

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

STUDENT AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN AN  
HONOR CODE ENVIRONMENT AT A TWO-YEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership

By

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## DEDICATION

For my mother and father, who always wanted the best for me and to Judith who is a role model for what a kind, respectful, ethical, and honest human being is.

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## ABSTRACT

### STUDENT AND FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN AN HONOR CODE ENVIRONMENT AT A TWO-YEAR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

Anthony Elton Prestby II

Doctor of Education Degree

in Educational Leadership

Academic dishonesty has been a growing concern in the history of higher education and is even more prevalent today as competition for success in a high stakes environment fosters dishonesty. At four-year universities, research studies indicate the rate of cheating is lower when deterrence strategies such as academic dishonesty policies in the form of an honor code are used. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of faculty and students in regards to dishonesty in community college with an adopted honor code. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven full time tenured faculty members in the disciplines of Business, English and Science courses leading to careers in the health profession. Additionally, twelve students were interviewed who were business majors, those who have taken a sequence of English composition courses, and those who had taken science courses leading to careers in the health profession. Findings suggest that while there are similarities in definition between how community college faculty and students define academic dishonesty, there is no universal definition. Participants report that they believe cheating results from pressures to attain goals and/or lack of an interest in lower division courses. Both students and faculty report deterrence strategies such as the academic dishonesty policy, specifically the honor code statement is ineffective because they are too idealistic. Implications indicate from this study that creating integrity will require finding ways get students to understand the value of all courses for their future endeavors. This study contributes to the body of research by adding to the knowledge of academic dishonesty specifically as it relates to dishonesty in community colleges.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A fully functioning democracy depends on an educated citizenry (Liss & Liazos, 2010). A formal education allows individuals to achieve success and become responsible, ethical, and moral human beings. Petress (2008) states that education is "... an investment we make to enhance our vocational futures, our personal self-images, and... is among the most precious and expensive activities we will ever engage in" (Petress, 2008, p. 686). Higher education has the duty and responsibility to instill the values of honesty and ethics into students who are the leaders of the future (Petress, 2008).

The pathway to higher education and economic opportunity is filled with competition that leads some students to commit acts of academic dishonesty to achieve success (Diekhoff, LaBeff, Clark, Williams & Haines, 1996; Kohn, 2007; Keller, 2011; Wowra, 2007). The economic downturn in California starting in 2005 provided less funding for the system of higher education as the state struggled with increasing deficits. As a result, the ability for students to gain admittance into the University of California and California State University systems was reduced as both institutions limited enrollment allowances and altered admission policies by raising minimum entrance requirements. The effect was the competition to gain acceptance into desired schools increased dramatically (Supiano, 2009). Minimum requirement grade point averages for admittance were raised and in some cases, enrollments were closed to new and transferring students entirely. Indeed, the stakes are higher for today's students where the ability to succeed is dependent on academic success—sometimes at the sacrifice of integrity.

Student cheating or "academic dishonesty" is not a new phenomenon. Student cheating can be documented as early as 1760 when students bored with routine

curriculum and memorization of course material along with adversarial relationships with professors gave rise to the practice of students using cheat sheets to function (Gallant, 2008). The result was one of the earliest higher education institutions, the College of William and Mary, developing the first honor code in which misconduct was described as lying or” (doing anything else contrary to good manners” (Gallant, 2008, p. 15).

Academic dishonesty is a growing concern to all facets of the educational spectrum from elementary education through postsecondary education; however, the effects of dishonesty are more often highlighted in higher education and found in research literature more abundantly at the college level. For decades, studies have documented the rates of academic dishonesty among students as raising to epidemic proportions some as high as 66-95% depending on the sample size (Bernardi, Metzger, Scofield Bruno, Wade Hoogkamp, Reyes, & Barnaby, 2004; McCabe, & Trevino, 1997). Several research studies reveal important demographic statistics related to reasons for cheating. Overall, men report higher incidents of cheating than women (Genereaux & McLeod, 1995, McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Whitley, 1998), while women have more negative attitudes towards cheating. In their 1997 study, McCabe and Trevino (1997) indicate that females, older students, and those with higher grade point averages self-report less academic dishonesty, while those involved in extracurricular activities self-reported higher levels.

Later studies such as those by Jensen et al., (2002), and Smythe and Davis (2004), support that males report a higher incidence of cheating than do females and business majors also self-report cheating more than other college students. Recent research has indicated that the incidents of academic dishonesty are rising in students entering the medical professions. In 2002, in a survey of 253 nursing students, 75 percent of



respondents indicated they had” (witnessed students cheating and 53 percent considered cheating” (Tippitt, Ard, Kline, Tighman, Chamberlain & Meaher, 2007, p. 239).

Additionally, Lanier (2007) confirms that online students cheat more than traditional lecture courses and single students and those with lower grade point averages are more prone to cheating. Clearly, academic dishonesty is a growing problem in higher education.

Fully eradicating academic dishonesty is a lofty goal. At best, most efforts have been punitive and geared to deter students from committing acts of academic dishonesty. The use of policies to promote academic integrity such as honor codes is cited as being most effective. Traditional honor codes as defined by McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2002), contain at least two of the following elements: a) un-proctored tests, b) a written pledge that is affirmed by students that states they have not cheated on tests or exams, and, c) a student controlled judicial hearing body. There is a heavy emphasis on students to report suspected incidents of cheating among their peers. Honor councils provide support and education to promote academic integrity for the college community (Gallant, 2008). Recently, smaller schools are adopting “modified honor codes” which may have some core contents of traditional honor codes but emphasize the development of community responsibility for academic dishonesty as an institutional norm (McCabe & Trevino, 2002).

### **Student and Faculty Perceptions on Cheating**

As community colleges are a critical junction for connection to universities, it appears vital to understand the perspective of students and faculty at two-year colleges in order to gain more comprehensive knowledge on the topic in an effort to create a more

honest academic community (Schmelkin, et al. 2008). There is confusion between faculty and students about what constitutes academic dishonesty in a range of behaviors from borrowing notes to full-fledged plagiarism and test cheating (Bisping, Patron & Roskelley, 2008; Brown & Howell, 2001; Davis, et al., 1992; Diekhoff, et al., 1996; Engler, et al., 2008; Etter, et al., 2006; Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Hollinger, Lanza-Kaduce, 2009; Jensen, et al., 2002; Klein, et al., 2004; Koljatic & Silva, 2002; Lambert, et al., 2008; McCabe & Trevino, 1996, Schmelkin, et al., 2008; Simon, et al., 2004). Further, Brown and Howell (2001) indicate that unless a significant proportion of professors and administrators perceive plagiarism as a serious problem students are more likely to plagiarize. In order to develop a culture of academic integrity and develop policies and programs to support this culture it is important to understand faculty and student perceptions of academically dishonest behaviors (Schmelkin et al., 2008). Findings by Genereux and McLeod (1995) indicate that cheating is more prevalent when instructors do not appear to care. Social psychologists theorize that schools are not viewed as moral institutions:” (At present, the schools themselves are not especially moral institutions... and tend to be based more on authority than on ideas of justice” (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1997, p. 57).

Some studies point to various psychological factors and theories for why students cheat, such as “social norms theory,” to explain why students act in dishonest ways. According to Bendor and Swistak (2001), social norms are behavior rules that are broken and the obligation to impose a sanction involves third parties, or an entire community as in an institution. As Bendor and Swistake (2001) state,” (Violations of a general code matter to everyone in a community and are not merely private matters between two parties...and norms are necessary to stabilize behavior in groups and institutions” (Bendor

& Swistak, 2001, p. 1494). McCabe and Trevino (1993) believe that honor codes create a “strong normative environment and a culture of integrity that discourages cheating” (McCabe & Trevino, 1993, p. 1). Further, in an honor code environment,” (students actively participate in the creation of this moral context by participating in the judicial process and by establishing and enforcing rules and norms regarding appropriate conduct” (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2002, p. 93). Students wish to protect the academic integrity culture and the benefits it provides and will not let cheaters go unpunished by threatening the validity of valued norms (McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2002, p. 93).

Faculty perception of academic dishonesty is also important for study. Research studies into faculty perception are most often concerned with how the frequency of student academic dishonesty and the preferred methods to deal with student cheating. While a high number report observing cheating, less than half report these incidents (McCabe 1993). Most faculty prefer to deal with cheating one-on-one, citing the campus judicial process as overly cumbersome, a dissatisfaction with how cases were handled, and the effort to report as too labor-intensive (McCabe, 1993; Moeck, 2001). Interestingly, faculty in both honor code and non-code schools overestimated the frequency of dishonesty more than students (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002).

### **Problem Statement**

Much of the literature on academic dishonesty has documented the use of honor codes and policies at the four-year university; (Brown & Howell, 2001; DeBruin & Rudnick, 2006; Engler, et al., 2008; Hollinger & Lanza-Kaduce, 2009; McCabe, 1993; McCabe, et al, 1999, 2001, 2003) however; very little research has attempted to

understand student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty at the community college level. Community college students are composed of a different demographic population than four-year institutions and enter with different goals, such as credentials, transfer, retraining, and career exploration. Research is needed on why students at community colleges cheat and how faculty perceive reasons for academic dishonesty by students and whether the existence of an honor code and honor council is an effective mitigation strategy. Since honor codes are shown to be an effective deterrent to mitigating acts of dishonesty, research should consider looking at two-year community colleges with established honor codes.

### **Purpose and Significance of Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand how students and faculty perceive incidents of academic dishonesty at a community college with an established honor code. This study provides greater insight into the specific reasons students at community colleges cheat and identify whether an established honor code is an effective tool to mitigate acts of academic dishonesty. While many community colleges may have established academic integrity policies and regulations, very little is known about the effects of such statements and policies on community college students. As Honor Codes and Honor Councils have been historically prevalent at four-universities (Brown & Howell, 2001; DeBruin & Rudnick, 2006; Engler, et al., 2008; Hollinger & Lanza-Kaduce, 2009; McCabe, 1993; McCabe, et al., 1999, 2001, 2003), there is little documentation of the existence of either Honor Codes or Honor Councils at community colleges.

The results of this study will be used to help community colleges create academic

communities that build integrity and trust without relying on punishment to prevent cheating. (Petress, 2008, p. 686). In addition, findings from this study may also inform how best to implement honor codes at community colleges. The implications of this study could be useful for other community colleges who are seeking to create a community of academic integrity.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions will be used to guide this study:

1. What are the similarities and differences in how students and faculty at community colleges define academic dishonesty?
2. What factors do community college students and faculty cite for their behavior related to academic dishonesty, either to cheat and/or how to respond to cheating?
3. How do community college students describe the honor code as a factor affecting their behavior to cheat?
4. How does the honor code at the community college impact faculty thoughts and behaviors in deciding whether to report violations of dishonesty and support a community of academic integrity?

### **Operational Definitions**

For clarity and consistency, several generally accepted terms are used throughout this study.

*Academic dishonesty* is a broad term to mean any act that is knowingly committing fraudulent acts with the intent to deceive. It may include such individual acts such as plagiarism and cheating.

*Plagiarism*, according to Webster's New World Dictionary, is to "take ideas (writings, ideas, etc.) from (another) and pass them off as one's own" ("Plagiarism" Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2002, p. 484).

*Honor Councils* while not expressly identified by name in the literature, for this study will be defined as a body comprised of faculty, staff, students, and administrators who meet to further the objectives of the honor code through educating the campus community about academic integrity issues.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

To understand student and faculty perceptions about academic dishonesty, social norms theory is used to see to what degree students feel their peers engage in acts of dishonesty, and how faculty support the honor code. Social norms theory posits that "people tend to maintain behavior consistent with peer descriptive norms" (Hard, Conway, & Moran, 2006, p. 1059). Additionally, Caboni (2005) state "norms delineate acceptable actions for realizing group goals and form a collective conscience for the group" (Caboni, et al., 2005, p. 520). DiBartolo and Walsh, (2010) point out that "dishonest actions have almost become the norm rather than the exception, as they represent the necessary price to pay for survival in a high stakes environment where progression through a program, honor society induction, and maintaining grades for scholarship and loans have taken precedence over behaving with integrity" (DiBartolo, & Walsh, 2010, p. 1).

In terms of the effects of honor codes on social norms, a peer reporting requirement inherent in honor codes has a positive effect on reduction of cheating (McCabe, 1993). Unfortunately, studies indicate that while honor codes might be an

effective deterrent for some students, it would not have an effect on their own decisions to cheat (Engler, et al., 2008). Social norms theory also indicates that “behavior is influenced by incorrect perceptions of how other members of our social groups think and act (Berkowitz, 2004, p. 5). Through the comparison of data in the form of interviews this study hopes to learn about student and faculty norms and whether the established honor code does in fact mitigate cheating on a community college campus by learning how students and faculty perceive cheating on campus.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This study uses a case study approach (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) that “seeks to understand the larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific case and therefore focus on the particular” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 104). Case studies are “complex and multi-layered” making them useful for producing “thick, rich descriptions” of the “complexities of a situation” and “illuminating some of the reader’s understanding thereby extending comprehension of some complex set of events of circumstances” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 105). To help provide rich description, this study borrows from both phenomenology and grounded theory.

Using phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) and grounded theory (Creswell, 2011), this study examines the perceptions of the phenomena of cheating and honor codes by students and faculty through interviews and document data. The research setting was conducted at a large community college in the western United States with a diverse student population. This is one of the few community colleges to have adopted an honor code, utilizes an honor statement, and has established an honor council to promote academic integrity.

Utilizing extreme case sampling (Patton, 2002), students and faculty members were selected to participate in the study. This approach was appropriate because participants were selected purposely from a unique community college that has adopted an honor code . Using an extreme sampling strategy allowed for “selecting cases that are information rich because they are unusual or special in some way” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Since this is the only known community college with an adopted honor code, faculty and student data provided information on how this special type of dishonesty polices affected beliefs and behaviors of faculty and students in regards to creating integrity. The faculty sample was selected from large departments on campus using criterion of full-time tenured faculty who teach in the disciplines of business, English composition, and particular courses of sciences that lead to careers in the health professions. These particular disciplines have been identified in the literature as important indicators of prevalence for academic dishonesty. Using tenured faculty helped gain a wide perspective on faculty perceptions of cheating and experience with the college honor code. Students were obtained from the currently enrolled population as of fall 2011. To further define the sample, students were selected who met criteria of completing twenty-five units or more of college work. An additional sample criteria was that each student was either a business major, had taken a sequence of English composition courses or particular science courses that lead to careers in the health professions. Utilizing this major or coursework criteria mirrored the disciplines from which the faculty sample was taken. Upon approval of this study by the California State University Internal Review Board and research site Institutional Research department, faculty and students were invited to participate in the research study and provided information on the purpose of the study, guidelines for participation, potential risks, benefits, and information on how



confidentiality would be maintained. Data collection will commenced in fall of 2011 and continued through the end of the semester.

Data analysis began immediately after data collection started. Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service. Utilizing electronic software, thematic analysis was used to review transcribed interviews for themes and codes were established. Throughout the data analysis process and review of documents codes were continually reviewed, refined, and modified to support new insight.

During the study the researcher had many roles such as a learner, intervener/reformer, advocate, and friend (Glesne, 2011) to gain valuable perspectives from participants. As a learner, the researcher sought to set aside assumptions and pretensions what is known about academic dishonesty and attempted to be open to new explanations. The data obtained from this study informs the larger educational community and the research acts as an advocate for participants to provide information on student and faculty perceptions related to the topic. The potential existed for the researcher to interview colleagues and have a friendly relationship that might raise issues of ethics (Glesne, 2011). Sensitive information was shared because of the familiar nature of the relationship between the researcher and the faculty. Since this information was relevant to the study, inclusion of this data required tactful handling of the information in the written findings to respect confidentiality.

The researcher has been employed at the institution for many years and brings assumptions regarding academic dishonesty. To mitigate bias, the researcher used member checks with participants to ensure their statements are appropriately reflected. Additionally a peer colleague was asked to review questions to ensure that each appropriately reflected the theoretical framework and was free of leading questions and bias.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study focused on student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty at the only known community college in the western United States with an established honor code. This particular community college had a prestigious reputation for innovation for transfer and is known for its highly competent faculty. The limitations of this study are centered on the student and faculty sample and the site selection.

In terms of delimitations, part time faculty members were not included, which could have yielded additional data on themes particularly for this institution that has over 900 hourly instructors as compared to slightly more than 300 full time faculty. Additionally, international students, including those with F1 visas were not included in this study. While differences in how foreign students perceive cheating is important for study, it was decided to set aside this for future research.

## **Sample**

The sample size of the study was limited to one community college and less than thirty subjects overall. Students were purposely selected from those who majored in Business, English composition and particular sciences that lead to careers in the health professions. Narrowing the disciplines from which to take the student sample limited the breadth of using a sample from a larger number across the college and those from other majors.

The faculty members for this study were selected from full time tenured faculty who taught in the disciplines of English, Business, and particular science courses that are the gateway to those students seeking to enter the medical professions.

An additional limitation was that the researcher worked at the institution from

where the participants were sampled and several of the students knew the researcher and because of familiarity, their responses may not have been as candid. This kind of “backyard research” (Glesne, 2011) while convenient because of the familiarity with the site and minimal issues of access, had potential challenges with using participants whom the researcher knew and the inclination to use colleagues and friends.

A final limitation is that students selected for this study were not self-reported cheaters, but rather were asked about their perceptions of why other students cheat and these assumptions may or may not have had any basis in fact. While it would have been optimal to interview students who actually committed acts of dishonesty, this was not feasible given the established current honor council hearing board process of the institution and issues of access to students who have been accused of cheating.

The faculty sample was taken from the same disciplines utilized in the student sample (English, Business, and particular science courses) and limited to using only full time faculty. While using the entire faculty population could have yielded more breadth, obtaining full time faculty as the population from which to draw the participants was used in order find faculty with more experience with student cheating behaviors and knowledge of the existing honor code. Furthermore, the perspectives of newer generations of faculty were not represented in the study.

### **Site Selection**

The site for the study was a prestigious two-year community college in the western United States with the only known honor code community college system in the state. Nearly all of the research on the effectiveness of honor codes has been conducted at four-year universities. Additionally, while research studies do mention judicial hearing

bodies such as honor boards, there is no mention of any type of governance committee charged with the education of the campus community about the honor code or strategies to mitigate academic dishonesty and this limits the ability to compare to other community colleges of a similar size and who have experience with utilizing an honor code and honor council and this is a limit to the generalization of the results.

### **Researcher Bias**

There were also potential issues of bias in the study. The researcher has had experience in committing acts of academic dishonesty that may produce judgments about why students are dishonest. As a full time employee with the study site, the researcher had good access that provided opportunities to obtain research participants for face-to-face interviews that yielded rich descriptive data. Additionally, the researcher is a member of the college Honor Council and discussions of policies could influence the ability of the researcher remain nonjudgmental. Challenges were related to the ability of the researcher to select students for interviews and provide them an environment where honesty and candidness can be fostered in the same way that would occur in an anonymous survey. Additionally, securing a faculty for individual interviews was challenging to coordinate schedules and obtain professors who have had a wide breadth of experience not only incidents of academic dishonesty, but utilizing the honor code and judicial process which could lead to utilizing friends and colleagues.

### **Delimitations**

This study was conducted in the fall of 2011 at a community college of a single college district in the western United States. This study did not attempt to look at factors such as gender, age, grade point average, and enrollment statistics. This study was

interested in perceptions of college cheating and while these demographics might be useful for further analysis, it was not the scope of this study. Further while cheating in online courses is important for study; this research was interested in gaining the perspective of students and faculty in the traditional classroom delivery of instruction and sets aside the topic of online faculty and student perceptions for future studies.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The organization of this dissertation is presented in the following format: Chapter One is the Introduction chapter that consists of an introduction to the topic and situates it in a societal and educational context, provides a statement of the problem, discusses the purpose and significance for the study as well as provides research questions that guided the study. Additionally the chapter contains a theoretical/conceptual framework, overview of the methodology of the qualitative study and the limitations and delimitations. Chapter Two is a review of literature that synthesizes existing literature about the topic, key factors pertaining to the topic of academic dishonesty, honor codes, and norms theory, and gaps in the literature related to academic dishonesty. Chapter Three is the methodology chapter that will identify the research tradition and data analysis. This is followed by a chapter that reports the results of the study and finally the study concludes with discussion of the results and recommendations for future study and implications.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

The pursuit of knowledge that results in a scholarly education is a respected hallmark of a civilized society, as well a critical component for success in the workforce. Unfortunately, the pressure to succeed at all costs in a highly competitive workforce in an economy where jobs are scarce creates an opportunity for academic dishonesty as early as elementary school through the graduate level. Researchers and experts in education agree that as rates of some type of academic dishonesty climb to 95% in some studies, it is appropriate to state that academic dishonesty is an epidemic in the American educational system (McCabe & Trevino, 1997). Both quantitative and qualitative studies have been performed on a wide variety of sample sizes to discern the factors such as demographics and reasons why students cheat, as well as methods educators can employ to deter or apprehend students who commit these incidents. Efforts such as the use of Honor Codes as a means of deterrence have been shown to be effective in reducing incidents of academic dishonesty at four-year universities (McCabe, 1993; McCabe & Trevino, 1996, 2002; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 1999, 2003; Simon et al. 2004).

