



THE CENTER  
FOR ACADEMIC  
INTEGRITY

# Integrity Matters

A Journal of Experience and Opinion on Academic Integrity  
From The Center for Academic Integrity

May 2005  
Volume 1, Issue 1

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Chris O'Connor, Layout Designer

## From the Executive Director

Welcome to the debut edition of *Integrity Matters*, The Center for Academic Integrity's "journal" of opinion and experience in upholding standards of academic integrity. When I first considered publishing a small journal, I wanted the inaugural edition to feature student reflections on academic integrity as the first voice readers would "hear" in our new publication. I thought it wholly appropriate that students, to whom we direct so much of our campus programming efforts on integrity and from whom we rightfully expect so much in the manner of upholding standards, would set the tone for *Integrity Matters*. I couldn't be more pleased with the result.

The four student essays in this volume collectively represent a slice of the "life span" of academic integrity. We learn not only about how four young men and women – a high school junior, a graduating college senior, a first year law student, and a first year doctoral student in the sciences (all attending CAI member institutions, by the way) – have made a commitment to think about and promote academic integrity but we also gain insight into how far-reaching the impact of that commitment is. As we read Lily's essay, we are reminded of the challenge to uphold academic integrity standards in the face of peer, parental and societal pressure to "get into the right school." Our lead essay, Kevin's reminiscence of his two years as the chair of a fledgling university academic integrity board, highlights the opportunities for influencing campus culture in positive ways. And Molly and Paige both seize upon the critical role that academic integrity standards play in acculturating graduate and professional school students to the professional standards and ethical codes of their disciplines and

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## Institutionalizing and Personalizing a Commitment to Academic Integrity: Reflections of a Student Academic Integrity Board Chairperson

By Kevin Coffman

My involvement with the Case Western Reserve University Academic Integrity Board (AIB) began about three years ago as I sat in my dorm room contemplating how to answer a question on the 2002-03 AIB application: "Why is academic integrity important in a university community?" Little did I know then that in answering that question, I was laying the groundwork for what would become one of the most meaningful experiences of my undergraduate career at Case. As a newly created entity, all I knew about the Academic Integrity Board was that its members were intimately involved in adjudicating cases of suspected academic misconduct. I can honestly say it was the first time in my freshman year at Case that I had heard the words "academic" and "integrity" used together. Much to the chagrin of my friends, that was the hook I needed to apply for a position on the inaugural Board.

I spent my first year on the board acquainting myself with the new academic integrity policies and becoming comfortable

articulating the "nuts and bolts" of the policy. Exhausted and a little disillusioned at the end of my first year from the academic rigors of Case, I began to contemplate what kind of legacy I would like to leave at the institution where I would be earning my degree. Did I want to be remembered as a "straight-A" student? A talented researcher? A great student athlete? Or did I want to be remembered as someone who was more concerned with creating an academic environment built on trust rather than deceit or competition? Would my fellow students' ethical development be more important to me during the next three years than the grade I received in Calculus? After reflecting on these questions for a while (and with a little prodding from the AIB's adviser), I decided to run for chair of the

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Academic Integrity Board – a position I have held for two years. Looking forward now to “life after graduation,” I recall with fondness my experiences as the Academic Integrity Board chair.

As I reflect on the challenges and opportunities that I encountered as chair of the AIB, I am amazed at the progress our members have made in bringing to the forefront on our campus the issue of academic integrity. Indeed, one of the first goals of the Academic Integrity Board was, in the words of the AIB adviser, to “start a conversation” on campus about what role integrity should play in the lives of college students – a conversation we would begin by using academic integrity as our “microphone” and one that I would, as chair, play an important role in developing. Naturally, with the position of chair came many responsibilities, some of which I was prepared to deal with and others I would in time learn to become comfortable with. It is my hope that in offering some insight into the role of an honor council or academic integrity board chair I may encourage others to take on a similar responsibility at their college or university.

I believe one of the most important tasks the chair of an honor council or academic integrity board can do is to help his or her group realize that a foremost goal is to be accessible. The council or board must be accessible both in the sense of campus visibility and accessible on

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a professional and personal level. Council or board members, as the “ambassadors” of integrity, should stay involved with their student groups, fraternities and sororities, athletic teams, and academic departments and be easily and openly approachable by students, faculty, and administrators. Forging productive relationships with administrators, faculty, and students is an important part of leading an organization whose goal of creating a more honest and productive academic and social environment relies on the buy-in of the entire university community.

