

PLAGIARISM

- Preventing Plagiarism

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According to one recent study, 68 percent of students surveyed at schools without honor codes acknowledged serious cheating at least once during their college career. This appears to represent a substantial increase over the 39 percent of students who admitted cheating on nine large public university campuses in 1963.

Academic dishonesty is not a victimless crime. It undermines an atmosphere of trust between students and faculty and harms those students who play by the rules.

Why do students cheat? Many students blame the pressure that they are under to succeed. Parental expectations, competition to get into graduate or professional school, even the need to maintain eligibility for financial aid contribute to academic dishonesty. Opportunity also plays a role. The Internet makes plagiarism as easy as cutting and pasting, and crowded classrooms give students a chance to peek at their classmates' tests.

Poor time management leads some students to cheat out of a sense of panic. Also, many students (50 percent, according to one recent study) feel that there is nothing wrong with cheating, and believe, correctly, that they're unlikely to get caught.

What can you do to reduce academic dishonesty?

1. Discuss the various forms of academic dishonesty in class—and the penalties.

Make sure that your students understand that all of the following are examples of academic dishonesty:

- Using a crib sheet during an exam.
- Copying during an examination.
- Submitting the same work in different classes, without acknowledgment.
- Making up sources.
- Using another's ideas or words without proper attribution.

2. Reduce opportunities for cheating.

It is much easier to prevent cheating than it is to pursue a case of academic dishonesty after it has taken place.

To prevent cheating on tests: Do not use the same exam in successive semesters; closely proctor your own tests; have more than one form of a test; and give essay rather than multiple choice tests.

To prevent cheating on essays: Don't reuse assignments. Ask students to submit their work in stages (for example, require an annotated bibliography). Require specific components in the paper, such as comparisons to other class readings. Consider alternatives to a traditional research paper, such as a paper based on interviews or examining a local topic. Require students to incorporate personal reflections or references to current issues.

3. Minimize student anxiety.

Carefully describe the format of a test and the material that will be covered. Make students feel that they can succeed in your class without cheating.

4. Integrate anti-plagiarism software into your course.

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