This chapter will explore a) existing knowledge of academic dishonesty, b) how cheating and plagiarism have been researched including key factors relating to academic dishonesty, c) the role of social norms relating to deterrence and mitigation strategies, and d) the apparent gaps in the literature relating to academic dishonesty.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

#### **History of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty as an issue in education is not new and can be traced in

American education from the Antebellum Period (1760-1860), the period of the Research University (1860-1945), the Mass Education Period (1945-1975), to the Contemporary University Era, 1975 to the present (Gallant, 2008). In the years of 1760-1860, students committing acts of dishonesty were more disruptive and confined to incidents of lying and cheating (Gallant, 2008). The first documented honor code was created by students to "...protect duty, pride, power and self... [and was meant for] "preserving self-worth and personal reputation and not protecting or obeying institutional rules" (Pace, 2004; Thelin, 2004; & Wagoner, 1986 as cited in Gallant, 2004, p. 15). Remarkably, students could utilize the honor code to justify cheating "especially if his honor was being threatened by failure in a course or public humiliation by his teacher" (Gallant, 2004, p. 15).

The period of 1860-1945 known as the "Research University Era" brings growth of student population as the Morrill Act of 1862 donates public land to states and territories for "Benefit of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts" (Higher-Education.org. 2010). Additionally women begin entering colleges to prepare for teaching careers. During this period "cribbing (the use of cheat sheets) becomes common on oral, recitation and exams" (Gallant, 2008, p. 18). Postsecondary institutions co-opted the traditional honor code "in an attempt to harness the peer power in the direction of institutional rule compliance rather than defiance" (Gallant, 2008, p. 19).

Mass expansion and diversification of the student population mark the years of 1945-1975 as the G.I. Bill coupled with an influx of government funding bring more students to the system of higher education. Critical events such as the Watergate scandal, incidents of student cheating at the Air Force Academy, University of Florida and University of Wisconsin bring more dishonest acts to the public eye (Gallant, 2008, p.

21). During these years, students become more vocal. It was also during this period that the rise of the term paper industry erodes the public trust of colleges to successfully deal with academic dishonesty. Additionally Gallant (2008) notes that during this period as the public becomes increasingly concerned with the ability of universities to handle student cheating, confidence in honor codes weakens. Misconduct is still defined as cheating but expands to include acts such as copying and pasting along with use of cheat sheets. In the late 1960's experts on student conduct posit that student cheating is "to rectify perceived wrongs against them, specifically illegitimate institutional constraints on their ability to earn high grades" (Gallant, 2008, p. 22). It was also at this time that the students feel institutional and "parental pressures to get top grades and avoid flunking out and disappointing their families" (Gallant, 2008, p. 22). The more contemporary term of "academic dishonesty" comes into use in scholarly journals (Gallant, 2008).

The years of 1975 to the present are unique with challenges. Bad economic times coupled with demands for universal access provides for the rise of the private for profit institutions. Competition among students for limited resources such as classes and financial aid leads to increased levels and types of cheating such as students ripping pages from books and professional journals to gain advantages over other students (Gallant, 2008). Additionally colleges begin seeing incidents such as students supplying falsified transcripts, letters of recommendation, and students hiring someone to take their exams (Gallant, 2008). Unique to this era is the concept of "collaborative cheating" where "students attempt to help themselves while helping others through the sharing of resources (such as old papers, lab reports, and examinations), divvying up the work on required assignments, and working together on independent assignments" (Gallant, 2008, p. 25). The 1990's experts in the field of academic integrity and honor codes such as



Donald McCabe re-energize the use of honor codes to mitigate acts of dishonesty as several important studies demonstrate the effectiveness of their use (Gallant, 2008; McCabe, 1993).

### **Academic Dishonesty Prevalence and Demographics**

Since the 1960's, research studies have been done to query students on whether they have cheated (McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Depending on the sample size rates for incidents of students who report engaging in some type of academic dishonesty can range from as little as 9% to as high as 95% (Schmelkin, et al. 2008). Definitions of cheating and academic dishonesty vary by study and explain disparity in findings. Smyth and Davis (2004) define cheating as ranging on a continuum from utilizing crib notes to hiring others to write papers. There is also disparity among students and faculty about other forms of dishonest behavior such as homework collaboration or handing in the same work for another assignment (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003).

In a study by Higbee and Thomas (2002) of 251 faculty and 227 students a questionnaire was administered with twenty-five different cheating behaviors ranging from blatant examples of "discussing paper with a friend" to collaborating on homework, to purchasing notes in lieu of going to class' (Higbee & Thomas, 2002, p. 44). Students viewed collaboration as acceptable, explaining that "students benefit from learning from others," whereas faculty viewed this as dishonest. However not all faculty shared this same view. Some faculty indicated "The world likes people who are team oriented" (Higbee & Thomas, 2002, 47). In yet another study of seriousness of dishonest behaviors by Nuss in 1984, fourteen dishonest behaviors ranging from taking an exam for another student to padding a few extra items on a bibliography were given to 500 faculty and 500

students (Nuss, 1984) of which 146 students and 169 faculty participated. Students and faculty agreed about the most severe forms of dishonesty such as taking an exam for another student, but there was less agreement with acts that were perceived as less serious such as copying from someone's paper without his or her knowledge, where students felt it was less serious and faculty felt it was extremely serious (Nuss, 1984, p. 141). What is interesting is that the faculty ranked "taking an exam for another student" fifth on the list of fourteen behaviors and felt that copying from someone's paper without their knowledge was the number one act (Nuss, 1984, p. 141). The results indicated that considerable confusion exists between how faculty and students view dishonest behaviors. According to Lee (2009) "we should not assume students see the issue [of cheating] the same way" (Lee, 2009, p. 172).

### **Prevalence**

In a large study of 15,000 undergraduate students done in 1992, 60% admitted to cheating, while in a study of 50,000 undergraduate students surveyed on multiple campuses, 78% of students admitted to cheating (McCabe & Trevino, 1993).

Undergraduate business, liberal arts, and education students self-reported that 75% of them admitted to cheating (Lanier 2006, p. 245). Types of cheating in conventional instruction range from copying another student's homework, to complete acts of plagiarism. More recently studies have been done to determine the seriousness of cheating in regards to online courses. In 1999 as little as 10% admitted to "cut and paste" plagiarism as compared to 40% in a period of surveys conducted between 2002-2004 (CAI Assessment Project Surveys as cited in Stephens, Young, & Calabrese, 2007). In a more recent study in 2008, 36% of undergraduate students admitted to copying sources

from the internet for use on papers (Abdolmohammadi & Baker, 2008).

## **Demographics**

The demographic portrait of those who engage in academic dishonesty is that overall more males than females are likely to cheat (DeBruin & Rudnick, 2007; Lanier, 2006, p. 246). However, some studies reported that gender differences vary by context. Stephens et al., (2007) reported that in conventional forms of cheating, women are more likely to cheat while males were more apt to cheat in internet based courses. Furthermore, women, older students and those with better grades demonstrate significantly more negative attitudes towards cheating (Etter, et al., 2006; Jensen, 2006; Stephens, et al., 2007)

As far as age, younger students tend to engage in cheating behavior more often than older students (DeBruin, & Rudnick, 2007; Etter, et al., 2006; Lanier, 2006, & Petress, 2008). Some researchers suggest that older students in college have better developed moral attitudes. According to Wowra, the data "...suggests that a central and important internal moral audience (i.e. superego or conscience) prohibits an older student from engaging in academic dishonesty, which presumably would lead to aversive feelings of self-betrayal such as guilt or shame" (Wowra, 2007, p. 317).

Information on the role of ethnicity is limited as existing research focuses more on gender rather than ethnic differences. However one study of 850 criminal justice majors and non-criminal justice majors, found that "...males [and] members of ethnic minorities...tend to be the biggest predictors of cheating among criminal justice majors" (Lambert & Hogan, 2004 as cited in Lanier, 2006, p. 246). In summary, research suggests that younger students and males are more likely to cheat than females and that

women tend to have more negative attitudes towards cheating. Information on factors of ethnicity in regards to academic dishonesty is very limited.

### **Reasons for Academic Dishonesty**

Various quantitative and qualitative studies have utilized self-reporting methods to learn how and why students choose to cheat. Most often, students who cheat are concerned with getting the best grades possible (Chiesl, 2007; Lanier, 2006; Schmelkin, et al. 2008; Wowra, 2007). The factors contributing to students committing academic dishonesty can be grouped into two main categories: academic pressures and external pressures such as those from family and peers.

#### **Academic Pressures**

Academic pressures, which encompass fear of failure, difficulty of tasks, lack of time, and competition. Academic ability is also a factor showing that average and below average students are more prone to cheating than those who are succeeding academically (Drake, 1941; Premeaux, 2005; Lee, 2009). However this is not always true. Petress (2008), states in discussions with university colleagues "...almost half the cheaters are fairly good performing students, ones who come to believe they could be a bit better and get greater grade and scholarship advantages if they just cheat a little" (Petress, 2008, p. 687). According to DeBruin and Rudnick (2007), students with lack of self-control and a positive attitude towards deviant behavior are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty and "can find it difficult to resist when opportunities for deviance arise" (DeBruin & Rudnick, 2007, p. 154), and to Wowra (2007), the decision to cheat "overrides their moral integrity" (Wowra, 2007). On the other hand, students with better grades and ability are less likely to engage in cheating (Genereaux & McLeod, 1995;

Jensen, et al., 2002).

Another related factor is academic procrastination, which is “the purposeful delay in beginning or completing academically-related tasks (Ferrari & Beck, 1998, p. 529). Roig and Caso (1995; Zastrow, 1970), indicate that procrastination to be a precursor to dishonest behaviors in university and college. In a study by Brezina (2000), students indicated that the pressure from lack of time contributed to their motivation to cheat: “I felt the pressure to do well, but didn’t have enough time to study.” (Brezina, 2000, p. 74). Students with anxiety over grades and doing well in school might be suffering from social anxiety that suggests “...a highly anxious student compensates for an anticipated decrements in concentration by bring crib sheets and other cheating devices into the testing environment” (Wowra, 2007, p. 304)

### **External Pressures**

A second category is external pressures, such as those from peers and parents. Parental pressure was also a mitigating factor in a student’s decision on whether to cheat. In the absence of familial support, peers greatly influence “ethical decision-making of young adults” (Simon et al., 2004, p. 77). Additionally, when students do not feel connected to the institution, or lack familial support, peer influence is a significant factor affecting whether students will commit acts of dishonesty. Peer support for acts of academic dishonesty and peers who also engage in cheating are “positively related to academic dishonesty” (DeBruin & Rudnick, 2007, p. 154). Additionally students rationalize their cheating behavior by stating “Everyone else is doing it...I see others doing it; it helps me get better grades, a good job; I see no reason not to cheat; there is little or no chance of getting caught; there is little or no punishment if I did get caught

(Alschuler & Bliming, 1995). This type of “minimizing consequences” or “euphemistic labeling” helps to deactivate a sense of moral obligation not to cheat (Stephens, et al., 2007, p. 235). Also, there is a theory relating to moral identity whereby the unethical act is committed without personalizing it. As described by Wowra (2007), “a peripheral moral identity allows a college student to cheat without incorporating the unethical act into his or her theory of self” (Wowra 2007, p. 305).

Both of these pressures override the student’s moral sense of obligation. While some students can disassociate acts of academic dishonesty from their sense of self, older college students have an internal moral compass that prohibits him or her from engaging in dishonest acts that would cause feelings of guilt and shame. With this understanding of why students cheat, the next section will seek to examine strategies for mitigating these behaviors.

### **Cultural Differences**

Western education is becoming increasingly attractive to many countries such as China, India and South Korea (Bowman, 2012). In a report issued by the Institute of International Education (IIE), the “population of international students at U.S. colleges and universities increased by five percent during the 2010–2011 academic year. The top three sending countries are China, India, and South Korea, whose citizens make up nearly half (46 percent) of the total international enrollment population in the United States” (Bowman, 2012, p. 56). This significant population addition to Western education creates challenges for both foreign students and American teachers in higher education classrooms. The notion of individual plagiarism and the taking of another’s work are different in Asian countries where collective work or collaboration is considered

“overenthusiastic helpfulness” (Hill, 1996, p. 100). In Japan students typically collaborate to prepare for school entrance examinations that is the primary academic sorting method for college and university (Hill, 1996). Hill also reports that teachers interviewed stated that they would never expel a student for plagiarism or cheating but definitely would for infractions of a dress code (Hill, 1996, p. 94).

In a study of 2,068 students in Taiwan on areas of academic dishonesty such as cheating on tests, cheating on assignments, and plagiarism, the rate of cheating was 57.5%. Specifically, the percentage of self-reported incidents of copying homework or assignments is 70.3% (Lin & Wen, 2007, p. 92). The authors believe this to be a result of a collectivist culture as they indicate “Taiwanese society is similar to other Asian countries in that it is a society focused on group work rather than individualism” (Lin & Wen, 2007, p. 92). Similarly, Native American culture focuses on helping others rather than competing (Soldier, 1989). In a study of 233 students from various universities from Hong Kong, China, Norway, and Taiwan to understand how students manage challenging coursework, responses indicate that more often students preferred to solve problems with friends ranks first, with seeking help from a teacher fourth (Jian, Sandnes, Huang, Cai, & Law, 2008, p.163). The study also indicated that when students ask other students for help, the first preference is to “point the students in the right direction, followed by letting a student have a look at their solution” (Jian, Sandnes, Huang, Cai, & Law, 2008). It appears that across several cultures outside the United States, the notion of one student helping another is viewed more of a collegial act than as dishonesty. With this understanding of why students cheat, the next section will seek to explain social norms theory to understand why humans follow or perhaps break rules and examine strategies for mitigating these behaviors.

## **Social Norms Theory**

In society, humans establish rules or standards that prescribe behavior in social and professional situations (Sasaki, Brannstrom, Dieckmann, & Sigmund, 2011).

Behavior that is in agreement with a standard of correctness can be termed as a “prescriptive norm” (McHugh, 2012) in that it is concerned with “what one ought, may or ought not do: they require, permit, or forbid certain pieces of conduct on the part of the agents, and are apt to guide that conduct” (McHugh, 2012, p. 9). This “oughtness” (MacCormick, 1998) manifests itself in everyday behaviors such as following the law, being courteous, kind, and compassionate. Behaviors that individuals ought not to do is steal, cheat, lie, drive recklessly, and others. In educational settings, this can be translated to the belief that students should follow prescriptive norms of academic integrity and not cheat.

In a civilized society members follow prescribed norms to establish order and continue the public good (Sasaki et al., 2011). Individuals have the incentive to follow rules in order to receive rewards, which, in an academic context is to be treated fairly and equitably in coursework to receive grades. Sasaki et al., (2011) believe that “the threat of punishment or the promise of reward can induce self-interested players to prefer actions that sustain the public good” (Sasaki et al., 2011, p. 1165). In the context of sanctioning academically dishonest behaviors this can be in the form of mitigation such as deterrence or apprehension to maintain normative behavior.

### **Strategies for Mitigating Academic Dishonesty**

With rates of conventional incidents of academic dishonesty reaching such alarming rates, the need for faculty members and institutions to address this issue is at



hand. While many single solutions may be delineated, they can be categorized into two types of strategies: deterrence and apprehension.

### **Deterrence**

According to Lanier (2006), deterrence as a primary “prevention strategy” includes options such as an institution developing academic integrity policies, honor codes and councils, as well as specific strategies such as mixing test questions, (Davis, Grover, Becker & McGregor, 1992), confiscating portable internet devices such as cell phones, laptop computers before tests, proctored exams, and spacing students apart, as well as attempting to reduce competitiveness to discourage cheating. Additionally breaking down the assignment into smaller components with a small point value could relieve the pressure and anxiety that contributes towards the propensity to cheat. From a social norms perspective, discouraging cheating by the some of the deterrence strategies creates an incentive for honest students to continue to act with integrity as they perceive positive measures are being taken to protect the academic environment and respect honest behaviors.

**Honor codes.** McCabe and Trevino (1999) report that honor codes have been found to be an effective strategy for reducing incidents of academic dishonesty. There is significant consensus in the literature that the existence of honor codes and academic integrity policies are an effective means to reduce incidents of cheating (Brown & Howell 2001; McCabe & Trevino, 1999; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 1993, 2001, 2002, & 2003). By definition, an honor code most often have elements such as a signed pledge, unproctored exams, judicial boards comprised primarily of students, and peer reporting requirements (Engler et al., 2008). While most experts agree of the positive

effects of honor codes, there is evidence to suggest that merely the existence of an honor code is not enough. The wording of the message of what constitutes plagiarism or cheating is critical to achieve maximum effectiveness to ensure students are not merely responding how they believe they should respond. (Brown & Howell 2001). Honor codes can be seen as a “social contract” (Douglas, 2000; Sasaki et al., 2011) where members agree to abide by established rules or face sanctions. As Sasaki et al., (2011) indicate, “adherence is voluntary but commits the parties to mutually beneficial contributions. Punitive clauses ensure that noncompliance will be sanctioned” (Sasaki et al., 2011, p. 1168). In this context students voluntarily sign a pledge committing to act honorably and agree to be governed by institutional sanctions for violations of this behavior.

Although McCabe et al., (2001), state that the presence of an honor code in and of itself does not explain lower frequencies of academic dishonesty, schools with honor councils have inherent peer group pressure to eschew academic dishonesty as well as a greater commitment to reporting peers who are caught engaging in dishonest behavior. It is important therefore that students have input into honor codes in order for them to be effective. Once established, honor codes can facilitate the formation of an honor council comprised of students, faculty, staff, and administrators to adjudicate and educate students on aspects of an ethical academic community.

Deterrence also comes from students being aware of the academic integrity policies of the institution. Policies must be disseminated wisely and contain specific statements that include detailed statements of what constitutes academically honest and dishonest behaviors and the natures of the consequences for violation. (Lanier, 2007, p. 257). Experts also recommend that institutions as well as faculty members should stress

the fundamental principles of ethics and integrity by establishing clear academic integrity/dishonesty policies in their classes. Faculty can provide awareness by including statements of academic integrity into the course syllabus and spending 5-10 minutes of the first class meeting discussing what constitutes academic dishonesty and student responsibility for academic honesty in the course (Klein, et al, 2006; Nuss, 1984). Faculty could also provide the internet address or enumerating the student honor code into the course syllabus would also be a good strategy. (Chao, 2009; Wowra, 2007, p. 318).

**Changes to classroom environment.** Finally, there evidence to suggest that there is a positive relationship between classroom environment and cheating behavior. Faculty who make an effort to develop a rapport with their students, (i.e., know their names), provide the opportunity to develop a relationship based on mutual respect and be a deterrence to dishonesty (Klein et al, 2006; Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999). Faculty members who do little or nothing to deter cheating in the classroom produce an environment where students feel they will be not be caught, and even if they are caught, there is going to be little if any punishment (Diekhoff, et al., 1996). Additionally students tend to cheat when there is an atmosphere of depersonalization and “students experience a greater sense of anonymity and become less interested in pleasing the instructor through honesty” (Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999, p. 495). This would be especially important in online courses where the student and faculty relationship tends to be more anonymous.

**Reducing competitiveness.** According to Kohn (2007), “competition is perhaps the single most toxic ingredient to be found in a classroom, and it is also a reliable predictor of cheating” (Kohn, 2007, p. 91). Competition also interferes with higher level

thinking needed in colleges (Kohn, 2007). Evidence suggests that reducing the competition among students could be an effective deterrent since the pressure to succeed might be lessened (Chiesl, 2007, p. 205). Competition erodes a student's self concept as they feel more "unsupported, uninterested, and incompetent" (Kohn, 2007, p. 91). Suggestions to reduce competitiveness include: affirming the importance of integrity at the start of the course, encouraging students to seek clarity for unclear assignments, small group projects to develop collaborative learning skills, and developing projects that are more personally meaningful to students that will foster interest and creativity rather than merely getting the best grade possible (Chiesl, 2007; Kohn, 2007).

### **Apprehension**

While certainly an acceptable means of reducing rates of academic dishonesty, apprehension is more reactive than proactive. Once a student is caught and/or accused of cheating the damage is already done. For deterrents described above to be effective the risk of apprehension must be real and if the "threat of being caught is low and the rewards outweigh the consequences then cheating may continue or even increase" (Lanier, 2007, p. 257). From a normative perspective, a punishment is that which is perceived to be "sufficiently large," and "it compels all players to cooperate by contributing to the public good" (Sasaki et al., 2011, p. 1165).

Methods of apprehension include having students submit papers electronically and utilize an anti-plagiarism search engine to detect "cut and pasted" papers. Confronting student cheating is met with resistance as faculty feel reluctant to "police" student behavior (Gallant, 2008), frustrated with the lack of administrative support and effective resolution (Gallant, 2008; Davis, Grover, Becker & McGregor, 1992), or simply

wish to ignore the behavior, by justifying that in reporting the student it will ruin the student's career (Davis, Grover, Becker & McGregor, 1992). Unfortunately, apprehension methods have the intent of thwarting the cheating behavior rather than learning the real reason students wanted to cheat (Kohn, 2007).

### **Cheating in Community Colleges**

A review of the available scholarly literature on cheating in community colleges revealed relatively few major studies specific to community college students. Of significance is a study done in 2002, of 265 community college students who were surveyed on their experiences and attitudes of cheating (Smyth & Davis, 2004). In this study, the results were very closely matched to rates and types of cheating in four-year universities. In a study of 256 community college students, Smyth and Davis (2004), found that 74% of students observed student cheating and over 45% confess to cheating at least once (Smyth & Davis, 2004). In this study, more males cheated than females and further found that although a high percentage responded that cheating was wrong, nearly 50% of sophomores believed cheating to be socially acceptable (Smyth & Davis, 2004).

