the Cycle

McCabe *et al.* (2012) explain that students who cheat in high school in order to gain admission to a selective institution do not expect to continue this pattern once they

begin college. The authors describe how high-achieving students believe that "true learning begins in college" and expect to behave differently when it does (p. 33). This suggests that the transition to college and freshman year experience is a pivotal time to interrupt the cycle of cheating that has become embedded in today's achievement culture.

The literature further supports this belief that the transition to college offers an opportunity to set new standards of behavior. According to Sanford (1964), students enrolling in college are doing so during a formative period when academic institutions can have significant influence over the development of their ideas and beliefs. By clarifying standards of behavior both during orientation activities and throughout their first year of college, students can be taught the school policies and expectations while receiving implicit messages about the importance of academic integrity on campus (McCabe *et al.*, 2012).

Peer Mentors

The role of peers has been shown to have a dramatic influence on cheating behavior. This is particularly true during the transition to college when students are uncertain about behavioral norms in their new community (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). Ideally, peer messaging will discourage cheating behavior and help to communicate to new students that they are entering a climate where academic integrity is expected (Novotney, 2011). However, a compromised peer culture in which cheating is the norm may enhance pre-existing cheating behavior among incoming students or – in the worst-case scenario – encourage previously honest students to begin cheating. In fact, a student who sees two peers who cheat in college is much more likely to engage in this behavior

as well (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). Thus, messages received from peers – both directly and indirectly – can influence student behavior and this moment of transition is an ideal opportunity for using peer mentors to communicate messages about the importance of academic integrity.

Further, as McCabe *et al.* (2002) explain, "getting students to understand that cheating is socially unacceptable can be more powerful than greater student understanding of a campus's academic integrity policies" (p. 373). A peer mentor program would draw upon those strengths and help to develop a culture in which students' play a leading role in communicating messages about the importance of academic integrity. Since "cheating behavior occurs in a social context and as the result of socialized norms learned from that context" (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009, p. 296), how those values are communicated to new students can play a pivotal role in decreasing cheating behavior.

McCabe and Pavela (2005) also found that encouraging students to be involved in both the creation and dissemination of messages about integrity to the campus community is an important component to creating a culture of integrity that students embrace. This is particularly powerful since students are "less likely to cheat in college if they perceive[e] that their peers would disapprove" (McCabe *et al.,* 2012, p. 114). In fact, the greatest deterrent to student cheating on college campuses is fear that being caught would embarrass them in front of their peers (McCabe *et al.,* 2012). Mentors would communicate this message directly to students.

While students go through the acculturation process to adapt to their new social and academic environment, they take cues from older classmates about acceptable

behavior (McCabe *et al.,* 2012). Thus, using peer mentors to help new students acclimate to the environment, provide one-on-one opportunities for discussion about the standards of integrity, and allow for an ongoing dialogue about challenges may be an important part of ensuring that colleges break the cheating cycle for incoming freshmen.

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Appendix A

Haverford College Supplemental Essay Question[1]

Haverford is a community in which members of a diverse student body and faculty can live together, interact, and engage academically and socially in ways that promote both personal freedom and community standards. If a diverse community is to prosper and if its educational goals are to be fully realized, community members must make genuine attempts to come to terms with their differences. Mutual understanding is fostered by respectful communication.

Haverford's Honor Code engenders a climate of trust, concern, and respect. The Honor Code affirms, for instance, the importance of not seeking unfair academic advantage by cheating or plagiarizing. The Code also requires community members to take responsibility for their words and actions in the social realm. The Honor Code serves as an educational tool without being a list of rules, leading students to hold each other accountable and to resolve conflicts. By encouraging respectful dialogue and conduct, we hope to create an atmosphere that is open, respectful, lively, and conducive to intellectual and personal growth.

Haverford's Honor Code has been in place for more than 100 years. Each year the Haverford student body reconsiders its commitment to these values, recognizing that the community and the Honor Code must continue to change and grow. The Honor Code is publicly re-evaluated and reaffirmed every year, yielding a dynamic *living* document that has a real presence in life at the College. Matriculation at Haverford will enable you to take part in this process of growth and change.

To read a complete version of the current Honor Code, or for additional information, please visit honorcouncil.haverford.edu.

We recognize that reading about an Honor Code is very different from living with it. Nevertheless, if you come to Haverford, the Code will be a part of your college life. We therefore ask you to write a reflective essay of 1-2 pages in response to one of the following prompts:

- Given the dynamic nature of the Honor Code and the opportunity you will have to shape and change the Code if you come to Haverford, what issues and ideas do you think are essential for an Honor Code to focus on, and how should an Honor Code address them?
- Write about an experience in which you encountered a tension between personal freedom and community standards. Discuss the experience and the underlying issues, how you dealt with the tension, and whether or not there was a satisfactory resolution.
- The Honor Code at Haverford creates an environment of deep trust, respect, and collegiality between professors and students which, in turn, fosters open dialogue and free intellectual exchange. Talk about the conditions you think are essential to allowing this type of dialogue and exchange in both academic and non-academic settings.

[1] Downloaded from the 2012-13 Haverford College Supplement to the Common Application at www.commonapp.org

Appendix B

Recommended Reading for Faculty

(1) Davis, S.F., Drinan, P.F, & Gallant, T.B. (2009). *Cheating in school: What we know and what we can do.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Selection

Long-Term Deterrents: Development of Individual and Institutional Strategy (131-166)

(2) Gallant, T.B. (2008). Academic integrity in the twenty-first century: A teaching and learning imperative. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 33*(5), 1-143. doi: 10.1002/aehe.3305

Selection

A New Approach to Academic Integrity: The Teaching and Learning Strategy (87-104)

(3) McCabe, D.L., Butterfield, K.D. & Treviño, L.K. (2012). Cheating in college: Why students do it and what educators can do about it. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Selection

Chapter 9 - Creating a Culture of Integrity: Practical Advice for Faculty & Administrators (164-195)

Appendix C

A Selection of Articles about the Harvard Cheating Scandal

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