A second important characteristic of a successful leader is enthusiasm. This is especially true of the chair of an honor council or academic integrity board since he or she has the difficult task of promoting an ideal among peers that is often unpopular and misunderstood. Promoting integrity is not a



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task for someone feeling lukewarm in his or her commitment to academic integrity.

Another important skill is the ability to articulate the fundamental values of academic integrity. It was in this area that I learned the most from my experiences on the AIB preceding and during my time as chair. Through discussions at general meetings, freshman orientation programs, teaching assistant ethics training programs, hearings, summer readings, and personal conversations with my AIB advisers, the vague notions I had attempted to articulate on my application freshman year about how academic integrity was important to a university community began to solidify into a coherent and workable value system. Listening, learning and reflecting helped me steer the Case Academic Integrity Board through its early years of existence and to equip each new AIB member with the confidence and courage to develop more fully their own personal integrity, but to challenge others in the campus community and beyond to do the same by upholding the values they have determined, through much reflection, to be right and ethical.

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## Peer Pressure in High School (Yes, it can be a positive influence!)

By Lily Hecht-Leavitt

Walking down the crowded halls of any American high school, one tends to hear conversations either about the weekend's festivities or schoolwork — or how the algebra test was impossible and the answer to number one is nineteen, number two is  $\frac{1}{4}$ , number three is . . . . But wait a minute. That student just gave his friend the answers to problems on the test! What kind of person would have the audacity to tell his friend the answers?

To the reader, this may seem blatantly immoral, yet the mindset of most high school students in this situation is “I just helped him out ... and it was only a few answers. Maybe by doing this he will help me on the next algebra test, plus we both really want to get into a good college.”

So, there it is: college — a major reason why so many students in high school feel the need to cheat. Since a student must have good or spectacular grades for admission to a first choice college, the offender thinks, “This one honor offense is nothing in the grand scheme of things.” However, that statement is incorrect in a couple of ways. First, what if the offender is caught by a teacher or turned in by a peer? Suddenly, someone is sitting in front of the honor

court and hearing the word “suspension.” At that point, it is too late to realize that one bad grade on a test is much less a problem than the word “suspension” on a permanent record. Second, what if the knowledge never learned is necessary for success on next semester's assignments or

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tests? Again, taking the easy shortcut without considering consequences can often lead to serious problems later on.

Why do students cheat? Do they not have the honor, respect for one's self, or the moral codes to make the right decisions? While many have integrity, many also fail to honor it, citing pressure from parents, college advisors, teachers, and peers to succeed. Students fear that if they do not meet the expectations of others, they will be thought less of. However, at the moment of pressure or crisis, most students don't realize that if they cheat they will do greater harm to their reputation (if caught) and their preparation for college (even if not caught).

As a member of my school's Honor Council, I constantly see teenagers making poor decisions that not only jeopardize their academic career but harm their morals too. Challenging a peer, especially one who is a friend, is hard. However, by telling that person that he or she has done something unacceptable and may be suspended may make that person take the situation more seriously (as opposed to a teacher lecturing about the future and why cheating, lying, or stealing is bad.) Confronting a friend is different: the offender knows his or her friend is looking out for him or her. In fact, just yesterday, a friend of mine came up to me and told me how he cannot mess up again in school or he will be expelled. Seeing him every day, I remind him to make the correct decisions and not to cheat. Because of our past conversations and his being questioned and punished by his peers on the Honor Council, I already see maturing and change. Friends who care are a constant reminder to do the right thing. I am keeping an eye on this boy and he, in turn, is keeping himself in line.

Honor and integrity are characteristics that are important for college, graduate school, careers, raising a family, and life in general. But at our age, peers can't influence peers by themselves. Schools also have to emphasize integrity. For example, I attended the Ghent Montessori School in Norfolk, Virginia, and feel as though I learned my morals and virtues there. I still remember the

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Aesop's Fables calendars which contained a virtue each month that the teacher would read aloud at the beginning of every month. Such acts may seem insignificant but little learning experiences like this one helped to shape the character of my classmates and myself. I still practice these virtues today and feel as if discussing them in school at a young age helped me develop into the person I am today.