An article by Pat Moeck (2002), addresses types of academic cheating and identifies why students cheat based on a survey of literature by the author. Moeck identifies cheating such as altering documents, stealing library materials, sabotaging equipment, and "aiding and abetting others to cheat" (Moeck, 2002, p. 481). As to the reasons for cheating Moeck cites the lack of knowledge of what constitutes cheating and the belief by students that anything on the internet is "free domain" for use (Moeck, 2002, p. 453). With this relatively small amount of scholarly research on academic dishonesty in community colleges, it demonstrates the need for more research of the phenomenon.

## Summary

Academic dishonesty is a critical issue in education. Since the 1960's quantitative and qualitative studies have indicated that the rates of students who self report committing some type of act of dishonesty have ranged from 75- 95% signifying that academic dishonesty is truly an epidemic in the educational system. When looking at the demographics of students who engage in acts of academic dishonesty, most research suggests more males rather than females tend to commit acts of cheating while females and older students are more apt to have more negative attitudes about cheating. Younger students most often engage in dishonest acts, while older students who have a more developed 'moral compass,' may refrain.

The factors contributing to students who cheat include, pressures from parents to do well in school, lack of commitment and time to do tasks, competition, and fear of failure. Research most often reveals that students with lower grade point averages tend to cheat more. Most often students who are academically dishonest suffer from lack of self-control and academic procrastination. Students who lack self control find it difficult to resist the opportunities to cheat and those with academic procrastination delay in committing to starting academic assignments to the point where cheating seems a positive viable option. When students cheat they rationalize and/or neutralize cheating behaviors with euphemisms that helps depersonalize the acts and thereby absolves personal responsibility. Finally, there is some evidence to suggest that acts of software and movie piracy are allowing students to neutralize personal responsibility and translate this to the academic environment.

With an increasing number of international students entering American community colleges and universities, the faculty is confronted with the culture

differences of students who come from countries where students help each other in coursework. Studies in several countries (Bowman, 2012; Jian et al., 2008; Lin & Wen, 2007 & Soldier, 1889); support the notion of collectivist learning rather than an emphasis on competition by individuals that could explain the difference in perception of “helping” by foreign students and “over-helpfulness” by faculty.

In any society, individual members follow prescribed rules or standards of how each person “ought” to behave. (McHugh, 2012) These social norms provide rewards for those who follow the rules and establish punishments or sanctions for those who break them. In Western academic cultures, it is generally believed that students ought to conduct themselves with integrity and not cheat (McHugh, 2012). To protect honesty, strategies are adopted to ensure the public good for all.

Strategies to mitigate academic dishonesty fall into two categories, deterrence and apprehension. Deterrence is a proactive prevention strategy that prescribes that faculty and institutions should develop strong and clear academic integrity policies and include statements of academic integrity in course syllabi. There is strong evidence to suggest that faculty play a critical role in establishing and promoting a classroom environment that fosters academic integrity (Gallant, 2008; Smyth & Davis, 2003). Faculty who spend time at the start of each course discussing academic integrity with students serve to reinforce what constitutes ethical behavior and inform students of the consequences of violating policies.

Honor codes and honor councils have received much acclaim as a positive deterrent. Honor councils typically are comprised of faculty, staff, and students. Students participating on the honor councils provide peer pressure and role modeling against acts of dishonesty that acts as a deterrent. While apprehension is another strategy

to reduce incidents of dishonesty, it is reactive. If students feel the threat of being caught is low, they are still apt to cheat.

While the literature on the subject of academic dishonesty is significantly large, studies are mainly limited to four-year universities with little or no mention of this issue or its effects in the community college environment. Community colleges play a vital role in the higher education system and specific studies could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Unlike at four year colleges and universities, faculty at community colleges are most often part time and may be working at several institutions and lack the connection and engagement compared to full time faculty members. It would be important to examine the perception of academic dishonesty and faculty engagement to academic integrity including the effects of honor codes and honor councils to answer questions and gain deeper understanding.

As members of an educational community, it is the responsibility of those engaged in imparting knowledge to provide an environment based on ethical principles of integrity, respect, and trust. Students come to education perhaps seeking only to obtain an education for future vocational uses; however, the opportunity exists to impart more than just academic subject knowledge. The values embedded in a code of academic conduct serve as a foundation to develop a student's moral sense and prepare him or her for a role as a member of a community committed to ethical principles.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of community college faculty and students in regards to incidents of academic dishonesty at a two-year community college with an established honor code. It is important to understand the perceptions from the student and faculty perspective of student dishonesty and further whether the presence of an honor code has an effect on incidents of academic dishonesty.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions frame this study:

1. What are the similarities and differences in how students and faculty at community colleges define academic dishonesty?
2. What factors do community college students and faculty cite for their behavior related to academic dishonesty, either to cheat and/or how to respond to cheating?
3. How do community college students describe the honor code as a factor affecting their behavior to cheat
4. How does the honor code at the community college impact faculty thoughts and behaviors in deciding whether to report violations of dishonesty and support a community of academic integrity?

Following this introduction and research questions, this chapter discusses the research tradition that guides this study, the proposed research setting and context, proposed research sample and data sources, proposed instruments and procedures, proposed data collection, data analysis, role of the researcher, and concludes with a

summary.

### **Research Design**

To examine academic dishonesty and the use of honor codes and honor councils, this study utilized a case study approach to study what Rossman and Rallis (2003) cite as the “subjective’ and everyday experiences of participants from their perspective in regards to academic dishonesty and their unique perspectives of an honor code and honor council on the college community. Case studies “seek to understand the larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific case” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 104) A “case’ can be an event, or process (Glesne, 2011) that include examination of data such as interviews, documents, and analysis. According to Glesne (2011), case studies emphasize in-depth interviews document collection, and analysis and the benefits are for a “better understanding of a particular case’ which, for this study is academic dishonesty at a community college.

Because case studies by their very nature are complex and multi-layered, this approach lends itself to borrowing from other methods, called “methodologically eclectic” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), such as phenomenology and grounded theory to provide rich, thick description. Phenomenological studies also emphasize “in-depth, intensive, and iterative interviews... to understand the deep meaning of a person’s experiences” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 97). Further, Clark Moustakas states, “the phenomenological research approach involves a return to experiences in order to obtain comprehensive description that provides the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). From a phenomenological approach, the study sought to look at perceptions from faculty and

students as it currently existed (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). By examination of data through interviews, observations of honor council meetings, and examination of artifacts such as an adopted honor code and related administrative regulations, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of academic dishonesty emerged.

This study also used a grounded theory design approach. Grounded theory is the “systemic qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive topic” (Creswell, 2008, p. 434). Through data (individual interviews and documents) the goal was to determine if there were perceived relationships or effects between the existence of an honor code/honor council at this community college and the perceptions of students and faculty towards academic dishonesty in order to generate theory (Glesne, 2011).

The focus in gathering data was to attain “saturation” (Creswell, 2008) where the “researcher makes the subjective determination that new data will not provide any new information or insights for the developing categories” (Creswell, 2008, p. 443). Glaser and Strauss (1999) indicate that saturation is most effective when the study maximizes the differences between the groups and can never be attained by “studying one incident in one group” (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p. 62).

Additionally, another feature of the grounded theory approach that was utilized is the “constant comparison method” that seeks to generate and connect categories by comparing incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories” (Creswell, 2008, p. 443). Glaser and Strauss indicate the constant comparative method is “concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories and no attempt is made by the constant comparative method to ascertain either the universality or the proof of suggested causes

or properties. Since no proof is involved, the constant comparative method in contrast to analytic induction requires only saturation of data—not consideration of all available data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p. 104).

### **Research Setting**

The research setting was a large community college in a single college district situated in a large urban area in the western United States. This community college was founded at the time of the Great Depression and opened with fewer than 200 students and today serves over 30,000 students and awards Associates of Arts degrees in over 80 fields of study on one main campus and several satellite campuses. The student population is racially diverse, with Caucasians comprising a little over 30 % of the total population. Latino students being the next highest ethnicity represented at nearly 29%. Asian Americans and African Americans are next at approximately 19% and 11% respectively (College Fast Facts, 2009). The community college employs nearly 1,900 full and part time faculty and staff, of which 870 are full time and 1,008 are part time faculty and staff. Of the 870 full time employees, approximately 300 are faculty employed full time. (College Employee Diversity Report, 2009).

### **Rationale for Site Selection**

With the state and local economy recovery lagging, more and more students are returning to education and specifically to community colleges to acquire new job skills. Additionally restricted enrollment statewide at four-year universities has resulted in students staying longer than two years at community colleges as students wait for universities to relax enrollment restrictions (Keller, 2011). These are difficult times for students and competition is extremely high. In some cases four-year colleges are

changing admission policies by raising minimum grade point averages for college entrance requirements (Keller, 2011). These factors create an environment in which students feel pressure to get ahead at any cost and these are prime conditions for incidents of academic dishonesty (Gallant, 2008). As two-year colleges are the first point for students entering higher education, it is appropriate to study a community college with a documented experience in academic dishonesty and which has attempted to use strategies to mitigate incidents of dishonesty. This study used a purposeful sampling strategy for selecting a community college in the western United States that has adopted an honor code.

In the past several years the site college had seen a noticeable increase in incidents of academic dishonesty cases. Data from the campus disciplinarian indicated that in the past two years reports of incidents of academic dishonesty had risen over 70% (Personal communication, 2010). Student discipline had always been the responsibility of a dean in student services; however in 2000, a department of student judicial affairs was created. The college community was concerned by the rise in incidents of academic dishonesty. The college adopted administrative regulations that encompassed a student conduct code and an honor pledge, known as the “honor statement” for students to sign upon enrollment each semester that states they will abide by the principles of integrity. Additionally a committee was created that was comprised of students, faculty members and administrators to adjudicate cases involving alleged incidents of cheating, known as the Honor Council Hearing Board. Further, in an effort to institutionalize the principles of an educational community based in integrity, the college created an Honor Council committee to oversee education, training, and provide workshops about the code of academic integrity and general issues of campus civility.

## **Data Sources**

This study looked at the student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty in an honor code environment at a two-year community college. Thus, this study included interviews as well as the examination of supporting documents. Through individual interviews with students and faculty as well review of documents, the goal was to obtain what Moustakas (1994) calls a “comprehensive description that provides the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994 p. 13).

## **Research Sample**

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2008) seeks to “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2008, p. 214). Patton (2002) also describes purposeful sampling as “judgmental” in that the researcher attempts to find cases that provide “information rich” data that “illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

From within the overall site population of 30,000 students, the sample was narrowed to those students who were: a) full time (enrolled in twelve units or more of coursework per semester), b) have completed twenty-five units or more of college coursework, and c) who were business, English composition, or those taking particular sciences leading to careers in the health profession. The aforementioned majors were selected due to the several studies indicating a rise in cheating behavior in both business students (Anistal, Anistal, & Elmore, 2009; Smythe & Davis, 2004; Kerkvliet, 1994) and nursing and medical students (Rennie & Rudland, 2003; Tippit et al., 2007). Further, enrollment in English and the Sciences when combined represent a significant percentage

of course enrollment. In 2008, English enrollments constituted nearly 13% of total enrollments, and enrollments in Life, Physical, Earth, and Health Sciences represented approximately 11% (Credit Course Enrollment by Department, 2008). Since sciences are a logical pathway to healthcare professions, it seemed appropriate to use science courses for a criterion for the study.

For the faculty sample, twelve full time tenure track faculty participants were selected from the academic departments of business, English composition, and science courses leading to careers in health professions and that are the same departments as used in the student sample. An effort was made to select three to four from each discipline. This allowed for constant comparison analysis between student and faculty groups which is a feature of both phenomenology and grounded theory research traditions (Creswell, 2008; Glesne, 2011). Although the primary data collection method was digitally recorded interviews, document review, jottings and journal notes were also used.

The final student sample yielded twelve students comprised of three Asian American students; three Hispanic/Latino students, three white students and three students who identify as multi-ethnic. The age breakdown consisted of nine students between the ages of 20-25, and three between the ages of 26-30. Nine of the twelve students were enrolled in 14 units during the fall 2011 semester, one was enrolled in 13 units, and two were enrolled in 12 units. Looking at cumulative units completed, five students had completed between 30-40 units; two had completed between 40-50 units, and five had completed over 50 units of college coursework. As to major of study, seven students were business majors, two students were studying English, and one student was a pre-nursing (science) major, one was a history major and the final student was a computer science major. These last two students in the study were initially used to pilot

test the interview questions, however; due to the positive value of their responses, the data was included into the final results.

### **Sampling Strategy**

Using a critical case sampling strategy (Creswell, 2008) the goal was to examine the more dramatic and important cases of academic dishonesty at a community college with an established honor code. Further Patton (2002) describes critical cases as those which highlight sites that are having particular problems with groups, in this case the high incidents of reported cases of academic dishonesty at a community college. The goal for picking this particular site was to “yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). This particular site is the only known community college with an adopted honor code which provided the ability to discern whether this type of policy has a mitigating effect on student decisions to cheat and also to learn whether the existence of such a policy supports faculty in their decisions to create a community of academic integrity within the classroom.

### **Data Documents**

The documents used in this study were transcripts from individual interviews and review of artifacts such as adopted college policies. Each semester or session students must sign the “honor statement” that is a pledge that indicates their willingness to abide by the college honor code and act with integrity. It was critical to know whether students read and understand this pledge, or merely respond in the affirmative in order to proceed through the enrollment process. As noted earlier, the college has adopted administrative regulations and policies that relate to both student conduct and academic integrity. These documents were reviewed from a historical perspective to understand if these documents



supported and encouraged a community of academic integrity and provide context of the phenomenon at the research site (Glesne, 2011).

## **Instruments and Procedures**

### **Identification and Definition of Data Collection Instruments**

This study utilized data collection in the form of individual interviews and document review to evaluate my research questions, protect human subjects and connect my research data to my conceptual framework. There were two interview guide documents, “Student Academic Dishonesty Study Interview Guide” (Appendix A), and “Faculty Academic Dishonesty Study Interview Guide” (Appendix B). Additionally two interview guides were created, a “Faculty Focus Group Interview Guide” (Appendix J), and a “Student Focus Group Interview Guide” (Appendix K). Finally, document review from the “Student Honor Statement” (Appendix C) adopted by the institution were utilized.

### **Description of Instruments: Overview of Student and Faculty Interview Guides**

The interview guides in this study consisted of three main sections, an introduction and background, the interview section, and a debriefing section. The information contained in the interview guides were developed using the existing established procedures as defined by the Office of Graduate Studies, Research and International Programs at California State University, Northridge.

The first section consisted of an introduction and background section for the research study. The sub-sections provided the participant with an explanation of the purpose of the study, information on how participant’s confidentiality would be maintained, and provided informed consent about the nature of the interview and

informed participants that they could decline to answer any question or leave the study at any time. This subsection concluded with instructions on signing the “Informed Consent Form,” and provided contact information for both the researcher and faculty advisor. The second section consisted of the interview questions and provided an opportunity at the end of the session for participants to include any additional information not covered or which the participant wished to include. The final section was a debriefing section that thanked the participant for their time and provided information on how data would be stored and secured to ensure confidentiality. It further informed participants how long the data is kept until it is destroyed.

### **Student Interview Guide**

Questions contained on the student interview guide were used to understand why students cheat and their perceptions of cheating (Appendix A). Studies indicate that for students to cheat a variety of situational factors seem to exist such as the benefits outweigh the risks of being caught (Whitley, 1998), feel instructors don’t care about them (Simon et al., 2004), and are dealing with multiple factors such as academic pressure and other stressors (Brezina, 2000; Genereaux & McLeod, 1995). Interview questions 1-4 attempted to gain an understanding of why students feel other students cheat and identify any perceived factors that make committing acts of dishonesty acceptable. In Moustakas’ view of phenomenology, the goal with the interview questions was to gain “extensive description of the textures of what appears and is given, [so] that one is able to describe how the phenomenon is experienced” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 76). Since the literature indicates that honor codes appear to be effective mitigation strategies (deBruin & Rudnick, 2006; McCabe, 1993; McCabe et al., 2001; McCabe et al., 2003), question 6

queried student's perceptions of their knowledge of academic policies of the college, and the existence of the honor code. Additionally in the grounded theory approach, the questions allowed the study to help generate a theory on academic dishonesty and use of honor codes (Creswell, 2008).

Once student interviews were completed and analyzed, student participants were given the option to attend a focus group to hear preliminary study findings and provide an opportunity to give additional comments about their perceptions. Students were presented a "Student Focus Group Interview Guide" (Appendix M). This guide contained introduction, background, confidentiality, informed consent, and researcher contact information as the individual interview guides used in the study. Four questions were asked of group participants. Question 1 attempted to learn what the study findings meant from a faculty perspective in regards to their perceptions of why students commit acts of dishonesty in community college. Question 2 asked if the findings would have any effects on their thoughts or feelings about academic dishonesty. Question 3 attempted to learn if the findings generated new strategies to promote integrity, and finally, question 4 asked if the study finds altered student perceptions of why students cheat in college.

### **Faculty Interview Guide**

Questions contained in the interview guide for faculty (Appendix B) also attempted to elicit feelings and perceptions faculty have about student cheating in order to gain an understanding of why faculty feel students cheat. Using constant comparison (Creswell, 2008), the data gleaned from responses to questions 1-3 was compared to student descriptions to help generate a theory on academic dishonesty through the use of induction and deduction. This comparison also helped gain an understanding of the

“essence” of the phenomenon of academic dishonesty (Moustakas, 1994). Since the literature indicated that faculty take incidents of academic dishonesty somewhat personally (Bouville, 2009), question 4 attempted to understand the thoughts and feelings of faculty when students cheat. Because the college had adopted an honor code, questions 6, 7, and 9 attempted to learn if faculty members knew about the adopted honor code and honor statement and how these contribute to creating a community of academic integrity (East, 2009, McCabe 1993).

After faculty interview data was analyzed, participants were given the option to attend a focus group to hear preliminary study findings and provide an opportunity to give additional comments about their perceptions. Faculty were presented a “Faculty Focus Group Interview Guide” (Appendix J). This guide contained introduction, background, confidentiality, informed consent, and researcher contact information as the individual interview guides used in the study. Four questions were asked of group participants. Question 1 attempted to ascertain what the study findings meant from a faculty perspective in regards to their perceptions of academic dishonesty. Question 2 asked if the findings would have any effects on their thoughts or feelings about academic dishonesty. Question 3 attempted to learn if the findings generated new strategies to promote integrity, and finally, question 4 asked faculty participants if their perceptions were altered because of the study findings.

### **Justification for Instruments Used in the Study**

The instruments used in this study support the existing research on the topic of academic dishonesty and also add to knowledge as it relates to social norms theory, the positive effects of mitigation strategies such as honor codes, and the understanding of

how students and faculty differ in their perceptions of academic dishonesty to create a community of academic integrity. The two interview guides were based on the existing research questions that attempted to examine the “lived experiences” of students and faculty in relation to the phenomenon of academic dishonesty and an honor code.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Utilizing a criterion sampling strategy (Glesne, 2011), the researcher worked with Director of Institutional Research and the Dean of Management Information Systems to identify potential students who met the criteria of full time and had completed twenty-five units or more of college work and were Business majors, had taken English composition courses, or particular science courses during the fall of 2011. Once a group of students who met the criteria were identified, the researcher worked with the Dean of Counseling to send out the research invitation announcement (Appendix F) by email to students on behalf of the researcher. This announcement solicited interested students and informed them about the compensation in the form of a \$20.00 gift card to the college bookstore and provided the contact information of the researcher. Having the letter sent from a dean of the college provided a layer of separation between the researcher and participants. It was hoped that communication from a college official would allow them to feel safer than if the letter came directly from the researcher whom they do not know. Students were directed to contact the researcher at a personal email account not affiliated with the institution.

Upon receiving email responses from students that were willing to participate in the study an effort was made to purposefully select a balanced group of twelve students from each of the areas of English, business and particular science courses.

In order to maintain the safest neutral environment for the student participants, the researcher worked with the Dean of Learning Resources to secure room space within the library to conduct interviews. The researcher contacted the selected participants and scheduled each student for 30-45 minute interviews in Late October through November of 2011.

To gain the faculty perspective, utilizing a criterion sampling strategy, the researcher worked with the Dean of Management Information Systems to identify full-time tenured faculty members from the departments of Business, English, and Science. After the population was identified, the researcher worked with the Academic Affairs to send out a research invitation announcement (Appendix G) by email. This announcement solicited faculty members who met the criteria and informed them of the study along with offering a \$10.00 gift card to the local sandwich shop adjacent to the college. The email announcement indicated that interested faculty members should contact the researcher directly and provided appropriate contact information via an off-campus email account.

The faculty response was initially lower than needed, and the researcher worked with the Dean of Academic Affairs to send out a research invitation letter (Appendix E) in campus mail to the faculty who meet the criteria. This letter outlined the purpose of the study, discussed the expectations for participation in the study, provided information on the \$10.00 gift card compensation, and indicated how confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study.

### **Timeline for Data Collection**

In late August of 2011, after approval from both the California State University Northridge Internal Review Board and the site institutional research department, the

researcher contacted the Director of Institutional Research to receive approval to conduct original research at the institution. After approval in September 2011, both the Dean of Transfer Counseling and the Dean of Management Information Systems were contacted to inform them of the purpose of the study and obtain assistance in identifying students who meet the unit and major criteria and the email announcements were sent out. Once the appropriate numbers of students were obtained the researcher scheduled the interviews in the study rooms located within the college library. Interviews were scheduled in late October through mid-November of 2011. In early October 2011, prior to commencing the student interviews, the interview guide was pilot tested on two students to determine if questions needed refinement. One student was a computer science major and the other student was a history major. Both students had taken English courses and completed over twenty-five units of college coursework. Because the information received from these two interviews was appropriate for the study, data was incorporated into the results.

