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Office of the Provost (570) 662-4804
<http://www.mansfield.edu/~academic/>

Report on Academic Integrity

Perhaps there is nothing that is more essential to maintaining the values of a university than our shared efforts to define and support the integrity of our academic work. McCabe and Drinan (1999) cited evidence that more than three-quarters of students surveyed at large public universities admitted to cheating violations of various forms. They also indicated that academic dishonesty has increased over time.

The maintenance of our own academic standards requires the combined work of the academic community in:

- Setting appropriate standards and clarifying our expectations for academic integrity
- Establishing processes for reviewing academic work relative to the standards and expectations
- Reminding students about academic integrity
- Following processes for reporting violations of academic integrity when they occur
- Reporting to the university community about violations of academic integrity and the penalties applied.

For a number of years the Provost's office has maintained a record of all reported violations of our academic integrity policy. When a report is submitted on the university form, it is checked against our files to determine if a student has previous violations. Beginning with the fall 2005 semester, I asked our staff to maintain a database of violations that would facilitate reports to the campus community.

During the fall 2005 semester there were 41 violations of academic integrity reported to the Dean's office. In 22 of the cases there was unauthorized collaboration among a group of students in a particular course. There were also 11 instances of plagiarism. The most common consequence proposed by the professor and accepted by the student as an F grade for the assignment on which the violation

occurred, but four students received F grades for a course, based mainly on the egregiousness of their violations.

During the spring 2006 semester there were 13 violations reported. Presumably the large difference in total violations from the previous semester was related in part to the one course that had 22 violations. Ten of the spring 2006 violations were for plagiarism. While the most common penalty was failure of the assignment, one student was suspended for a semester because of her blatant misappropriation of another student's work; another was suspended because of repeated violations following a clear warning from the professor; and another was terminally dismissed from the university because of repeated violations involving deliberate plagiarism. All suspensions and terminations involved a formal hearing.

During the fall 2006 semester there were 11 reported violations. Most involved plagiarism or unauthorized collaboration. Again, the most common penalty was failure of the assignment.

My experience over the past two years is that the majority of students who are charged by a faculty member admit their guilt and readily accept the penalty proposed. A minority of charges are appealed before a hearing board that follows the process described in the *Mountie Manual*. The outcome of these hearings varies depending on the evidence presented by the instructor, for example, copies of similar exam responses or clear evidence of plagiarism based on portions of a paper or essay that matches closely the content of a document available on the internet. *Turnitin* is helpful

in obtaining such evidence.

In the near future I will propose that we (a) move the hearing process for academic integrity violations from Student Affairs where it has traditionally been organized to Academic Affairs, and (b) recognize multiple levels of violations. For example, it seems clear to me that there is a significant difference between a first-year student who fails to cite the source of a brief quote and an upper class student who blatantly plagiarizes a significant portion of a paper, or between a student who collaborates inappropriately on a minor portion of an assignment and a student who steals an examination from a professor's office. My hope is that if we create a more rational process, faculty will be more likely to participate in our shared task of maintaining academic integrity. If you have thoughts about either of these proposals, I would be pleased to discuss your reactions.

- Peter Keller

Reference

McCabe, D. L., & Drinan, P. (1999, October 15). Toward a culture of academic integrity. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. B7.

Spotlight on Faculty

- * Karen Guenther, History, has just published her second book, *Sports in Pennsylvania*.
- * Ira Newman, Philosophy, has been elected President of the English-speaking section of the Canadian Society for Aesthetics.
- * Nancy Sidell, Social Work, has been named as a national mentor. She will work with institutions receiving curriculum improvement grants in Geriatric Social Work.

When a man sells eleven ounces for twelve, he makes a compact with the devil, and sells himself for the value of an ounce.

- Henry Ward Beecher, (1813-1887)