The home is also a vital place to learn integrity – if integrity is discussed and practiced there. Dishonest parents cannot teach their children about virtues they do not possess. If a child sees his parents acting unethically, so, too, will the child. I also have found much learning about integrity in religion. Belonging to the Jewish faith, I was raised to

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## Professional Integrity in the Sciences: The Graduate Student as Apprentice

By Molly Gregas

For future scientists, graduate school means a specialized and integrated training that includes core knowledge, lab skills, critical thinking, and research integrity. Expectations of professional conduct particular to the field accompany the concrete goals of courses, publications, and degrees. The student is expected to quickly learn and apply a research code of ethics and always to conduct his/her research with the level of integrity and professionalism expected of a mature scientist.

Unlike many commercial fields, where advances and discoveries are closely guarded and kept confidential to allow for competitive advantage, the values of free information sharing and efficient dissemination are paramount in the sciences where the continual advance of the body of knowledge takes precedence over



personal edge or gain. In exchange for publicly sharing discoveries through publications, conferences, and collaborations, a scientist receives credit for his or her work when someone who builds on that discovery cites that work as a stepping-stone. In this way, a scientist earns reputation and reward built on recognized accomplishments while enabling future scientists to move forward in their own work. Scientists with records of quality accomplishment have the best chances for funding and opportunities for future success.

Within this “culture” of science, one important concept that a science student quickly learns is that any small advance is possible only because of the work that others have done. From this small advance, another researcher will perhaps make another discovery, so dissemination of quality information must be efficient and corroborated by others in the field, underscoring the importance of quality work and ethical transparency.

As part of this effort, a scientist must keep good records, including documentation of daily experimental activities as well as accounts of expenses, records of equipment use, and sources of materials. Publications must include details of experimental design, descriptions of lab techniques, sources of reagents and raw materials, and any information required for another scientist to repeat the work and confirm the results; the author must also give proper credit to other lab members and collaborators who have significantly contributed. The scientist is further obligated to share any new materials, reagents, or techniques with other scientists engaged in similar work, who will then give credit for that loan in their subsequent work. In this way, information and necessary materials are freely shared, in the spirit of the advance of science as a whole rather than the individual scientist. A researcher who hoards information, misuses funds, leaves out essential experimental information, or falsifies data and results will earn a negative reputation in the tight scientific community. Someone who becomes known as a good collaborator, with an excellent work ethic, who works well as part of a team, and gives due acknowledgement to co-investigators, will be in high demand and will have many opportunities to take advantage of further teamwork.

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Scientists are also accountable for the integrity of their work to agencies outside of universities, research institutions, and their peer groups. Because scientists often fund their work through private and federal grants, these funding sources require strict accounting as to how those funds are allocated and spent, requiring accurate and up-to-date recordkeeping regarding all activities and expenditures in the lab. A graduate student in science

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learns the methods of documentation his or her field requires, from keeping a daily lab notebook, to filling out purchase orders and expense reports, and logging use of equipment and lab space. If there is an investigation into a scientist's work or use of funds, this documentation is crucial to establishing the integrity of the research and those engaged in it.

The consequences for misconduct in research are many and severe. A scientist may lose crucial grant funding and lab space or even be asked to leave his or her institution. He or she may find it difficult to attract future students and collaborators and to get publications through the review process. A scientist's track record of thorough and successful research is a combination of publication record, reputation, funding success, and recognition by peers. With integrity in question, a career can grind to a halt or never leave the ground.

Fortunately, the burden of learning how to conduct research responsibly rests on many shoulders. Novice scientists gravitate to mentors with good reputations who strive to pass on their work habits and ethics. Graduate programs that receive funding from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and other agencies are required to include a number of hours of formal ethics training for graduate students, along with the day-to-day learning in the lab and the scrutiny that takes place when a student submits work for publication. As apprentice scientists prepare for their profession, formal and informal mechanisms teach the habits and standards of ethical research that will result in impeccable science and a satisfying career.

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practices. All four essays demonstrate that academic integrity is fundamental to a rich and rewarding learning experience. As importantly, our four writers also portray academic integrity as a "gateway" value in the understanding of broader ethical issues in our educational, professional, and social communities. It is not an overstatement to conclude that students are our "apprentices" to the ethical habits and practices essential to a progressive and trusting society and that academic integrity is the core value within the "guild."

As I develop themes for future editions of *Integrity Matters*, I plan to reach out to the membership of the Center for ideas, writings and musings, and feedback. I also encourage you to stay tuned for the unveiling of *Integrity Update*, our companion newsletter of resources and information, which will be sent to all members sometime after the distribution of this journal.