For faculty interviews, in early fall 2011 the researcher contacted the Dean of Academic Affairs to inform her of the purpose of the study and gain support and assistance in identifying appropriate criteria in order to select full-time tenured faculty members from the departments of Business, English, and Sciences on campus which was consistent with the majors of the student sample. After the appropriate criteria were developed the researcher contacted the Dean of Information Management to retrieve a data sample to use to contact the faculty members. The group of potential faculty members were each sent an invitation email (Appendix E) by the Dean of Academic Affairs inviting them to participate and informing them of the purpose of the study and the potential compensation. Respondents were directed to reply to the researcher using

an off-campus email account. The researcher scheduled the interviews at a mutually conducive time and met in the faculty member's office

### **Faculty**

Upon arriving for individual interviews, faculty participants were given the "Faculty Informed Consent"(Appendix H) and "Faculty Interview Guide" that provided a statement of purpose of the study, informed participants of their rights for confidentiality, and provide a list of questions that were asked during the interview. Faculty interviews were digitally recorded using two recorders. Individual faculty interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached and no new information emerged. During faculty focus groups participants were given the "Faculty Focus Group Informed Consent" (Appendix L), and the "Faculty Focus Group Interview Guide" (Appendix J).

### **Students**

Student interviews were digitally recorded using two recorders and conducted in a study room in the library on campus. Upon commencing the individual interviews, student participants were given the "Student Informed Consent" (Appendix I) and "Student Interview Guide" (Appendix A) that discussed the study purpose, addressed confidentiality, participation, and provided a list of questions that were to be asked. Interviews continued until data saturation was reached.

### **Data Analysis**

Interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service and reviewed for authenticity. All identifying information connecting specific participants to each interview was removed to ensure confidentiality. After consulting with the individual participant to offer them an opportunity to add, delete, or clarify data, transcribed



interviews were input into an electronic data base called “Atlas Ti” that allowed the researcher to do what Glesne calls “Thematic Analysis” where the task was to sift through the data looking for ways to categorize data and establish codes for the various themes (Glesne, 2011). This supported the foundation of the grounded theory approach, which is to “build theory” (Glesne, 2003, p. 187). Through constant comparison between types of data (interviews, focus groups, documents), the researcher looked for similarities and differences in order to identify patterns. Further, constant comparison according to Moustakas (1994), “causes the accumulated knowledge pertaining to a property of the category to readily start to become integrated; that is related to many different ways, resulting in a unified whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 109). Data was compared by major or discipline and also by type, whether faculty or student to aid in gain new understanding of the phenomenon of academic dishonesty.

Data analysis began immediately after the first interview in order to determine if follow-up interviews are necessary or questions need to be modified. As Moustakas (1994) suggests that data collected and analyzed as the same time allows “integration of theory to emerge by itself” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 109). Coding went through several iterations and was modified as analysis continued.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Trustworthiness (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) is judged in qualitative research studies by conforming to standards of competent practice and ethical conduct. They believe for a “study to be trustworthy, it must be more than reliable and valid; it must be ethical” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 63). To bring ethical practice to the study member checks and peer review was used to establish and main integrity of the research.

To strengthen and lend credibility to discovered themes, member checks (Creswell, 2008; Bradbury-Jones, Irvine, & Sambrook, 2010) in the form of participant feedback were solicited from both students and faculty. According to Creswell (2008), a member check is a “process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to verify the accuracy of the account” (Creswell, 2008, p. 267). Further, this provided participants an opportunity to let the researcher know if the description was complete and representative of his or her thoughts and feelings (Creswell, 2008; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2010). Students were contacted after each interview is transcribed and given the opportunity to read the fully transcribed session. Additionally, two separate focus group meetings were arranged for students to verify validity of perceptions from transcriptions or make clarifications. An identical process was used for member checks for the faculty participants. Faculty members were contacted and given the opportunity to meet with the researcher or be sent the fully transcribed interview for review. Two separate focus groups were arranged and conducted to clarify and ensure the authenticity of the data. Four faculty members agreed to participate in the focus groups. Two faculty members were from business, one from science, and one faculty member from English. The interview lasted one hour.

Finally in an effort to support trustworthiness in the findings, a peer colleague was asked to review codes and themes as a form of external audit (Creswell, 2008) to substantiate whether the findings and themes were appropriate, determine the degree of researcher bias, and learn if the inferences based on the data was logical (Creswell, 2008).

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the principal researcher, I had multiple roles within the study as a learner, informer/reformer, and advocate (Glesne, 2011). Glesne also points out that in the learner role the researcher is like a “curious student learning from and with participants” (Glesne, 2011, p. 60). While I may have had preconceptions based on why students commit academic dishonesty, there were opportunities to gain understanding from the student point of view that can contribute to the knowledge of the phenomenon.

I am a classified staff member of the same community college where the study is being conducted and a member of the Honor Council. Upon completion of the research study, as the principal researcher, I have multiple roles within this study. I am a potential informer to the larger educational community with respect to outcomes of interviews, a transformer using the knowledge I have to shape policy development. I am also an advocate for students to have their voices heard so that faculty members might make changes with respect to their treatment of integrity issues.

### **Personal Reflexivity**

According to Schwandt (2007), reflexivity refers to the fact that the researcher is “part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 260). Schwandt also believes that reflexivity is a “means for critically inspecting the entire research process, “including bias, theoretical predispositions, and preferences” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 260).

### **Participant Reactivity**

Rossmann and Rallis (2003), note that reflexivity can also include the researcher as observed by participants. Because the researcher is a long time employee of the site, it

was also important to exercise care in how the researcher was perceived by the participants. There was a concern that they might have seen the researcher as a college official rather than a student eager to learn about the phenomenon under study. The researcher took care to meet the participants in a setting that provided a non-threatening location on campus to elicit more candid responses that are indicative of the lived experiences reflective of a phenomenological study.

Faculty in this study can be considered “experts” or “elite” participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) in this study because of their close relationship with students and the phenomenon of academic dishonesty. Rossman and Rallis also indicate that access to these individuals “is often difficult because they are usually busy people operating under demanding time constraints” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p 192). As such, in order to provide a safe environment for faculty to feel comfortable in relaying their experiences, interviews were held in the faculty member’s office.

### **Researcher Bias**

As a classified staff member with nearly 25 years of student services experience, I felt that I had some insight into students and how their minds attempt to deceive the academic community. Having also personally committed acts of dishonesty in high school, I knew first-hand the thought process and decision-making that proceeds cheating for some students, however; I still wanted understand why other students cheat. I was further concerned with the responses from faculty and whether their input will be useful for the larger campus community.

While in high school, I committed acts of academic dishonesty in a language class and the instructor admonished those who cheated as well as expressed his great

disappointment that a group of students would resort to cheating rather than inform him that we were unclear about the material. The reality of the situation was that the language of Latin was extremely difficult and I was in fact too lazy to put forth the effort to learn the material. The instructor did take this incident of cheating personally, and I neutralized the cheating behavior because the social norms of the group dictated it was not hurting anyone and everyone else was doing it and peer pressure was a strong motivator to participate in the dishonest behavior. This was a pivotal point in my moral development. From that point forward my concept of honor and integrity has been a guiding principle. The examples I have witnessed to this point of students involved in incidents of dishonesty have been clearly blatant intents to deceive, so I will need to acknowledge that perspective but hope to remain open to see other viewpoints from interviews.

From both literature and listening to personal stories, I believe faculty often feel personally offended by students who cheat and I have heard them express frustration at students' lack of concern for integrity in order to achieve their goal (Bouville, 2009). Students on the other hand feel their cheating hurts no one and is a victimless crime (McCabe, 1992). There is also research that indicates students will neutralize the behavior by offering excuses and blaming others for their acts of plagiarism.

As a member of the campus judicial body that deals with input and development of the college honor code, I had perceptions about academic integrity that might influence how I frame questions and interpret data. My assumptions were based partly from results of the empirical literature that indicates student cheating is due to a lack of preparedness, stress, academic and familial pressures, time management issues, failure to establish rapport and/or respect with instructors. My additional assumptions of faculty perceptions

of student cheating were based on the review of literature are that indicates instructors feel students are lazy and only concerned with achieving their goals and thus will not put forth the extra effort to learn the material. This led me to question if the faculty members had misconceptions of why students cheated, or were they are attempting to use the syllabus and prescriptive measures that are appropriate for dealing with this issue, or, as the literature suggests, preferring to deal with cheating incidents one on one? Finally, many of the faculty members that participate in this study will be known to me. This presented challenges of familiarity. Further the potential existed for faculty to be what King and Horrocks (2010) call “high status” interviewees, and present challenges of control because the faculty member is used to asking questions rather than responding to them.

### **Strategies to Mitigate the Effects on Subjects**

To counteract some of the potential biases described above I took steps to ensure mitigation of researcher effects. I clearly outlined in the student and faculty interview guides the purpose of the study and delineated how confidentiality would be protected. I utilized member checks (Moustakas, 1994) to get feedback participants to ensure I accurately represented their statements. Additionally I asked for a peer colleague to review (Glesne, 2011) my questions to find out if they adequately supported my research purpose. As a reflective practice, I continually reviewed my jottings, notes, and transcripts to look at my personal feelings and perceptions to understand my role in the study. The goal was to continually seek valid knowledge by striving for Epoche, which is the “process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them

again, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). This also lent more trustworthiness to my analysis (Glesne, 2011). All of these strategies helped ground my knowledge of my topic to ensure I was sure of my own expertise (King & Horrocks, 2010).

### **Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues surrounding my study involved what Rossman and Rallis (2003) call “expectations and relationships.” For students, this centered on issues of “trusting relations” between me and them. Students might have been reluctant to be candid in responses for fear of reprisals from administration and faculty. Additionally students and faculty might also felt exploited and used (Glesne, 2011). Specifically, students might not have felt they are receiving large enough compensation for their time to participate in the study. It was important to establish rapport (Glesne, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Upon transcribing the data, issues might arise that could compromise confidentiality and trust if they were exposed to campus authorities; any potentially damaging information was deleted from the transcripts.

### **Strategies to Mitigate Ethical Concerns**

In order to respond to these anticipated concerns, I gave particular attention to crafting a very specific and carefully worded interview guide and informed consent document that clearly spelled out how the data would be used and how confidentiality was to be maintained as well as indicated the length of time the data is kept before it would be destroyed. Through written instructions on interview guides and informed consent forms, I explained that the names of students and faculty will be converted to pseudonyms to ensure their identity will not be known. Both students and faculty were

able to view the summaries of their interviews to ensure accuracy and allowed to disengage from the study at any time. To help ensure students did not feel exploited and that the compensation was appropriate, I questioned several random students about which they would prefer a gift card to a local sandwich shop or a bookstore gift card as compensation. All students questioned felt the bookstore gift card would be more adequate and so students were given a \$20.00 gift card to the college bookstore. I submitted my proposal for the study through the California State University Northridge Internal Review Board approval process to ensure it complied with all requirements as well as the research site approval process.

### **Summary**

This study utilized a grounded theory design and phenomenological approach to study student and faculty perceptions at a two-year college that had adopted an honor code. The goal was to examine the everyday experiences of faculty and students in regards to the phenomenon of academic dishonesty. Through data collection in the form of interviews and the review of documents such as the adopted honor code and the honor statement, the focus was to reach saturation in data collection where interviews or documents provided no new insights into the phenomenon of academic dishonesty.

The research setting was a large diverse community college in the western United States. Community colleges are important for study because due to the economic downturn, many students are coming to two-year colleges to learn new skills or obtain higher degrees. The community college in this study is the first community college to adopt an honor code and evidenced a large rise in academic dishonesty cases in the past two years.



Purposeful sampling and extreme sampling strategy was used to select faculty and students for this study. Eleven full time tenure track faculty participants were selected from the academic departments of business, English composition, or science courses leading to careers in health professions and eleven students participants who a) had completed twenty-five or more units of college coursework, b) enrolled full time (12 units or more), and c) were majoring in business, have taken English composition courses, or particular science courses relevant to careers in the health profession. Data instruments used were those in the form of individual interviews and document review of the adopted honor code and honor statement. Interview questions were contained in interview guides that inform participants of their rights and discuss ethical issues of the study. Data analysis consisted of interview transcription and document review. Participants were given summaries of their interviews in the form of a member check to ensure accuracy and authenticity. Data was analyzed using “Atlas TI” to categorize and code the data for themes. Consistent with grounded theory and phenomenology, patterns were identified to allow new themes to emerge and find the essence of the phenomenon of academic dishonesty. Additionally data from categories such as discipline or major was compared to other categories such as faculty to student to reach saturation. To help establish trustworthiness, preliminary coding and themes were reviewed by a peer colleague to guard against researcher bias. Finally, focus groups were arranged for faculty and students to review the emergent theme and provided credibility to the data.

Through multiples roles, the researcher was an active learner seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants; an advocate for student voices on the topic of academic dishonesty; and an informer to the larger educational community about the issues related to cheating behavior and mitigation strategies. Issues of personal bias

included assumptions about the character of students who cheat and preconceptions of behaviors based on the personal history of the researcher who has had first-hand experience with cheating in high school. To mitigate any potential bias, the researcher utilized member checks from participants and asked a peer colleague to review interview questions, themes, and coding. Focus groups were arranged with participants to critically examine themes derived from data and document review to reduce my prejudices and gain fresh perspective.

The ethical issues of this study were those of trust and exploitation. There was a concern that faculty and students might feel their confidentiality could be compromised and they were not receiving enough tangible benefit to participate. To mitigate these concerns the interview protocol clearly spelled out how transcribed data will be secured in a locked location, that their personal identifiable information would not be used and that the data will be destroyed one year after the study. Feedback was obtained about various forms of compensation and appropriate adjustments were made to the type and amount of compensation.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### **Introduction**

This research study utilized a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of faculty and student perceptions of academic dishonesty at a two-year community college that has an honor code. Research questions sought to understand the differences or similarities in the way faculty and students define academic dishonesty. Through the theoretical perspective of social norms theory the study also attempted to gain insight into whether having an honor code and honor council had any effect on either decisions to cheat, respond to cheating, and/or report dishonest behavior. Using data received from semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis revealed several overall themes to understand the phenomenon of cheating and the effectiveness of an honor code environment.

This chapter consists of presenting the findings of the twenty-three interviews conducted with faculty and students. Results are presented based on the overall themes gleaned from the data. Each theme is presented with accompanying supporting data in the form of substantive quotations comparing both students and faculty and between disciplines. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Qualitative Findings**

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences in how students and faculty at community colleges define academic dishonesty?
2. What factors do community college students and faculty cite for their behavior related to academic dishonesty, either to cheat and/or how to

respond to cheating?

3. How do community college students describe the honor code as a factor affecting their behavior to cheat
4. How does the honor code at the community college impact faculty thoughts and behaviors in deciding whether to report violations of dishonesty and support a community of academic integrity?

From these overall research questions a list of questions was developed to conduct semi-structured interviews lasting from twenty minutes to more than one hour.

Transcribed interviews were reviewed and input into thematic analysis software for coding. Initially 69 possible categories were identified relating to the phenomenon of academic dishonesty from both the faculty and student perspectives.

From this large list, reflexive analysis provided the opportunity to further refine codes to develop main themes along with sub-themes consisting of:

1. Prevalence and Definition
  - a. Perceived rates of dishonesty or cheating on campus
  - b. Definitions of academic dishonesty
  - c. Specific types of behaviors
  - d. Seriousness
2. Factors for Cheating
  - a. Academic pressures
  - b. External pressures
  - c. Academic procrastination.
3. Emotional Responses to Cheating
4. Mitigation Strategies

- a. Deterrence strategies
  - b. Academic dishonesty policies
  - c. Apprehension
5. Creating a Culture of Academic Integrity

### **Prevalence and Definition**

To understand the prevalence of cheating for the institution, faculty and students were asked about their perceptions and thoughts about the rates of academic dishonesty and cheating for their classes and the campus, to describe their own definition of academic dishonesty, including identifying specific behaviors. Faculty members were asked to explain how each created their definition of dishonesty. In order to understand the phenomenon of dishonesty, faculty and students were also asked to relate their experiences in identifying cheating and discuss their beliefs about the seriousness of behaviors.

### **Perceived Rates of Dishonesty**

When asked about the perceived rate of cheating either on campus or in their classes, there was a low estimation by faculty and a higher percentage by students depending upon the type of cheating whether on ground or online and the type, such as looking at someone's paper or more perceived egregious cheating. Among disciplines nearly all business, English, and sciences faculty perceive rates of cheating low, ranging from 1% to 5% with only one faculty respondent indicating it was higher, at 25%. Much of this perception for low cheating rate is due to the rigor of the coursework, attrition, instructor vigilance to preventing dishonesty thereby developing a reputation for strictness towards incidents of dishonesty. It should be noted that the reported lower

percentages only refers to on-ground courses and faculty overall felt the perceived rate for online courses was much higher. Students on the other hand, estimate the perceived rate of academic dishonesty was higher, ranging from 10% to over 90% depending on the type of behavior.

**Faculty.** Among business faculty the perceived rate is low. One business faculty member put it this way when comparing his classes to the rate of cheating for the campus:

For my on-ground classes, I think the rate is probably zero or negligible ... One semester I really spent a great deal of time investigating this. I found about six to seven students cheating that semester. So, I suspect maybe 5 percent of our students cheat - not a lot, but they do. (Professor D)

Another business faculty member indicated that overall and for her courses, she felt the dishonesty rate was low, "I'm gonna say less than 3 percent, fortunately" (Professor K).

For the faculty who teach science courses leading to careers in the medical professions such as certain advanced biology courses, the estimated rate of cheating for faculty interviewed was also low:

In the past few years, I have had maybe two or three instances of plagiarism. If students have cheated on exams, I haven't caught them (but I take precautions to avoid "inadvertent" looking at a nearby exam as well). As for numbers, I don't know what to say, but the rate is low. (Professor B)

Another science faculty member also estimated it at a low percentage because of due to the rigor and attrition:

Because there's such a high attrition rate that I usually have extra numbers in, which by the middle of the semester attrition, dropping out, not coming. The numbers thin out, so then it doesn't become a problem. I haven't really studied it. In microbiology, it's relatively rare. I would say less than 1 percent in the past five years. (Professor E)

In the English discipline, the rate was also perceived as low, as one faculty

member commented, “For my classes: I average filing one academic dishonesty report per term, two per year and I teach about 300 students, so that comes out to be less than 1%. That’s the number I’m sure of” (Professor A). Another English faculty member’s comment would concur as she stated, “10% now. It used to be much higher, but I think I have developed a reputation” (Professor J). Another English faculty member hoped it was low due to her personalized teaching:

I would say at this point, because of the way that I have become very clear at the beginning of the semester and because I have adapted my teaching to be very personalized, I don’t think – if they’re doing it in my class, they’re getting away with it because I’m not catching as many cases as I used to, maybe, or as other colleagues are. I can’t – I don’t know because it’s all very subjective. So there may be – people may still be getting away with this, to some extent, with me, but I hope that it’s a minimum. (Professor G).

There were some responses to indicate faculty believe the rate of cheating is low because they may not be detecting all cheating that is going on such as this response from a business faculty member: “I know I don’t catch all of them because it varies, you know” (Professor K).

An English faculty member felt the rate depended on the kind of cheating involved and when all types of cheating is considered such as for deliberate acts it is low but taken together it could be 15-20%:

As far as deliberate – [meaning behaviors such as] I’m going to search the internet and try to find an essay that matches and try to pass it off - I...15% and it depends on the assignment, really. Sometimes that essay just will not exist and so they will come empty, you know, and it’s not...they are not going to find anything, but, yeah, I mean, 20% covering all those different kinds of cheating. I think sounds pretty fair (Professor I).

Other faculty members had difficulty estimating the percentage and could only offer a guess based on strict policies and standards set by the department as evidenced by this comment from a nursing program faculty member:

In the nursing program, I would think, hopefully, it's lower than the rest of the campus. I would hope so. Twenty-five percent? I really have no way of knowing what goes on, I just assume that probably one out of four students are in that situation. (Professor H)

**Students.** While faculty members estimated rates low in both courses and for the institution, among the students the perception of rates of academic dishonesty was mixed. Two students estimate cheating to be less common, in the 10-20% range, while other students estimate it as high as ninety percent based on the type of cheating involved. Among Business majors, the estimation of cheating rate was mixed, but still higher than faculty estimates. Student D stated "Maybe 10 or 20 percent. I'm not sure. I think its low," as did Student E, also a Business major, "I think it is sort of low. It is not high. It is not that everyone is cheating. It is like some people. Not much. don't [know] is it ten or twenty. It is sort of low. I am going to say around there." However, other business students indicated it was a very high percent when taking into account all those who don't get caught:

I would say like a lot, like over ninety percent. I mean, if somebody gets caught cheating, then maybe that was there only time because they felt they had to do it one time. But for one person to actually get caught, there are many people who don't. (Student G)

Other business students indicated perceived cheating percentages at a higher rate based on the individual definition of cheating behavior, and if the behavior is minimized, the estimate rose significantly:

For example, people admitting to taking paper from work, or taking stuff from work that you were just like, oh, it's not a big deal, whatever, or printing stuff at work and bringing it home, or stealing supplies. They're just like, what's wrong with that, like, I work for the company? But technically, that's a company expense that you are now taking yourself or something like that. So, that's why I think it would be kind of higher, maybe 50 or 60 percent. (Student C)

An English student felt many students might be considered dishonest depending



on the definition and temptation to get information from the web to plagiarize:

I would guess many students are dishonest in some way. I don't know if the blatant cheating would be that. But, some sort of dishonesty like you know, instead of reading something in the book, you would go online and read it. If you include all of those things, I would say it is a pretty high percentage. (Student F)

Responses appear to indicate that faculty members perceive lower rates of academic dishonesty than students. This is interesting when compared to data from the campus disciplinarian that indicated the rate had risen 70% in two years. While faculty respondents most often attributed this to their own personal efforts to mitigate dishonesty, not all student respondents agreed and some even felt the rate of cheating was higher because faculty are not catching all cheating that is occurring. While several students felt it was low, business and science students consistently reported believing it was much higher depending on how it is defined.

When faculty members were confronted with preliminary results that rates were perceived as low between 1% to 20% during focus groups, some faculty initially disagreed but in group discussions acquiesced feeling that indeed it could be that perhaps they were not as vigilant in catching all cheating. Because not all faculty respondents could identify a rate of dishonesty for their classes or the campus, it may also indicate that more information needs to be reported data disseminated about violations.

### **Defining Academic Dishonesty**

Responses from both faculty and students revealed similarities in how each defines academic dishonesty. For faculty, academic dishonesty is more often viewed as an attempt to deceive and use the work of someone else to gain an unfair advantage. Student responses agreed with certain parts of faculty definitions. Overall students believed academic dishonesty was an attempt to deceive and not follow school rules and

provided an unfair advantage to others who did their work honestly. While components are similar responses revealed no standardization among faculty and students as to the definition of academic dishonesty.

**Faculty.** Science faculty generally viewed academic dishonesty in terms of gaining an unfair advantage and doing something without consent, as evidenced in the following comment from one faculty member:

Academic dishonesty occurs when someone does something that is not permitted that gives that person an unfair advantage over someone else. Academic dishonesty is basically unfair, taking an unfair advantage that puts that one person ahead of another person where they shouldn't be there. (Professor B)

Another faculty member also had this to say:

Academic dishonesty is any procedure or act that questions the integrity of any effort produced by any student where that effort may be viewed as not being the product or the result of the activities of that student per se in whole or in part and not unfairly aided by sources known or unknown where that effort which is provided as claimed to be indicative of that person's individual effort where, in fact, it is not. (Professor E)

Another Science faculty member elaborated on how dishonesty is taking the work of another without consent:

Academic dishonesty at [redacted] is copying off someone else's test exam; using someone else's homework; not attributing - using sources that - and not citing sources. So, copying other people's work and - or having other people do your class work for you, and taking exams for you - sitting in for you, even signing attendance forms for you (Professor E).

English department faculty members defined it similarly, as using the work of another with credit as one's own work:

Academic Dishonesty to me means any action of taking somebody else's words or specific ideas, not general knowledge ideas, and passing it off as one's own. In my case, it's a piece of writing. Which I could include a study guide or an essay. But I think I would restrict my definition of Academic Dishonesty as one that involves passing off work that was completed by another as one's own for credit. (Professor I)

To add to the definition, a Business faculty member stated:

...basically what we're trying to evaluate is the student meeting the objectives of the class, so they have to be doing work, they have to understand that work that they get from somebody else or another source needs to be cited, they need to be able to differentiate between what their own stuff is and the others (Professor K)

However, other Business faculty responses described academic dishonesty in terms of specific behaviors:

Cheating. Simple as that. I would say cheating on homework assignments, cheating on quizzes, and most particularly, cheating on exams. Behavior that leads to cheating. I just keep thinking of academic dishonesty as cheating. I can't think of anything else. I guess students could lie about certain things, but that's kind of a subjective area. Thus, I mostly interpret academic dishonesty as cheating. (Professor D)

Academic dishonesty at [redacted] is copying off someone else's test exam; using someone else's homework; not attributing – using sources that – and not citing sources. So, copying other people's work and – or having other people do your class work for you, and taking exams for you – sitting in for you, even signing attendance forms for you. (Professor F)

And this from a Science faculty member:

It means that the students submit work, or demonstrate, or take an exam where they are not using their own information and they're copying from somebody else, plagiarizing; someone else is doing the work for them. (Professor H).

While there is an actual definition embedded into the adopted Honor Code of the institution, it would appear then that faculty use part of this standard definition but add to it in order to create their own definition for their courses as evidenced by this business faculty member's comment:

I think that, in this environment a lot of people are copying what is on the code or on the best practices template or some [inaudible] website. I think that, I think that it varies on what they communicate to students, which is a totally different thing. (Professor F).

Another business faculty indicated that she didn't use the adopted definition verbatim but rather kept it simple:

I refer to the policy and tell them to go, because I know that they have signed it,

as part of the registration process. I don't put it verbatim, but I do, I do have a line that says something to the effect of "It is simple. Do your own work and give credit to other people, document your sources (Professor K).

A science faculty agreed that perhaps although faculty themselves feel confident about how they define it, it may be problematic if there are inconsistencies with the adopted definition:

I mean, we certainly have an idea, even though there is not defined yet, it is probably...it is interesting to see that our definitions and impressions are not consistent with what the existing definition is in campus. Which I never really considered, you know (Professor E).

**Students.** Similarly, students perceive academic dishonesty as an attempt to use another's work as one's own and gain an unfair advantage in the classroom as stated from the following two students:

Academic dishonesty is when you are, like for example, you don't do your work yourself. You either - maybe an assignment, you copy another student, or you have information with you during a test, or other academic dishonesty is maybe you try to find the answers to a test before. I don't know. Not completing your assignments, maybe, on your own, plagiarizing" (Student C, English composition)

Further, there a component where students feel that dishonesty is an attempt to circumvent the rules or school policies, as noted by Student K, "Dishonesty would be like not following the standards by the school," or as this response from a business major:

Okay, academic dishonesty is when you don't follow the rules or when you try to get around the rules, or when you do something that has an advantage over another student who could not do what you did. An example is when a teacher did not intend you to do it, or when the teacher didn't like ask you to do it, but then you still did it. (Student G)

Additionally, other students shared the belief that academic dishonesty was deceitful and not indicative of one's own work, as with Student D's remarks, "[Academic dishonesty is] Basically, when you're taking other people's work and sharing information or copy homework and during a test, " and Student H, who stated, "Academic dishonesty

is taking someone else's work for your own benefit. And, essentially lying. So that would be dishonesty for me." Other students also elaborated further:

Academic dishonesty has to do with any type of cheating or forging of work that you claim as you own; any type of using materials that you're not supposed to. Just going beyond the realm of what your professors ask of you to try to get an upper hand when it is not - within what is being given to you. (Student L)

Another student provided this response to illustrate the attempt to deceive:

Anything used by the teacher to test or gauge skill level of a student of the knowledge that that student has. So, anything that they use to kind of work their way around answering or to fake how much they know. I think that is academic dishonesty. (Student J, Pre-Nursing major)

There also appears to be an indication that students use the term cheating or plagiarizing interchangeably with academic dishonesty, as one student commented:

Academic dishonesty to me is the knowledge of, or the getting the knowledge of the answers to a test, a quiz, or exam, prior to said exam, test or quiz during it, from either friends, books, tests, teachers, just like cheating, kind of. (Student J).

To summarize, when asked what the term "academic dishonesty meant to them, generally, faculty and students agree that academic dishonesty is deceitful by using another person's work as one's own and creates an unfair advantage over other students who do not cheat. However some faculty members and students use the term academic dishonesty and cheating interchangeably, and sometimes define academic dishonesty in terms of specific behaviors. Although there was general agreement, each faculty and student defined it in their own unique terms and there was no universal definition.

### **Specific Behaviors**

**Faculty.** When asked to provide specific examples of what behaviors would be indicative of academic dishonesty, most faculty respondents across disciplines indicated a range or continuum of behaviors including from sharing notes to fraudulent activities:

Well, once upon a time it only meant plagiarizing. Which took the form of

copying bits without citing or taking whole papers off of the internet. But now it has come to include things like falsifying your identity, taking the class for someone else (Professor J, English Department)

As well as this example from another English department faculty member:

So examples of academic dishonesty that I've dealt with are students are - it's been a range of things - they're using the Internet when they weren't supposed to, they're quoting websites without attributing, citing them correctly, they're having friends or hired tutors write for them, and then in extreme cases, I had a really bad experience in the winter of 2010, I had students who had people impersonating them in an online class. (Professor G)

Business department faculty provided these examples to further illustrate:

Academic dishonesty at [redacted] is copying off someone else's test exam; using someone else's homework; not attributing - using sources that - and not citing sources. So, copying other people's work and - or having other people do your class work for you, and taking exams for you - sitting in for you, even signing attendance forms for you (Professor F)

Or this example from a Science faculty member:

Every semester at least one or two students will either fail to do the work, will copy from somebody else's not realizing that their unknowns are completely different, and then turn in a report that's completely false and would not have [been] obtained at the labs or would not have completed the exercise to warrant an identification [and it] becomes painfully obvious once you look at it. There are a myriad of examples. Looking at the wondering eyeball syndrome I call it where they look at somebody else's paper. (Professor E, Science Department).

Another Business faculty member felt academic dishonesty was narrowly defined as cheating:

Behavior that leads to cheating. I just keep thinking of academic dishonesty as cheating. I can't think of anything else. I guess students could lie about certain things, but that's kind of a subjective area. Thus, I mostly interpret academic dishonesty as cheating. (Professor D)

Another Business faculty member felt it could be more broadly defined to include other examples:

Academic dishonesty, to me, can cover a couple of broad areas, the most obvious being cheating in an exam setting; cheating on homework; collaborating more than just to exchange information and materials; one person relying heavily on the

work of another person. (Professor C)

**Students.** Student responses about specific behaviors mirrored some of the faculty responses such as this from a student, “Cheating, uh well, I think of basically copying the answers or the thing, the –the information from somewhere else” (Student A). Another student felt it was “cheating on tests primarily..” or “Cheating on your homework maybe” (Student B). For some student specific actions constituted more attempts to solicit information from other students about upcoming tests such as this comment from a Business student, “Like for tests, it’s kind of easy for students to try to ask each other what’s on a test, or like what they did what questions, what to study, and things like that” (Student G). Another response from a student studying English composition also pointed to a dishonest act as another student attempting to coerce answers rather than learn the material:

‘...if you had a friend that has taken the class before, you could ask them for tests, test materials or what not. I am a geography tutor, and people come up to me, sometimes and instead of wanting to learn about geography, they will ask me, “so what is on the test? What should I be studying for?” (Student F)

Other students indicated that cheating by looking at another student’s paper during a test and attempting to get notes from class were examples of dishonesty,

Just looking over at a someone’s paper or maybe using some kind of sign, signals. I’m taking a CIS class, so for that it’s looking at someone’s monitor when you’re taking a test. So basically when you’re just not looking at your own work or paper, but when you are trying to, I guess look over someone’s shoulder and try and get their answers. (Student D)

In summary, responses from both faculty and students about the specific forms of dishonesty comprise a range of behaviors:

- Coping or sharing homework
- Unauthorized use of the Internet

- Plagiarism
- Paper and Exam Cheating
- Fraud

For students, while there were similarities, students were more detailed in explaining behaviors:

- Copying or sharing homework
- Obtaining and Unfair advantage
- Not following the school rules
- Using Coercion to get Test Information
- Paper and Exam Cheating

### **Emergence of Fraud**

Nearly all the faculty focused attention on the emerging issues of fraud or impersonation as a serious sample of dishonest behavior that is adding to the regular types of cheating:

I mean every type. There is the sort of desperate, last minute student whose experience of college is more social than academic and so they get desperate at the last second and have to turn in something, all the way to students with parental pressure that insists then nothing less than an “A.” They are squeezed between my amazingly difficult standards and their parents’ amazingly difficult standards. And the, what I consider, the actual criminals, the ones that are either taking the class for someone else entirely or have such contempt for education that they are willing to buy or steal a paper. There are all different types. (Professor J, English Department)

### **Identifying Cheating Behavior**

In order to contextualize the results of the study, it was important to learn how faculty discovered dishonesty. Among faculty who give essay tests or assignments where students write a papers, the faculty responses indicated that their definition plagiarism



was based on years of experience and a “gut instinct” to being able to differentiate the students voice from that of writing that was not belonging to the students and this usually led to a search for the original source. For faculty who give multiple choice examinations identification is a result of copying from another student or discovering students have stolen a solution manual or answer key.

### **Discovery by Experience or Gut Instinct**

For faculty who give tests by essay or assign papers, the ability to identify cheating starts when the writing style or student “voice” is incongruent with the perceived ability for that particular student as this faculty member stated:

I gave an assignment where students are supposed to write about a famous microbiologist in the first person. And, I call it my “Who’s Who?” assignment. So, in come these various different things. In comes an assignment about a person who was still living, written in the first person with web references fortunately, for sites that I recognized. I Googled the person’s name and I get the essay that was turned in, but not the references that were turned in. To me, that was about as definitive an attempt to cheat as anything I’ve ever seen. (Professor B)

An English faculty member provided an example when reading papers the writing doesn’t seem to be at the level of that particular student:

So it would be something like, ‘When so and so posits A, he clearly is alluding to B.’ So she was doing this thing about posits and alludes. It’s just very highfalutin language for somebody who’s just come over and, like, in an academic situation here. (Professor A)

The faculty member went provided another example when he found two separate students who plagiarized the same material for a paper about the effects of smoking:

So I’m reading it. It had an elaborate bibliography. Then, the next day, I’m reading through the other class, and I get a paper on smoking - the dangers of smoking - ways of overcoming smoking. I start reading it, and I think, “This is awfully familiar.’ So I go back and sure enough, it’s the same paper, only the first guy was actually, inadvertently, very clever because he introduced all these grammatical mistakes into the paper. So he must have typed it in himself and then introduced fragments or misspelled words and stuff. But it was the same

paper, the same bibliography and everything. (Professor A)

Another English faculty member had this to say about the importance of hearing the students' voice:

I did have one student who memorized the SparkNotes entry for the book that we were being tested on and so even though it was all in her handwriting, that, to me, was academic dishonesty because I wanted her interpretation; I didn't want her to be repeating somebody else's interpretation. (Professor G)

Among faculty who give multiple choice or testing other than essays, Faculty pointed to the evolution of cheating behaviors and the availability of solution materials on the internet for students that help them cheat in online and on-ground courses:

What I've discovered (since two or three years ago) is that students, for online classes, purchase the entire test bank solution for the text book. They're all out there for every single book, regardless of what publisher you have. Alternatively, students go to some sites called Course Hero or Cramster.com where if they pay a \$10.00 membership, can actually get access to all the test bank answers. (Professor D, Business department)

Or this account from a science faculty member:

One of the most egregious and blatant examples was a student who came into the practicum with a sheet of papers on top with nothing written on them because they have to answer the questions on blank paper. She had secreted the answers to the organisms, which were given in a practicum. She was simply copying as they walked by and in about the first minute and a half of the practicum, she had all 40 questions written. (Professor E).

Students also indicated there were a range of behaviors that each would consider dishonest, such as this statement from a Business major: "Scanning notes and document sharing online and stuff, or looking for answers online like if the pages or something exist online then you go there to try to get answers and stuff" (Student ?), and this from a student, "I think just like looking over someone's paper or your phone, especially your phone...and then looking over someone's paper but now the teacher's try to space you apart so it is sort of impossible. I think it is just mostly sneaking in notes into your

sleeves or something.” (Student B). Students respondents had the ability to identify an even wider variety of cheating behavior than faculty as evidenced by this student’s comments:

It would be like if you try to get some information that your teacher didn’t really ask you to get and then you’re not really supposed to. Texting to their friends during class, classmates with answers, having answers in their water bottles, on the opposite side, hiding it under their shoe, on their arms, in different languages, there are a lot of ways that people try to fake the system. Even writing answers on, equations on their erasers and having it like take off the slip and then hiding it. Down to that, or asking questions by the teacher and having the teacher kind of give more in depth kind of [answer], again it’s not a way of asking teachers for questions directly to the test, but it does give them more hints. I am not saying they shouldn’t, but the questions that they do I have seen people work around or get big hints by asking teachers questions. Also using just before the test, having copies of the test beforehand and then getting that, or asking students that have the test, like if they are in the same class, but different sections, meaning they have it an hour before or the day before, getting the, they can’t get the answers because it’s different tests for most teachers, but getting the general knowledge. (Student J, Pre-Nursing)

Still other students gave even more descriptions of deceitful and blatant examples of dishonest behaviors such as those for tests:

I’ve seen kids just copy test answers or, like, literally bubble in Scantrons and bring that Scantron into class and turn it in. I guess a group of students got one of the teacher’s tests from the last semester, and apparently that teacher doesn’t change her tests every year. And so, they bubbled in their Scantrons very lightly and went into class and turned that test in, but they filled it in darker so that the teacher wouldn’t notice that it was filled in lightly. Or go online where they have all the printed out essays, they knew that they were having a quiz, or a test, [and] they will look up all the spark notes, look at previous essays, and they are online that they could pay to have, memorize, or somewhat memorize sentences or words there and bring little flash cards to the test, and then just let it like that. Or in my Counseling [redacted] class, they would also just have everything written out beforehand, or just hide it again in their clothes, or on the water bottles, or just in different parts of the body they would hide it like that. But, I think that the weirdest thing that I’ve ever seen was they had glasses on and they had the wide frames. They would literally put little pieces of tape and write, it was math class again, they would put equations on it and they would take off the glasses and rub their temples and read the equations and put it back on. (Student J, Pre-Nursing).

In summary, when asked to identify specific behaviors of academic dishonesty,

faculty indicated a range of behaviors such from cheating on homework to exam and paper cheating, to fraud. While student responses also indicated similar behaviors constituted academic dishonesty, it was clear that students could identify many more detailed forms of behaviors that provided a much more descriptive list indicating the extreme lengths students are willing to undertake in order to commit acts of dishonesty.

### Seriousness

**Faculty.** Although faculty find academic dishonesty and cheating not conducive for the educational process, they appear to perceive a range of seriousness between inadvertent cheating and blatant attempts to deceive. Some English and Business faculty respondents felt cheating was less serious when they “slipped” up than when it is deliberate:

So I would make the distinction between something which I gave them which they just sort of slipped up and they don't know exactly how to quote versus deliberately saying, 'Man, I don't know what to say about *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Oh, here, this is cool. I'll just take it and then not cite it.' (Professor A, English Department)

It appears for some faculty it is the intent to deceive that is key in how to determine the seriousness for dishonesty, as a Science faculty member (Professor B) put it, “I tend to hold off on any kind of, of writing the students up if I can, if I can clearly tell that there was an intent to cheat, you're dead.” Or, it is less serious for smaller things such as homework as this faculty member from the Business Department stated:

Sometimes I don't think people understand that they're really cheating. And sometimes they do. They're just tryin' to test to see what they can get away with. But most of the time, I do like to take away - in any case - a sense of okay, you need to understand that you're gonna get called on. You're gonna get checked. And you need to be responsible for it. And then also, what's the lesson from it. If this is the only time for homework and small stuff - if it's the only time, then we don't have an issue. But if it's more than once, it may be a trip to the academic disciplinarian's office. Because again, for one point or two points or for the

minor stuff. I feel like that has to be managed.

However; faculty members feel exam cheating is more serious:

But anything that happens on an exam, that's gonna cost ya. That's the automatic referral to the disciplinarian. On the exams, I can't manage how much of it you're cheating on. So therefore, for stuff that's a quarter of the class. Anything you do there will cost you. And it's gonna cost ya big time. For one or two points in the whole class of 400 points, I'd rather teach the lesson and then watch for any aberrant behavior after that, in which case, you may get called on the carpet from the disciplinarian. (Professor C, Business Department)

An English faculty member also put it this way:

I handle them differently. If I think it's inadvertent, I talk to them. But the inadvertent ones, I will talk to face-to-face and explain what was wrong. Actually, let me back up. I don't necessarily do that. I put on the paper, this is plagiarism, it's unacceptable, we went over this in class, come see me. So then, it's in their ballpark. (Professor J, English Department)

As with disciplines of sciences, the English faculty have a clear distinction in seriousness in which they view blatant and inadvertent dishonesty, as the English faculty goes on to say:

When I knew a student had bought and could prove that a student had bought or wholesale copied, I think that required more than simply tracking them. I think that "inadvertent" minor opportunistic, checking an answer from another student, failing to cite a source, whatever. Those can be tracked and see if they form a pattern. The big ones, the bought paper, the totally copied off the internet paper, I think that requires that the student fail the class, which we're now not allowed to do anymore, and that they have a notation on their transcript that they failed it for plagiarism. I would not be adverse to them having to sit out a semester. That to me is willful. That to me is contemptuous of this institution and the process of education. (Professor J, English Department)

When probed to find out if less serious forms of cheating should be dealt with harshly, the same English faculty member stated: "Oh, no. That is like a bad decision and I don't think a single bad decision should follow somebody for the rest of their lives. The blatant copying of a paper should (Professor J, English Department).

It appears that intent is a significant factor in determining the seriousness with

which faculty determine cheating behavior. For inadvertent or minor infractions such as errors in citing sources, or homework cheating, many faculty do not view this as serious. Because they realize that students may be cheating or over collaborating on homework, it is given a lower percentage of the total grade.