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believe that honesty is a necessary character trait. All religions, it seems, are based on the same fundamental principles, one of which is honor. Honor remains with you for life and makes you a reliable and respectable person.

Young people feel stressed at times and may look to take short cuts. Schools have a responsibility to instill in young adults the understanding that it is better to fail something honestly than to succeed in something falsely. So what can educators do to teach the importance of integrity? Many things. They can be role models for integrity. They can talk about integrity and ethics in class. They can hold workshops or seminars. Even if some students respond bitterly, many others in time will react positively and eventually the word will spread that learning the character traits of integrity and honor is as important, if not more important, than the curriculum designed to help pass a standardized test at the end of the year.

Ultimately, though, students have to influence other students. As we say at our school, "Teach it, embrace it, witness it, and promote it: integrity is not too cool for school. Pass it on."

*Lily Hecht-Leavitt is a junior at Norfolk Collegiate School and a member of the Honor Council. For more information about Norfolk Collegiate's honor code, contact Dr. Karen Clifford at kclifford@norfolkcollegiate.org*

## The Relationship between Honor Codes and Professional Codes of Conduct

By Paige Berges

Designing an honor code for graduate and professional schools presents a unique challenge. Important in any honor code formulation is the distinct goal of placing discretion in the hands of graduate and professional students to create their own ethical codes. There also is the concern that an honor code should be shaped to reflect the rigors, or model the ethical codes, of the profession. At Duke Law School, the goals and concerns competed this year as it considered whether to include a “duty to report” in its professional school honor code.

At Duke, the Law School Honor Code Task Force had to weigh the often-vehement opinions of students with the very real ethical concerns within the legal profession. The American Bar Association and the Bar of each state promote a “duty to report” suspected ethical violations of fellow lawyers as a requisite for maintaining good standing. The question before the Honor Code Task Force was then, should law schools, as part of their program of professional training, condition students to report their peers’ honor code violations?

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In his discussion of the recent Enron scandal at the Fourth Annual Rabbi Seymour Siegel Memorial Lecture in Ethics, Professor William Simon noted that the lawyers involved with Enron viewed complicity as “loyalty.” In effect, they viewed their non-action as the ethical choice. Students are often quoted similarly, viewing reporting on their friends and classmates as “snitching,” “ratting,” and the like. In response to the Enron scandal, Congress passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, expressing the clear disapproval of such complicity.

To institutionalize within an honor code a duty to report is to send a similar message: that non-action in matters of academic dishonesty is so egregious that it warrants separate punishment. But is failing to report student plagiarism morally equivalent to a failure to report the misdeed of the corporate lawyer? And, just as whistleblowers in the workforce are often the subjects of retaliatory action by employers, the backlash to a reporting student can be severe. Some argue that instituting a “duty to report” may reduce some of a student’s guilt in reporting while providing a moral justification to fellow students. On the other hand, many more argue that a punishable “duty to report” undermines the very idea of honor, especially at the professional school level, where students should be mature enough to fashion their own ethical standards. Moreover, there is the concern that a failure to report would be so seldom punished for lack of evidence that the Honor Code as a whole might be rendered completely useless. With strong reaction from the student body, and questionable benefits, the Task Force had to consider that, perhaps, an outright duty to report is not the proper policy in the professional academic setting. One of the qualities that is so beloved by students at Duke Law School is the atmosphere of trust and of shared goals.



Freshmen at Duke University signing the Community Standard

The Task Force addressed a central question: does the “aspirational” language of the Duke Community Standard — “I will not lie, cheat, or steal, *nor accept the actions of those who do,*” (emphasis added) — send the clear message that complicity in unethical actions is not right? Or must more forceful steps be taken to teach students the value of self-enforcing ethical norms before they are faced with Enron scandals and Bar requirements?

After much deliberation, the Honor Code Task Force proposed a revision to the Law School code that reconciles ideals with concerns. The Task Force concluded that the aspirational language of the Duke Community Standard

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should be assumed to mean that there is a duty to report, confront, or otherwise manifest non-acceptance of honor code violations. As such, the Task Force proposed revisions that will include a statement on the goal of fostering professional ethics and advancing the idea of an ethical code that is both personal and conforms with the Community Standards. There will be no punishable offense for failing to report per se, but the Honor Code Task Force decided that there will be a point at which complicity (defined as “aiding and abetting”) is so egregious that it itself amounts to lying, cheating, and stealing. The Task Force presented the new proposal to the student body and expects a final draft to be presented for faculty approval in May 2005.

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