**Students.** Students similarly have a continuum in how they describe the seriousness of dishonest behavior, feeling that there a difference in someone who might need a little help in understanding the material and this doesn't constitute cheating as would copying, as this student put it:

I'm not gonna say that I've never ever, ever shared answers because you just - you know, a lot of times, like, in school or something like that someone would be like, oh, I didn't get a chance to finish. Oh, what did you get for this last question or something like that; I didn't understand it. I think the most important thing though is that you - like, for example, if it's something like math or English, at least if someone's going to ask you for it, they should at least have a reason for why they don't have it. Like, maybe they didn't actually understand it, but they should want an explanation of how you got the answer or something like that.

You know, not just straight up copy the answer. But, like, you know, you shouldn't just give someone your paper though for copying or anything like that. (Student C, Business major)

Other students felt helping each other on homework was less serious, as this student put it: "Well I would think that like for homework and stuff you can help each other, but you can't like directly copy their answers when you didn't do anything to get the answers together" (Student D, Business major). Another student felt other students perceived cheating was acceptable because it was worth very few points for the overall grade: "On homework and other assignments, people can collect copies from each other but that's not always a big problem because it's not worth any points and you don't learn from it" (Student G).

Students do appear to know the difference between helping another student to

learn and cheating, as this business student put it:

Sometimes you find in helping, you may - like, even sometimes, like, say in tutoring for example, you're trying to teach someone something, you may end up giving them the answer but you want to try to not just hand them the answer because it's not gonna teach them. Sometimes it's hard to explain certain things, like a certain concept; I'm like, I don't know how you can't understand this. I don't remember how I learned to understand this, but - it's a difficult thing to do. That line between helping and just giving an answer is thin. (Student C)

Of the more serious types of cheating behavior would be plagiarizing, exam, and test cheating such as this example from a business student:

I had a class last semester that students – I guess a group of students got one of the teacher's tests from the last semester, and apparently that teacher doesn't change her tests every year. And so, they bubbled in their Scantrons very lightly and went into class and turned that test in, but they filled it in darker so that the teacher wouldn't notice that it was filled in lightly. (Student I)

### **Reasons for Cheating**

For the faculty and student participants members interviewed, the most cited reason across all disciplines for academic dishonesty was academic pressures, either external pressures such as family or peers, or internal pressures such as the desire to get a better grade or accomplish a goal because they feel underprepared for the coursework. Additionally, some faculty members stated that they believed students who cheat are “lazy” and “just don't want to do the work in order to earn the grade.” In addition, some students reported that they believed other students cheat because they perceive certain lower division or prerequisite courses are a “waste of their time” and this leads them to want to hurry through and get onto to higher level courses or those that are in their major.

### **Academic Pressures**

**Faculty.** Faculty members realize the pressure that students feel to succeed in this high stakes environment and believe this leads them to cheat in order to gain an advantage. One business faculty member described the various pressures and reasons

students cheat in this way:

I think they cheat if they feel a lot of pressure -- if they're getting pressure from family to get a certain grade and they're not, that will make them cheat. There are a lot of external factors. I think they'll cheat if they feel that the instructor doesn't like them. I think that leads people to cheat. If things are unfair in the class, and, the biggest thing, if they think other people are cheating. Anybody will cheat if they think other people are cheating.

A business faculty member was reluctant to provide a generalization of students who cheat but also pressure was a factor:

I don't like profiles. But I'll give you some things that I think will cause students to be more likely. Pressure: And the pressure may be either internal or external. So whether it's I feel that I need to perform at this level. I'm trying to please my parents. I'm trying to get into this college. (Professor C)

Faculty also believed that temptation for higher grades were also a contributing factor:

There's always temptation out there to be dishonest. When you weigh the pressures that are on the students, because we're not in a terminal institution, the grades to get into the next place. Different students have different parental pressures, etc. (Professor K).

When faculty members were asked about perceived pressures of students who cheat, one felt it was self-initiated:

It's self-ascribed. It's the idea that they have to do better than the next person. Now, to get into medical school they have to get a 4.0 average or a 3.8. It's the pressure. It's the student who is somehow limited either in their perception or the reality, past performance. They haven't been able to measure up to what's expected or desired or should be achieved. They think the only way they can compete or become competitive is to cheat. (Professor E)

Another science faculty felt those students in certain biology courses are driven by a need to succeed in order to transfer to a four-year university:

I think one of the major factors is the desire to succeed or the need to succeed, obviously, to get into any program, particularly in the healthcare sciences, allied health disciplines. Which all are competitive. You need a minimum GP of 2.5 in the core sciences prerequisites before you're even considered. So it's that pressure to succeed and the academic rigor, which is an inherent part of the



application process.

A Business faculty member also commented on the external pressure placed on students to be accepted into four-year universities and how this leads to cheating as she related this discussion she had with a student:

Well, I think this quest we're on here at [redacted] for everybody to get into [redacted], and [redacted], and the top-notch schools, I think we - it's too much pressure for students. I asked a student the other day why he wanted to go to [redacted] and he just looked at me like, "What an idiot question. Why would you ask?" We give them the impression that the [redacted] schools, and some of them in particular, are just where the cream of the crop goes. And if you don't go there, you must be trash. And it's wrong. (Professor F)

English faculty responses also indicated that perceived pressure from parents was a significant predictor of student cheating, as one faculty member stated:

Pressure, especially I think –That is, they are all to become doctors and lawyers and they have to get out of here quickly and they have to get on to a good university and they have to get into law school. There is just so much pressure. (Professor J)

Another English faculty member added to the factor of pressure by describing students with little to no regard for the learning but rather getting to the goal:

They're in a big hurry, they have poor skills, but high pressure to get good grades, and they do not have respect and appreciation for the purpose of general education or the philosophy of general education. They don't see the need because they view themselves as future professionals in some field where they won't need this, so they're just trying to jump through the hoop" (Professor G)

**Students.** Students interviewed also believed that pressures were the greatest factor for students to cheat or commit acts of dishonesty as this student commented:

Some students, I guess, that are - I would think students maybe under a lot of pressure. Like, they know that they need to get a certain GPA to get into a certain school and they just are so under pressure that they don't know how to deal with it. (Student C)

Another student discussing the pressures for other students made disassociated the behavior from the person:

People who are under pressure. They need to do well so if it takes cheating to do that than they are going to do it because they are under pressure but they are really not bad people. It is just people who are under pressure. Well, the pressures to go to a better University later on, to transfer, to make yourself look good on transcript. To make sure you get an 'A' or a 'B' and stuff, so yeah. (Student E)

A student discussing the added pressure for those who are attempting to get into the Nursing program at this institution also added:

The nursing program has a one and a half to two year waiting list only for those that qualify. Apart from that there is cut-offs, like it's by point systems and if you don't have an A in the class that can put you back tens of people. So, it's a lot of pressure now for people to say, well, if I don't do well on this test, then I won't get that A and I won't get my nursing, and then I won't get into the program, or it's just, this one grade could mess up your whole entire future pretty much. So that's a big one type of thing. (Student J)

External pressures such as getting higher grades in order to transfer is the single most significant factor cited as a motivation for cheating by both faculty and students in this study. Competition to gain advantages creates tremendous pressure for students at all levels of academic ability where the opportunity to do just a little better undermines his or her moral compass.

### **Academic Procrastination and Lack of Motivation**

Additional reasons for cheating indicated by faculty and students are what would be "academic procrastination" defined as lack of motivation for courses that don't interest students and time constraints due to putting studying off until the last minute, as this business faculty member stated, "Any unprepared student will cheat, or if they haven't studied enough" (Professor K). Or this comment from another business faculty member portraying the lazy student:

I think students who want the easy way out. There are students who actually have the ability to do well in the course, but they just don't want to. They're just lazy. They want to just take the easy way out. I think students who want the easy way out. There are students who actually have the ability to do well in the course, but they just don't want to. They're just lazy. They want to just take the easy way

out. That's one type of student. (Professor D)

This faculty member went on to elaborate about the desire for circumventing the educational process:

But the problem is, I think, a lot of students these days want things right away. They don't want to put in the effort. They just want the rewards. So, what happens is that these students who cheat just want to quickly obtain 24 units of accounting. They want to hurry up and pass their classes with a C to get the units instead of really learning the material covered in their classes. They don't care if they learn anything right now. Their thought process is, "I can go to CourseHero.com. I can buy this solution key. I'm just going to cheat. I'll worry about learning it later." That's just awful (Professor D)

An English faculty member also commented on the portrait of a lazy student who is not interested in doing the work required but is still under pressure to do well:

There is the sort of desperate, last minute student whose experience of college is more social than academic and so they get desperate at the last second and have to turn in something, all the way to students with parental pressure that insists then nothing less than an "A." (Professor J)

Students also felt that being underprepared or lazy are factors that contribute to other students cheating, as this student put it:

I think that people plagiarize because there's a deadline for an essay and they don't have anything done, but they don't want to get that fail so they go online or to another student, or any sort of cheating so that they have that material done by the deadline, and so they can turn it in and get the good grade...or it's those that are under a lot of pressure to get the grade. (Student I)

Students also cited lack of motivation and low interest in the course as additional factors for dishonest behavior:

I feel like other kids who are also just lacking the motivation to do their work are likely to do it. Or maybe more prevalent in certain students than others or something like that. Like, there are a lot of students who maybe dislike subjects like math or dislike English and don't like writing essays or something like that, and they might have someone else do it for them. (Student C)

Another student stated, "Or some people are just lazy so they are going to just look over somebody's paper or try to so hard to get all the answers on their phone and

then they will cheat from the phone or something” (Student G).

Several students remarked about the lack of interest in the subject material that could be the cause of cheating behavior:

I think a lot of it relates to first of all, enjoying the material you are studying. Because we as students, a lot of us had to take, most of us had to take classes that aren't in our major, all of them do, So in their major or in their syllabus so there is always going to be students that are really just not as good in this or that particular class, math or science or history or English you know. So, they are not interested in the subject so they are just going to want to get it over with as quickly as possible. (Student F, English)

Another student felt students might also feel that sometimes their own work wasn't enough and they needed to do something to get an advantage and put it this way:

I think a lot of students do, like students who like don't really care about the class, even though they may not care about class but then because like they kind of want to get it easy, like get like easy points or something. You know, try to do it. So, like lazy people who do it, they cheat because what they are doing is not enough, so then they have to like do some more and they feel either they don't want to try more. (Student G)

Some students believed the lack of motivation wasn't a good excuse to cheat as evidenced by this comment:

Yeah, I just don't know if every student has that within them. I feel like it's up to each individual to be able to get their motivation high and to be able to get their determinants high. Like, actually graduating college doesn't mean graduating college because you cheated on every test, but it means graduating college because you worked hard, and you applied yourself, and you learned all the material, or close to all the material. (Student I)

From these faculty and student comments, academic procrastination brought on by either laziness or fear of doing well creates another factor for cheating behavior. Faculty members perceive students are unmotivated to do the work and want an easy way to get through the courses. Students believe other students cheat because they perceive the course is unnecessary and is impeding his or her ability to get into more interesting courses in their major field of study. This is significant because degree or transfer paths

are created by faculty based on their knowledge and expertise of what courses are needed for students to achieve success in future degrees. Students are not engaged in coursework they feel is unnecessary and this creates tension and frustration between both the student and the instructor.

### **Cultural Differences**

Students from other culture may view certain behaviors of academic dishonesty differently. As noted earlier, countries outside the United States view educational collaboration as an acceptable practice. Faculty responses did acknowledge this as a factor for cheating as indicated by this English faculty response:

I hate to say it, but I have developed now a sense of distrust when I see that I have an Asian international student in one on my online classes. And part of that is cultural, I know, because they have a different idea about collaboration on work than we do if they're from a culture that they didn't grow up in the States.  
(Professor G)

She went on to elaborate:

And then because of their kind of cultural training, they tend to group up, and so then when they're outside of the class, they're not necessarily getting a lot of the practice speaking English. (Professor G)

A science faculty alluded the foreign students who receive pressure from parents, "I've heard tales of "My father in my country expects me to do, yada, yada, ya."

(Professor B).

### **Emotional Response to Cheating**

To fully understand the phenomenon of cheating, it was important to learn about the emotional reactions to cheating behavior from both faculty and students. For faculty, across disciplines there were very strong emotions associated with cheating ranging from shock and despair, to irritation and anger or attempting to devalue the educational

process. Students similarly have reactions ranging from annoyance to anger based on perceived unfairness of those cheating and lack of respect for learning.

**Faculty.** Faculty members take it very personally and respond with severe reactions depending upon the intent and severity of the act, as demonstrated by this comment:

It ranges dependent on how egregious it is. It ranges from disbelief, do you really think you'd get away with this. What do you think I am, stupid or overly lenient or uncaring? Sometimes it's bordered on almost smoldering anger because I want students to understand that there's a consequence for their actions. They have to shoulder that responsibility. So it is, sometimes it's incredulous that they would actually try to do that. The example of writing on a hand and then saying, oh, I did this because I want to remember. Well, come on. I'll just give you the textbook. (Professor E)

And this reaction from a Business professor, "Usually, I just turn red from head to toe. I feel completely betrayed. To me, it's the ultimate sin in an academic environment - the ultimate sin" (Professor F).

Anger at cheating stems from a feeling that students circumventing the actual learning process could have dire consequences especially for those entering the health professions, as this Nursing faculty member stated:

My first response, I think, my instinctual response is anger that they would do that. If they don't cause they don't know that, they'll never be licensed, but if they do by chance not have to know that information, there may be a time when knowing that information could be a matter of life or death or comfort. Somehow, it would affect the well-being of a patient, so I feel angry that they don't feel that kind of professional concern, and I'm concerned what kind of professional they'll be if they're willing to cheat rather than learn the information, and I worry about the welfare of the patients, and the reputation of the college. (Professor H)

An English faculty member discussed that cheating angered her because it signaled to her that students didn't care about her efforts to help them learn the material:

I'm incensed first. I take it very personally. I have been taking it personally for 22 years. I don't know how to get past that. I put 100 percent of my energy into

my teaching and when somebody does that, I take it as an insult, as a personal insult. It really offends me. Even if it's the simple inadvertent type, it screams they're not paying attention, they're not taking the class seriously, and they're not working as hard as I am to make their education work for them. That really infuriates me. It infuriates me more globally because it suggests to me that they have managed to get all the way into college in a culture that hasn't taught them to value what this institution offers them.

Another English faculty member discussed the evolution of her feelings towards discovering cheating and the sense of frustration she felt over having to go through the process of confronting the student:

It's changed over time. I think I used to feel more surprise, and then as I got clearer about what plagiarism was and felt that the student really had no excuse for not understanding it, so as my explanations improved, then my dismay that a student would go ahead and do it also increased. I just kind of get this, oh, here we go again - just knowing that it's going to be an exhausting and irritating experience now because students rarely say, yes, you're right and I'm terribly sorry and I deserve the consequences. Usually, they go through a whole number of things. (Professor G)

The emotional response appears to stem from the feelings that students who cheat are taking opportunities away from other students who may be more serious about their education, as one English faculty member stated:

Well, at this stage of the game, my idealism is more for the students who have been shut out of classes because students with bad intentions took their spots. So my idealism goes toward wanting to protect the environment from people who had abused this privilege of actually getting a spot in the class because there's such a higher demand for spots than there are spots available. And then for the students that I catch, I actually feel very realistic about them, that it's rare that I would ever believe that a student really didn't know what he or she was doing. (Professor G)

Other faculty expressed the disappointment that students would cheat rather than expend the effort to learn what was required:

Sometimes I think it's they want to try and put one over and beat the system, game the system. The effort that's required to do that is not commensurate of the results. The effort expended would be better devoted to just learning the materials so they understand it. They're defeating themselves. (Professor E, Science)

**Students.** Students, when asked about their feelings towards dishonest behavior, expressed it as being unfair because those who cheated didn't do the assignments and work as hard as they did, as this student commented:

It just makes you upset because you're just like that's really unfair because, you know, that's - I don't know, it's not right because, for example, the personal essay that you have to write for school, it's quite difficult to do and the fact that you're having someone else do that hard work for you is just unfair because you're not - first of all, you're not really conveying who you really are in your essay, you're not showing your writing style and all that yourself. You're showing someone else's work. (Student C)

This particular student upon reflection also added that along with being unfair it was also selfish:

I think cheating is a very selfish thing to do for sure because you are hurting yourself, that's not in your self-interest cause you are not learning the material, you are not doing it yourself, you're not going through the practice and need of And then, you hurt the person who you're cheating off of because if it's plagiarized, then you're not giving them due credit, if it's a friend and you're like, oh, let's share answers or something like that, and you're taking from them, a lot of times people will catch it because you'll both have the wrong answer or something like that, all your answers match. They'll get in trouble with you because they shared the work with you, so I mean, your both kind of the culprit, but it just hurts everyone doing it. (Student C)

Another student also stated it was unfair because the student who cheats doesn't put forth as much effort as she did:

It is unfair because they are probably getting the right answer from cheating. Well, like not looking over people's paper but their own little cheating thing. It is sort of unfair while I study so hard because I have seen - our studies are hard but I do worse than they have, and they are doing better, and it is like why am I trying so hard at something when they are cheating. It is like should I cheat now because they are cheating, but it is like, I just don't cheat even though I am doing badly because yeah. Yeah, I don't know, it sort of pisses me off sometimes. Because here I am, trying and they are cheating and getting better grades than I get. (Student E)

Another student responded with frustration that cheating students didn't take the time to learn the material:



And then, you see those people get an A and you're like, but you didn't study, you didn't learn the material, you didn't put any work into doing it. All you did was go bubble in a Scantron. So, it was kind of like, it kind of upsets you because you put so much hard work into it, and then they put such little effort into it and you get the same results. So, it was kind of, I would say, irritating, yeah. (Student I)

One student related an incident about how bold other students could be about offering to share answers and her shock at other students cheating:

It was actually really hard. It took place in the library, the one with my last semester class, the filling of a Scantron. Me and another girl were studying in the library and that group was at the table next to us. They actually asked us while we were sitting, do you want to copy the answers? We were like, no, we're studying for a reason. We're studying because we want to learn the material so that we know how to get through the test. It was just - it was appalling to me. I was like, how could you actually just copy a Scantron from a previous test? How do you even know that the test is gonna be the same? So, that was - I didn't like it, but I didn't know exactly how to approach it in a certain way, so I would say that, yeah, I didn't do the right thing by letting it go, but at the same time, I had never seen that before and I think I was more shocked than anything. (Student I)

Another student expressed being upset but also didn't want to be distracted by what is going on, "Well, at first, I become kind of angry, but then, I just feel like I shouldn't get distracted. But, one time, it was for lab assignments in physics, which is really important and worth a lot of points" (Student G). The other emotions stemmed from the perception that students who cheated believed that the teacher wasn't aware of the cheating, as this student noted:

I say how can they get away with that, you know like the teacher is not stupid but they think he is but no teacher is stupid. Yeah and then I will sort of say I wonder how they did, next week she did better than me, like what! I got like a fifty something and they got a seventy something. (Student E)

Similar to faculty respondents, overall students expressed dismay at students who cheated and circumvent the educational process and how this will leave them unprepared for dealing with future life situations:

I mean, yeah, a degree is gonna get you somewhere, but it's not gonna get you

everywhere in real life. Just because you show up with a degree to work and you don't know how to do the material doesn't mean they're gonna hire you. I feel like especially in today's job world and everything, it's so hard and a degree's not gonna get you everywhere. You have to have the sense of application, you have to have the background in knowing all of your material to be able to work in industries, so I think that's a big importance as to why people shouldn't necessarily cheat. And so, I feel like - but, I feel like a lot of the students don't think about the future like that. I feel like they're just trying to get through it now, but then when it gets to that time they're gonna be like, oh, why didn't I just actually learn it? Why didn't - I feel like some students would regret it, regret cheating I guess because they really didn't learn it. But yeah, I mean, I don't know. I know my dad always told me if you cheat you're gonna end up working at McDonald's for the rest of your life. So, I was like, okay, well, I don't want to do that. (Student I)

Other student responses also pointed to the future consequences of cheating in classwork, such as this comment from a student pursuing a career in Nursing:

So if you cheat on one, you are just killing yourself for the next one, pretty much. English, [redacted] was kind of like, dude, why are you doing that? The reason that that bothers me so much is that it's the basis for our chemistry, if you mess that up; you are going to be messing up everything. If you mess an anatomical part you are going to be messing up everything if that's your major, you will be hurting people, you will be messing up your business if you do that in the future. And often times I hear people say, oh, it's just right now, I'll get it down later, and I kind of doubt that will ever come. (Student J)

As demonstrated by these responses, faculty and students feel strongly about academic dishonesty and it is important to hear about mitigation strategies and the effectiveness.

### **Institutional Mitigation Strategies**

This institution adopted an honor code for students. Within the code an "Honor Statement" or pledge is presented to students each semester upon enrollment. This statement is part of a larger policy of academic dishonesty available to students online, in classrooms and in the college catalog. As noted earlier, students must electronically sign a pledge each time he or she enrolls for a regular semester or inter-session. The statement can be found in appendix C.

The remaining sections of this chapter will deal with interview responses as to the perceptions of how faculty use deterrence strategies and how students view the effectiveness of the strategies on their decisions to cheat.

### **Deterrence Strategies**

Deterrence strategies for this institution are categorized by strategies such as putting a dishonesty statement in each syllabus, and those utilized during testing, and the use, knowledge, and effectiveness of the institutional academic dishonesty policies.

#### **General deterrence strategies.**

All faculty members interviewed stated that as a general rule, it is customary to insert a statement about academic dishonesty into the syllabus. As one Business faculty member stated: “The syllabus, to me, is the starting point to all of that in terms of making sure that you don’t put yourself in a position that can even be construed as cheating” (Professor C).

**Deterrence Strategies for testing and exams.** During tests or examinations community college faculty utilize some standard methods to deter cheating such as asking students to keep desks clear, and turn off cell phones. Among Business, English and Science faculty, there are a few unique deterrence strategies that warrant noting. For all business faculty, who give multiple choice tests, each rely on textbook publishers to provide banks of test questions because they find it infeasible to write their own questions. This method allows the ability to scramble the test questions. Creating a classroom environment where cheating is discouraged is important. Faculty members use methods such as seating charts and walking around the room to watch for cheating. Some business faculty utilize unique methods to deter cheating as this faculty member stated:

I assign seats at the start of the class. I walk around the classroom nonstop and I number my tests to make sure they give them back to me. I'm really on top of that. I get to know students. People say that, "Oh, somebody can you give a fake ID." I require mandatory attendance, and if students go over a certain number of absences, I drop them from the class. I get to know my students on a personal basis, and after each exam, I sit down and talk to them during office hours to go over their exam. (Professor D)

Along with getting to know students on a personal basis in order to deter cheating another business faculty member takes it even farther to ensure cheating is kept to a minimum by ensuring that the classroom environment is conducive to integrity by having a seating chart and even cleaning desks, as this business faculty member stated:

But what I will say is I think it's important to make sure that students don't always feel like they can just sit near their friends. Oftentimes, a seating chart is appropriate. Knowing the names of all of your students is hard to do when you have 40-somethin' students. But if you know 75 or 80 percent of the class, and in class, you call people by name. But I'm gonna go in there. And I'm gonna look at every single desk before the exam starts. And I'm gonna take some soap and some water and try to take any markings off the desk beforehand. So now, when students leave, and there's some writing on the desk. I can say that I've seen every desk in here - no, no, that was here before. No, I've seen every desk. So I'll go in and kinda police the desks. (Professor C)

Not all faculty can "police" the environment and commented about the futility of creating a personalized classroom environment such as this comment from a business faculty member who believed it was nearly impossible to develop personalized relationships with her students:

There is no way to know. We don't spend that much time with our students. There is no way you can know beyond a few students with whom you develop a close relationship. So and you can't treat students differently, based on your gut feeling of, oh you seem so nice, you can't be a cheater. (Professor K)

The business faculty members interviewed also all stated that it is a department policy not to give tests back to guard against students sharing tests with other students for future exams, as this business faculty member commented:

We also have agreed, as a department - all of us who teach Business [redacted],

because we're using the same common pool of questions, despite the fact that it has thousands of questions for every chapter, we've agreed - that we're not going to ever give exams back with the answers. So, the only way - the only way they can see their exams, and the questions, and the answers is if they come in my office. So, they have to - and I'll go through them one at a time so they get a great deal of personal attention, but I do tell them, "Because we feel we're protecting the integrity of the exam, we feel that an exam is not a learning experience. An exam is simply a measure at a point in time that -' but we do provide the learning experience if they wanna come in. We feel that protecting the integrity of the test questions is extremely important so that the test and the answers don't get out there in any way. So, we won't discuss them by e-mail if a student writes. We do all of this. (Professor F)

For faculty in the English courses, nearly all the examinations are using a composition book or "blue book" to write essays. While the act of students copying from each other during testing would not be much of an issue, faculty still encounter incidents of dishonesty and in order to deter cheating have developed ways to ensure students are not coming to the exams with previously printed essays or notes, as this English faculty member stated:

I give my own in-class exam in English 1 and so for an in-class essay I always request that they bring Blue Books and I request that they bring in an absolutely blank Blue Book and then I collect them all at the beginning of class, shuffle them and redistribute them. I just let them know that in rare cases students have been known to bring in attempted drafts of their essays and that for the sake of academic honesty and also because there's no way for anybody to really anticipate the prompt and thus, they might put themselves in jeopardy, I would like to just follow through with that policy. I'm not saying any one of you would do it, but just in case. So I kind of downplay the implicit accusation and play up the idea that it's just for the sake of everyone's benefit (Professor I)

Additionally to deter cheating one English faculty member took this extra step:

I have one on ground class where I test in Blue Books and I have them bring their Blue Books into class, I have them put their names on them. I should preface this by saying I give them the essay questions ahead of time. I give them a list of five and out of those five questions, three will appear on the exam and they have to write on one. Which I consider a very humane way of testing. I like it. But it also means that they can walk in with already filled Blue Book. So I have them come in, I have them sit down and write their name on their Blue Book and then I collect them and I re-distribute them to other students. All they have to do is cross that off, but if they open it up and there's an essay in there, I'm the first one

to hear about it. (Professor J)

While there were some basic standard methods faculty used for testing, slight variations among business faculty existed based on each faculty member's own experiences and philosophy of cheating behavior.

For faculty teaching specific science courses leading to a career in the health services field, most often testing is done using multiple choice exams. Most faculty interviewed used methods similar to Business faculty such as numbered tests, multiple versions of tests, and seating charts to ensure friends are not sitting near each other thereby increasing the potential for cheating among peers, as this science faculty member noted:

I write exams so that there are two versions and one time in a diagnostic test, I saw the B answer on the A test. So, I number my exams so I can put them down and see who was what. So, I took this exam and I took the exam for both the prior and the following consecutive number -and lay them up, boom, boom, boom. There's the B answer on the A exam. And, when I looked up, the question above it had been copied from the person also, so I could tell that - that this person had copied from the person to her left, not the person to her right.  
(Professor B)

Unlike most Business faculty interviewed, science faculty rely on creating their own exams to test knowledge on concepts as indicated by this response from a science instructor:

I never use the same questions. Every exam is completely different. In fact, every lecture, I don't write notes. I do prepare the night before. I read the current literature. Whatever is given in the lecture is a result of the experience I have, the clinical experience, the published data, the basic information related to the textbook, and any source, which is relevant and valid to explain the concepts, which are presented for that particular topic, so every exam is different. They never see the same questions and I give them back. In fact, some students have expressed disappointment in that this wasn't what you put in the last exam. This is different. Oh, surprise. Did you expect to have the same exam? They never see the same questions. In fact, every single lecture given in any course is never the same. There's always new information being presented. They're always different ways of presenting the, the information in a different light to emphasize

different aspects of that particular concept. So it never is the same, so that does not become an issue. (Professor E)

In contrast, the Nursing faculty member interviewed felt it was inconceivable to write new questions and too time consuming:

I don't like to rewrite a whole test every semester. I have 250 questions in eight weeks that I - three exams and a final, and if I had to rewrite all those questions every semester I wouldn't be able to get anything else done. So, I want to think that they're not cheating so that I don't have to rewrite anything, but if it's true what other faculty have said, then they probably are passing on the questions to the next semester. I've heard faculty say that they collect notes and papers and things like that and they give them to the next semester behind them. I don't know if it's true or not. (Professor H)

To summarize, faculty members use a variety of methods to deter cheating. Some are fairly standard strategies such as ensuring that desks are clear, no cell phones or electronic devices, multiple test versions and seating charts. Some faculty members go to greater lengths to deter cheating and have developed unique strategies such as elaborate test question scrambling, color coded tests, and washing desks prior to examinations. These strategies are taken to ensure the classroom environment discourages cheating and creates an environment of integrity.

Students. When students were asked about the testing procedures of faculty to get their perceptions, the responses were fairly similar to faculty statements about how testing was conducted, as one student recalling a recent exam stated:

We come in and we have our - we have to have our blue books. He goes through the blue book, he goes through everyone's blue book and makes sure that there's nothing in the blue book. We're not allowed calculators, so for example, I know people can store stuff in calculators and look at that. Everyone has the same test because I know when he posts the solutions they're all the same, but he's watching us the entire time we're taking it. I don't really pay attention. I don't look up at him because when you look up, then you start looking everywhere and you don't want to be looking around. (Student C).

When asked specifically about whether the instructor gives tests back, this student

commented:

He gives us our test back. He actually has posted the tests from the year before as a sample, so I mean, he writes the tests new every year, or every semester, I guess, it seems, but - yeah, he gives us our test back and he posts the solutions and everything. (Student C)

A student recalling an accounting exam offered this scenario:

For one of my classes, Accounting class, once the tests are handed out, it's silent. You have all your stuff put away and you start the exam. And the teacher walks front and back. He walks by each student, kind of looks over shoulders to make sure everyone's focused on their own paper. And most of the time, since you're doing a lot of calculations, everyone's head is kind of bowed down and they're fixed on their paper. So no one really has their head up looking around. (Student D)

When asked if there were difference in how instructors handle testing, the student stated:

I think it's pretty much the same where the teacher does walk around or sometimes they're just sitting in the chair in front of the class and they'll just be looking over the classroom. So it depends, they could be walking around or they could be sitting, just watching. Most of the time they are in the classroom. (Student D)

Upon hearing that the instructor was in the classroom "most of the time" the student was asked to elaborate on the instructor leaving the room during an exam and he stated:

Not for the entire period, but maybe they go out real quick. And who knows, you might think the teacher is still watching you from the outside window and then maybe some people think, oh the teachers gone, here's your answers. (Student D)

Nearly all student respondents provided a similar account of how instructors used seating charts and/or multiple test versions:

For my geography test my last one. I came in, the teacher gives us all tests and they are different versions. I think there are [a few] different versions A, B & C. We just start doing the test. I guess because they are different versions, one-row gets (A), one row gets (B) and another gets (C), it is hard to cheat. They usually are not different questions they are just in order differently because after we go over the test, we are like the version (A) started with question one, version (B)



started with question twelve, and version (C) started with another question. So, that is pretty much how it goes and when we are done, we turn in the test and that's it. (Student F)

Of particular interest was that many students pointed out that instructors utilized a seating chart that was different for examinations and pointed out that the most instructors watched students during examinations to deter those from cheating:

A few of our teachers actually cared, like they would give us a random seating chart right before class so we sat in different order than we used to. Some other teachers space out the rows and the room so no one is next to each other. (Student G)

Another student recalled this testing practice:

So, she would seat you through the rows and it would basically be a blue, a green, a yellow, a pink, a blue, a yellow, a pink, and so nobody sitting next to each other had the same color test, which means they all had different versions. So, she would do that and she would seat everybody. Then, she would have one proctor on each side of the room and she would be in the front and then they would walk around. They would circulate, so people were kind of - I guess they would be too nervous to cheat because there were three people instead of just one. But, she did it like that and then at the end of the test you would just go into the front and turn it into her, and that was it, you could leave (Student I)

When this student was queried about if her other classes were handled similarly, the student responded:

I don't think my other classes are nearly as strict about it, I guess, as strict about tests. Like, yeah, the teachers watch, but they're not necessarily - like, I've had some teachers just doing their own paperwork and not paying attention at all, but then I've had teachers just sitting there watching, just watching the class and that's it. So, I mean, it varies class to class.

Not all classes were handled in this manner as indicated by this student's response:

[For my] Psych class there is a big difference, honestly it's a one hour class, you walk in with your scantron, she hands out the test, and then we do it. There is not change of seating, there is not change of where we put our bags, there is no time limit, there is no nothing, it's like, here's your test, do it, and then leave. I mean, every now and then my teacher gets up and walks around and sits down, but it's not like going row to row, it's just walking along the front row and then sitting

down. So, it's kind of like, check out a little bit more type of thing, but, yeah.  
(Student J)

The perceptions by several student respondents indicated that instructor vigilance in watching for cheating was important, such as this response, “some teachers are more strict, they walk around in the classroom and make sure to tell the people had their cell phones turned off” (Student K), or this response from a student about her experiences with various instructors classroom management behavior during testing:

While we were taking the test he was reviewing our homework. I can't say if he was looking up or not, or how often he was checking on the class to try to guard against the academic dishonesty, but yeah, I really wouldn't be able to tell you.

I was pretty much looking down most of the time, but I'm sure he did look up every so often. Any questions, we would come to him and other than that, he was probably pretty entranced in grading homework. During the speech class, the professor was pretty much a similar situation. He'd pass out the test, ask if there were any questions. That professor did walk around every so often to just gauge, make sure no one was doing anything out of the ordinary, anything that would draw attention to themselves. The math class, the teacher once again just kind of sat at the front. He seemed more focused on the class to make sure nothing was happening, as opposed to doing any side jobs. But, yeah, pretty much the same thing. They're scanning the room, but at what level depends on the teacher and what else they may be doing at the time. (Student L)

These comments indicate that there is some variation in the amount of vigilance on the part of faculty during testing. This is important because this perhaps creates an environment where students feel they may not be caught.

### **Academic Dishonesty Policies/Honor Code**

As noted earlier in this chapter, this institution has adopted academic dishonesty policies and has an official honor code. Both faculty and students were asked about their knowledge of the academic dishonesty policies and to discuss their perceptions of its effectiveness for cheating or responding to cheating behavior.

### **Knowledge of Institutional Policies/Honor Code**

**Faculty.** Among the four business faculty members interviewed for this study, the responses indicated a range of knowledge about how students were informed about academic dishonesty policies from very limited to a fairly good knowledge. Nearly all included their own syllabus as one method in which students are informed about dishonesty policies and had varying degrees of knowledge of the college policies. One business faculty stated, “Well I really like the fact, now that they have to agree to abide by the code of conduct—academic honesty code, whatever it’s called” (Professor F). Another business faculty stated: “I think when they register they have to read some information about academic dishonesty?” (Professor D). Additionally a third business faculty member had knowledge of how students were informed about the specific honor code but was unclear as to other information that is communicated to students:

I know we have an honor code. I know that the code is part of what students must click on in order to register. I’m not sure what else is communicated as a college. And it may be interesting for us to find out what else do they learn about academic dishonesty? Whether it’s in the counseling classes or elsewhere about what’s appropriate behavior” (Professor C).

Among the science faculty interviewed for this study, again there was a range of knowledge about how students are informed about dishonesty policies, as one faculty member stated:

They are presented with, on the very time that they enroll and try to sign up for classes, a statement that they will adhere to the policies of academic integrity, which if they don’t click it, they can’t move on. (Professor B)

Another Nursing faculty member stated:

Well I know it’s available for them to read if they were so motivated. It’s in the orientation. If they’re a fairly new student, then they would get it there. If they’re not a new student, then they didn’t get it. It’s in the schedule of classes, it’s in the catalogue, it’s on –[the student self-service system]. In the nursing program, I think every instructor mentions our policy because the nursing program itself has a policy of disqualifying students caught cheating. (Professor H)

Still another science faculty provided this explanation:

There is a student's bill of rights or whatever it's called. There is also information online when students sign up. It's in the catalog, academic responsibility. There's an academic dishonesty policy. We have it posted in the lab. It's public knowledge. It's available. (Professor E)

**Students.** Students also had limited knowledge of institutional policies such as this statement from one business student taking English composition courses:

I know that there are really big consequences for it. Like, the fact that it's on your record, goes with you [to] every school. I'm pretty sure - I know they - you will fail the class. They'll make sure - or at least the majority of the teachers will make sure that you fail the class. Well, it depends on what you, I guess, cheated on. Maybe if it's an assignment you'll get a zero on it or something like that, which is enough to make you fail a class, or maybe if you cheated on something super big, like a final or a mid-term or something, you might just completely fail. They will want to make sure it shows up on your transcripts so that whatever schools you apply to or want to transfer to know, or places you want to apply. I don't know if they have you meet with anybody. (Student C)

Other students seemed to have very little knowledge and discussed it in terms of what was written on syllabi, such as this student, a Business major taken English composition courses:

Well, I am not sure. I don't really remember all my teachers. The syllabus that I got from all my teachers has it but most of them, when I actually do read them it is actually there. It will tell you and then there are academic consequences to this so they tell you in the beginning. But, I think some students would overlook it or something or just not read it. But, all students should know about it. (Student E)

And this response from an English student, "Not much. I know there is one that we sign at the beginning of the year when we have to enroll for classes. There is an academic dishonesty thing online" (Student F).

Business students had even less knowledge of college dishonesty policies, as indicated by this response, "I know that during the first day of class, most teacher do mention you should know the syllabus which has the academic honesty policies and their rules" (Student G). Another Business student stated, "Actually I don't know of a specific

for that [policy]. I am not very familiar, but I know that it probably goes hand in hand with both the main idea of academic dishonesty” (Student H). A Nursing student stated, “I do know that if you are caught being academically dishonest, you will have a mark on your record, possible expulsion from the college, immediate F in that class, and it’s marked in your transcript by the teacher” (Student J).

### **Effectiveness**

To determine whether or not faculty and students actually had seen the institution’s “Honor Statement,” both groups were shown the statement and asked if they had seen it. All respondents recognized the statement then were asked about its effectiveness either to deter cheating or respond to cheating. All the faculty members interviewed were glad that the statement was in place, but felt it was not an effective deterrent because the language in the statement was too idealistic, vague, and lacked clarity. Student responses indicated some understanding of the policy but also felt it needed more detailed language to define behaviors.

**Faculty.** Faculty general felt most students disregarded the policy and do not understand the language as indicated by the following response from an English faculty member:

I think it’s on the blue books. I think it’s one of those things like those long things we sign saying, “Okay, I agree. Let me into this website’ or something. I mean, I don’t - because, I mean, look at the last sentence, “I will conduct myself honorably as a responsible member of the [redacted] community in all endeavors I pursue.’ I mean I don’t even know what that would mean. So it’s a little broad, vague, unclear. So I guess I would say it’s not helpful. (Professor A)

Another English faculty member was appreciative of the adopted policy but doubted its effectiveness:

I love it. It’s great. And whether or not students with bad intentions would be at

all affected by that, I'm kind of doubtful. I think it's a beautiful statement, exactly what I want all of my students to have as their attitude when they come in here. If they don't already have that attitude, signing their name to that, I'm not sure that that's going to create the attitude for them. I think it's a great reminder for students who are somewhere in the middle, and again, I have no idea, statistically, how that breaks down. (Professor G)

An English faculty added to the feelings of other faculty members and stated to be effective class time would need to be devoted to go over the code to ensure students understood what it meant:

I don't think it would be effective in my [redacted] class unless we really spent some time talking about what it would mean to be honorable, what that Honor Code is. I don't think they would really understand what they were committing to if we didn't spend some time working at these texts, various codes rather. And then thinking about what rigor and honor and responsibility are. (Professor G)

Another English faculty member similarly felt it needed to expand on defining what "academic dishonesty" was in order to be preventative:

Well, again I think some of them would get it, but I still think it would be worth looking at those codes. Especially as a way to talk about kind of a responsible public discourse because that sort of ties into the bigger question of making knowledge and wanting to be able to value and rely on the integrity of academic enterprises. So yeah, I still think to just have them read it, sign it and be done with it would be a disservice. It might be a legal lever, so to speak, but it wouldn't be a useful one, a preventative one. Because it doesn't define what that is. Yeah, it doesn't define an act of Academic Dishonesty. (Professor I)

A fourth English faculty member had a stronger comment that while she appreciated it was in place, she felt students disregarded the statement:

I think it's a joke. I mean, I love that it's there, but nobody - there is very little thought of high ideals. I don't know what they understand it to mean to conduct myself honorably. I love that it's there, I love, love, love that it's there and I talk about it when we have Blue Book exams. But you know, it's just, I think for them it's just that one more hoop they have to jump through. Like, okay I have to take this little - I have to sign this thing. I just don't think it means anything. (Professor J)

Among Science faculty, responses also indicated that the statement was ineffective as a deterrent because it doesn't give enough detail about the consequences:

If I was reading this as a student, well I'm always a student, I would think this efficacy is kind of lofty and really doesn't mention the repercussions, for example, and the consequences. I would question the efficacy from the viewpoint of a professor, an instructor, I would really question whether this tells a student basically, you know, if you're cheating it's being dishonest. You're not helping anybody. You're not doing any good for yourself and you're actually compromising your entire code of ethics and conduct and it doesn't say much about you as a person. So, to me, this is kind of the boilerplate which aspires to achieve or to stimulate a sense of a higher ideal in student's life. I don't think they have, a student even thinks in that fashion. They're looking at can I do this and get away with it, what are the consequences. I think this should be much stronger in terms of the consequences. (Professor E)

The faculty member also stated that the statement needed to go farther to educate about the immorality of dishonesty:

I think it should also point out that it's reprehensible, morally and unethically unacceptable, and it doesn't say a hell of a lot about you as an individual if you're going to think that cheating is adequate. So I would really question the efficacy of this. Reading this in the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards, what the hell are the high ideals? Pardon my language. I commit myself to respect and uphold this [redacted] Honor Code. What is the [redacted] Honor Code, and student conduct code? First of all, that assumes you have a knowledge of this, that you've read it, that you accept those principles. It should be given to the students association. It should be part of every single course that is given. It should have a copy truncated form. Not those 18 points, which nobody reads anyway. Certainly not to that extent. I think it has to be enforced with greater vigilance. The policies, in my own opinion, could do with a rewrite, could be made more succinct to the point, and stress consequences, and point out that it's reprehensible, (Professor E)

A nursing faculty member also questioned the effectiveness of the statement and doesn't believe students read it and felt this statement won't really make a difference.

I think it's a lovely statement. I don't think anybody reads it. I think it is well written and idealistic. There's probably students who wouldn't understand this. It's way above their level of comprehension. I think that there are some students that might even just subconsciously when they click in to get their information and this pops up, I think they might go, "yeah, you know I gotta remember this is important to this school, but I don't think they give it a lot of thought. I don't think they read it word for word. I think for those people who feel okay cheating and they can rationalize that the most important thing is that they get their degree or transfer and it doesn't matter how they get there, it doesn't matter what you write. It's not going to make a difference. (Professor H)

However; this faculty member did acknowledge that the code could be effective for some students and it was better to have one than not at all:

I'm from the school that it's better to reach higher. You may not get all the way, but it's better than not expecting anything from yourself. If instead we said, you know, try not to cheat, do your own work, be a nice person and behave please, I don't know that you'd get any more or less better behavior. (Professor H)

Business faculty responses echoed much of the same opinions of the effectiveness of the honor statement, such as this faculty member's response:

What the hell does it mean? It's not specific. It's not specific enough. What are high ideals and rigorous standards? [A student could say] "I didn't know; it didn't specify copying, plagiarizing, citing someone else's work as my own." I wish it had more specifics. I think other than the fact that I think it's a little—the policy itself is a little idealistic and cumbersome, and I really don't have a lot of faith that it'll work. (Professor F)

Another business faculty member felt it needed more specifics but as with other faculty members felt would not deter those students who are intent to cheat, as he stated, "Oh that's really very generic and vague. It has to be more specific. But you know what? Like these statements, sometimes, they're just symbolic. I don't know. I'm not into policymaking, but it's symbolic" (Professor D).

**Students.** When students were asked about the honor statement and what it means and whether it is effective, responses indicated understanding of what the policy meant, but when asked about the effectiveness of the honor statement felt other students probably didn't read it and felt while it was there to school's reputation, it needed to include specific examples. One Business student who had taken the English composition sequence put it, "A lot of people don't read it. I think to read all that stuff" (Student C).

When asked what the statement meant to her as a student, she responded this way:

It means that if you –because they want the best for you and your peers, they're just—you know, and the –rigorous—high ideals. Like academic life. Like, if academic life was meant to be cheated on then you wouldn't even get an



education. Then, the rigorous stand is academic life. School has a lot of work that goes with it. You have to study, you have to do work; that's why its school. These are just, I guess –myself to respect and uphold and honor, yeah. I mean, I don't know, you just have to make sure you keep the [reputation] good, that you are willing to commit to what it is to be a student here. (Student C)

When asked how this might affect other students cheating behavior, she stated:

It kind of depends. A lot of people don't read the terms on anything. You know like, I'm signing up for a new email account, okay, I agree. I'm not gonna do some illegal crap, I promise. So it just depends on the student though. A lot of students don't take things seriously. I feel like if someone would see this, if they've been academically dishonest it would make them feel guilty because you are—I mean, technically, if you are signing off on it, it's a contract. You are technically in a contract when you—you have to I believe, agree to this before you even sign up for classes. But, it just –I mean, it could maybe have—you could maybe throw on more detail because technically the honor code and this is making you refer to a different document or something. (Student C)

Other students also felt that including specifics and consequences are an important part to creating an effective policy. Another student when asked about the policies, responded “I think they strictly apply it because even on the student website, on your student login, each time you have to accept the Academic Dishonesty. So it's always there for you to read remind you” (Student D).

Students overall felt that this statement would not affect their decisions to cheat because they had their own ethical standards, as related by this comment from a Business student when asked how this statement has affected their decisions related to academic dishonesty, “Well it just makes me realize how serious it is. Obviously I have my own ethical standards. So just respecting other people and myself and doing my own work” (Student D).

Another student equated it with being similar to a civic duty:

It's like a civil duty. Like trying to be a citizen in America where you have to do certain stuff to maintain that duty as a student you wouldn't cheat. I mean I have been tempted to cheat, but I have never cheated. I don't feel good cheating even thinking about it, like me cheating, I don't feel good. It's like, I don't think I

should do this because I might be caught and it is not going to be good. I would rather fail and do better next time. Because whenever I fail, I would feel really bad so I am going to take initiative or discipline myself to do better (Student E)

When this student was asked how faculty could help students better understand policies, he replied:

I think they could give examples of what happened to past students. A teacher gave an example of one student who was getting “A’s and then one time she let someone else cheat off her paper and she got dropped out of the program or she got kicked out of the program. So that kind [of] made people [say] “oh wow!” that could happen and it did happen, it could happen to me so I gotta be careful. (Student D)

Other student responses indicated that examples were not enough the decision whether or not to cheat was a personal moral decision and there wasn’t much a policy or faculty could do, as this student commented when asked what could be done to educate students about integrity:

Nothing. Because when you tell somebody, okay yeah, yeah, yeah, because they are just going to ignore it. I don’t think anyone likes being told what to do they just have to do it on their own. They have to discipline themselves from not doing it or doing it so I don’t think - as much as you say it they are not going to, you know it is like if you tell somebody not to litter, you know they could easily just throw a gob unconsciously, just do it. So, I don’t think there is anything you could do even if you tell people some horror stories you know, how some girl got a cheating transcript notation on the transcript or something. Besides some horror stories, you know after a while you forget about it. Yeah, so I don’t think there is anything you could do about it. It is what you can do about it for yourself. (Student J)

An English student comment also pointed out the best strategy for mitigating dishonesty as an internal desire to learn:

I think you would start by—you have to instill a wanting of a learning experience. You cannot rush them into studying something just because they need to. I don’t think it is something that [the college] can solve by itself. I think it is something that starts earlier like the desire for learning, then the desire of getting through the day, getting through the test (Student F)

### **Apprehension**

Another strategy to deter cheating is apprehension. Once a faculty member suspects cheating has occurred, he or she confronts the student, and reports the incident through the institutional process. First it was important to understand how faculty detect when cheating as occurred. Several comments from faculty indicated it was based on a gut instinct of the “usual” standard of student work in their classes and years of experience to discover cheating. Once cheating has been discovered it was important to understand the steps faculty take to report dishonest incidents. There was no clear consistency on when faculty report incidents. Some reported every incidence, and others preferred to deal with the first incident one-on-one, especially if they could not find the original source and/or did not want to go through the perceived hassle of reporting because they punishment was not severe enough.

### **Faculty**

From interviews conducted with faculty, detecting dishonesty seems to come from how each faculty member defines academic dishonesty either direct witnessing of cheating behavior during a test or discovering cheating while reviewing exams or papers and is, as related by this English faculty member,

I think this is something my colleagues would generally agree that there is a - once we read quite a few essays from the students, we start getting a sense of the kind of work they do and the kind of mistakes they make and the kind of strengths they have. So there's a kind of a quality of their writing that we get used to.  
(Professor A)

Often times something in the exam or paper will give the faculty member an inkling that cheating or plagiarism has taken place and the faculty member will take time to verify through means such as the internet to discover it is not the student's work, as this faculty member stated:

So I don't have any particular one, other than going to Google. I mean, I'll just type in 10, 20 words out of an essay. If I think that there's a passage that is not their own writing, I just type it into Google. I had someone a couple of years ago - well, maybe a year and a half ago - who just went online and got an academic piece of writing, and there it popped up.

Or, the faculty member just senses that something just isn't quite right and the paper is not written at the level of the student, as this science faculty member explained:

Well, I gave an assignment where students are supposed to write about a famous microbiologist in the first person. And, I call it my "Who's Who?" assignment. So, in come these various different things. In comes an assignment about a person who was still living, written in the first person with references, web references fortunately, for sites that I recognized. (Professor B)

For instructors detecting test cheating, because of the unique methods they have devised such as multiple versions of tests, seating charts, and other things, it becomes somewhat easier to catch cheating if students attempt to copy from each other since the answers will be incorrect, as this faculty science faculty member explained:

I number my exams so I can put them down and see who was what. So, I took this exam and I took the exam for both the prior and the following consecutive number -- and lay them up, boom, boom, boom. There's the B answer on the A exam. And, when I looked up, the question above it had been copied from the person also, so I could tell that -- that this person had copied from the person to her left, not the person to her right. I mean, when I get a B answer on an A test - then I need [to go hunting for cheating] obviously, obviously - That's the red, if I see a red flag, only then do I go hunting. (Professor B)

When a student is suspected the faculty searches to find the original source or double check exam materials to provide evidence in order to discuss this with the student as indicated by this comment from an English faculty member:

And when I know that there's something plagiarized in front of me and I can't find the source, I get ballistic because I can't really do anything then. I don't feel like I can send it to the [redacted] without proof, although apparently I can. But I don't think that's right, so I don't do it. So if I can't find the proof, that is if it's a bought paper that I can't put my hands on,

All faculty interviewed for this study remarked how important it was not to

unfairly accuse a student of plagiarism or cheating and how important it was to protect honest students and the integrity of the learning environment as indicated by this comment from an English faculty member:

Yeah, I have to be really careful because there's nothing worse than accusing somebody who isn't doing anything wrong. So if I have an inkling, if I have a question, I will communicate with the student, but I'll try to do it in a way that doesn't accuse them. I'll say, this doesn't sound like you or this doesn't match the other writing sample that I have for you and let them tell me what happened. But then if you Google it and you find it, that's - then I report it, for sure.  
(Professor G)

And this response from a Business faculty member:

Because I tend to be collaborative in a lot of things, and therefore there's more room for my students who expect a level of collaboration to be confused. And, and if I, if there's a chance that I have not been unclear, I will probably bring it to the students' attention, ask them for their side of the story. "What were you thinking? What's going on here? This appears to be cheating." And, oh, you know, usually I get an "Oh no" -- type of answer and determine from that whether academic dishonesty has actually occurred. If it's obvious, then I simply go online, fill out the academic dishonesty form -- Because it's easier for me to apologize than to let something happen and be feeling I haven't protected the rest of the class. I think that's what the instructor's role is, is to protect the students that are being honest. And I actually have that in my syllabus. I say, "I protect honest, ethical students." (Professor B)

Once faculty do apprehend student cheating, it was important to learn the behaviors or actions that were taken. Most faculty indicated their individual process was to confront the student on suspected acts of plagiarism, as indicated by this English faculty member's response:

So then what I do is, as I was just saying, I track it down. Then I ask - I ask - when I hand the papers back, I'll say, 'May I talk to you after class?' Then I go up to the office. Then I shut the door because I wanna have a private conversation. Usually, it is sort of an abbreviation - little bit more elaborate than what I just said. It's, 'Okay, I've read your paper. Here's the course outline discussion on plagiarism. Here's your essay. I've highlighted the passages in your essay that are exactly from this essay that I found online. So you'll be receiving a zero on this assignment. Are there any questions?' So, at that point, usually the student says, 'No.' I even had one guy like a year and a half ago who stood up afterward and said, 'Thank you.' Then he left. I thought that was a first.

I said, 'Well, you're welcome.' Its like, 'You just got a zero on this assignment. You're probably gonna get a D or an F in the class.'" (Professor A)

Or this response from a business faculty member,

She printed out one of those sample exams and she had it in her thing. She tucked it underneath her thing. I caught her with it and I actually said to her, 'I'm taking your exam right now. Please gather your stuff and leave. I'll talk to you in a minute but I can't talk to you right now.' I waited five minutes. In that five minutes of time, what sometimes happen is people own up. Different things happen. She was like, 'Oh, I misunderstood.' I said, 'Well, then what?' I don't argue with them. Then what? I said, "Is there any part of you that knew this was wrong?" This particular student said no. I said, 'However, when I approached you, you hid your paper underneath. Why did you do that.' She said, 'Well I know this material. I just didn't know this.' I told her she was going to get an F on the exam.

Reporting incidents of academic dishonesty is inconsistent among faculty members interviewed, with some reporting each and every incident and others preferring to deal with it personally as demonstrated by this comment from an English faculty member:

On the one hand it's outrageous to me but then on the other hand I have a hard time feeling like I should just fail the student. I kind of just want to say to the student, "All right look, you cheated, you got caught, cut it out, let's go forward.' You know, "This doesn't work.' So that's usually what I do. I'm often struck by - a lot of times the students either like break down and start crying like, "Oh by God, I'm sorry!' Or they really like, "I didn't cheat, I don't know what you're talking about.' 'I didn't do this.' And I'm like, "Well, here's the website where it happened." Then, "I'm sorry, I didn't plagiarize, I don't know what you mean.'" (Professor I)

This faculty member continued to explain her frustration and decision to work with the student one-on-one for a first offense rather than go through the reporting process:

Just like bizarre denials. Yet, even in those cases where evidence would suggest that they're being liars... bold-faced liars, I still would just rather say, "All right look, this is an 'F' so you can re-write it or not, but let's move forward.' Second time around, that's when I would prefer that the Academic Disciplinarian take serious action against the student. (Professor I)

A business faculty member doesn't always like to report because it is a hassle especially if she doesn't have evidence.

It's such a hassle to report people through the system, that I must admit as a faculty member I don't always report every instance, but I'll certainly report the second and go through the hassle, but occasionally I think people are just testing the envelope. (Professor J)

Another business faculty expressed dismay that even when faculty go through all the work to report there is little support:

The faculty's perception [is] that they will do a lot of work, but there is a backup or whatever, there is only a downside to them. It's not like the student is going to be put through the wringer by anybody else or that anyone is particularly stern. Even the letters that go out to students are just really wimpy and they say 'Don't worry. This isn't going to go in your record.' Those letters need to be a little more stern so the student understands the extreme disapproval, not just from your teacher but from the college. (Professor I)

And this statement from another business faculty member who believes students know that the punishment is not severe:

The punishment that's here – there's not a student that's afraid of punishment. I have had students that have said, "Well my friend got written up. What's the big deal?" So they're not afraid of whatever is going on here. They know it doesn't go on their permanent record. It's a hassle, but that's it. And they also know they can fight it. (Professor K)

And this from an English faculty member who also feels that students who cheat need to be punished:

Although I still would like to see the people who need to hit a wall hit the wall somehow and feel that it's more painful to be caught doing that than it is to avoid doing that and very often, the pain quotient – for some people, the pain has to be more here And I think that's just whatever temperament and background that some students have that that's the only way they're going to learn, and it's actually doing them a favor to let them hit a wall. (Professor G)

As discussed earlier faculty evaluate cheating on a scale of seriousness depending on the type and severity whether it is cheating on homework or cheating on an exam and this appears to determine whether they report incidents, as one Business faculty

remarked:

If this is the only time for homework and small stuff - if it's the only time, then we don't have an issue. But if it's more than once, it may be a trip to the academic disciplinarian's office. Because again, for one point or two points or for the minor stuff. I feel like that has to be managed. But anything that happens on an exam, that's gonna cost ya. That's the automatic referral to the disciplinarian. On the exams, I can't manage how much of it you're cheating on. So therefore, for stuff that's a quarter of the class. Anything you do there will cost you. And it's gonna cost ya big time. For one or two points in the whole class of 400 points, I'd rather teach the lesson and then watch for any aberrant behavior after that, in which case, you may get called on the carpet from the disciplinarian. (Professor C)

Faculty feel compassion for students which also could explain their decisions to cheat, as indicated by this Business faculty member:

When I confronted him on it and I gave him a zero on it, you know, I asked, 'Why?' And he just - he openly admitted - he openly admitted, "I was just pushed for time and I thought I could get away with it." And because I appreciated his honesty, I didn't turn him in and, normally, I do. I fill out those forms religiously, but this time I didn't it. Yeah, for some reason I did and I'm not real sure why I did this time. I'm really not sure, but I think a lot has to do with the frustration of the fact that even when we turn people in, virtually there's nothing done to them - not even - I know [redacted], who's your friend, I hope that it won't go any further, but she - you know, the slap on the hand. That was it. And sometimes, not even that - a letter that goes to a student that says, 'You've been cheating. Cut it out, but don't worry. It's not part of your academic record.' You know, what use is that? For most people, that's not a deterrent and I think we have a more serious problem. So, for me, it was a little frustration. Well, I could turn him in. I could fill out those forms, but oh, well. So what? You know, what'll be done? Nothing. (Professor F)

Another reason indicated by faculty for low apprehension rates could be that part-time faculty do not report due to either lack of knowledge of policies and/or feeling fearful that reporting students may cause them to lose their jobs as reported by this business faculty member: "With our part-time faculty.. many of them live in fear that students will complain if they come down too hard or report them for cheating" (Professor F).

Finally, faculty respondents indicated a desire to have more input into the



reporting process to encourage faculty to report incidents. In faculty focus groups, representatives from all disciplines of this study indicated that the reporting process could be improved as indicated from this business faculty member's comment:

We need the enforcement and the discussion to be done more effectively. Not just what is in the classroom, but it is very difficult to find the forms if you don't know the exact terminology. The behavior code form, the academic dishonesty forms, it needs to be on that list [web menu], right there on that faculty staff list and it needs to say 'Academic Dishonesty Report.' (Professor F)

Another business faculty member also added:

They need to be printable to a PDF so that you can save them on your [computer] and print them up later, if you need them. They want to save paper but the form disappears once you leave it. (Professor K)

## **Students**

When students were asked about apprehension as a form of deterrence, most indicated that fear of punishment from being caught would be significant for other students not to cheat as stated by this comment from a Business student taking English composition courses:

They would just tell us. Just don't cheat or something. I will report you and stuff. I mean just saying the word 'report' is just like a big - just tell you not to do it you know. Don't be stupid, don't do it, that kind of stuff. [This] girl actually was caught and that teacher was really strict. She was reported to the College Board or something or this college and it got on her transcript that she cheated. Yeah and she was like yeah, that former student she came to the office telling me that she thought the transcript notations saying that she cheated, and she was crying in the office because it is irreversible. It is like when you go off for a job and you have a felony or you are convicted of a felon or something that is going to affect you getting a job out there. I think it is not as bad but still sort of equivalent to it. If there is a transcript notation on your resume saying that you are dishonest no one is going to hire you. (Student E)

A Nursing student also said instructors were very clear in their warnings to students about cheating and this created a risk of being caught:

I mean, I thought that it was a big risk too, because the teacher that I had was, had been teaching for forty years, and she knew that if she saw anyone cheating,

especially for a math course, if she saw cheating they are out, immediately. So, that was a huge risk for them. (Student J)

### **Creating Integrity**

With incidents of dishonesty on the rise in education, and the apparent perceived ineffectiveness of college deterrence strategies, it is important to understand from the faculty and student perspective what could be done to create a culture of integrity. Both faculty and students agree that there are some students who will cheat no matter what. Faculty responses generally express the desire by faculty to get students to understand the value of the course and point out the usefulness of coursework in their future lives. For students integrity is a personal value and they want the faculty or college to deal with it but felt the college should emphasize the consequences of cheating.

#### **Faculty**

Faculty responses indicate a desire to get the students engaged and understand each course has purpose for the future as evidenced by this English faculty member's comment:

I think what you wanna do is - at least what I'm trying to do - is get at the mindset of the student and try to make the education valuable and get them to see that this is a genuinely engaging topic and subject to explore, and they benefit from developing their own ideas. So when a student feels that, then I don't think he or she wants to cheat I think, maybe, a student who is like in this basics - fundamentals class that I'm teaching here, just as an example, might come into it thinking, 'I'm not thrilled about writing. I'm not doing very well in writing.' Well, if you can convince them that they're gonna need writing and that, if they - if I were just, "Okay, here's your B. Go to English 1," and if they're convinced that, okay, when they get in English 1, they're just gonna sink to the bottom, they're not gonna do the work, that somehow people are gonna realize the jig is up. (Professor A)

Another English faculty member discussed the responsibility of students' education being the foundation for establishing future values as students become members of the public:

But I guess if you get into the ethical, practical side of things it's about establishing a set of values and habits that return later on in life, when they are more fully members of the public. I mean, I guess I firmly believe the idea that, whatever Aristotle's great quote about how important habits are. Because if you establish a pattern of habits in your life it becomes very hard to break them. So in those early stages of the student's academic career, I think it is really important for them to adopt those values and those habits, even when the assignments is kind of test that idea. (Professor I)

And this English faculty member's response:

Or if they're on the job, they're not gonna be able to plagiarize - if they have to write an email to somebody and their boss says, 'Get over here and write this,' and they can't do it, then they start to realize, okay, that's a skill they need. "It may not be what I'm most excited at, but I need to develop this. So I'm gonna learn how to do it.' So, yeah, if they feel genuinely - if it's authentic, I guess. (Professor A)

On the other hand, a third English faculty member felt the only way to create integrity was to make punishment harsh enough to guard against student wanting to cheat:

I think we absolutely need to have both (education about integrity and punishment). But right now, all we have is education. We need punishment. There have to be consequences. As long as there are no consequences, nobody will take the education seriously. It's as simple as that. I really believe—I know I sound as if I'm purely punitive and I'm not. I spend an inordinate amount of my time in my classroom educating them about integrity and ethics and honesty. (Professor J)

Among science faculty, the emphasis was on education to create a culture of integrity and to differentiate between dishonesty and what it means to be a scholar as indicated by this faculty member's comment:

I think the more we educate, the less we may have to worry about cheating. I mean, we as faculty need to take some of the precautions to prevent cheating, but I think, we can also educate that if you have, you know, if you cheat, you can't be a scholar. You can't be part of the scholars program if you have, that's, that's one of the consequences. And, and we, we want to send a bunch of scholars out -who can kick butt at universities, thank you very much. I too try and remind my students that, you know, academic, academic integrity matters. And, it does matter to me I mean. (Professor B)

This faculty member went on to discuss the option for the institution to focus

more on integrity rather than the negative connotation of dishonesty and how the institution focus on integrity rather :

I think, going at it from the point of view of academic dishonesty, emphasizes the cheating. I would rather go at it from just as a program to prevent bullying, I heard, I heard -Joseph on the radio as I was driving home the other night. And, his, his clip was about bullying. And, his point was, if we establish a culture of kindness, we don't need to worry about bullies. And, the same thing holds true for academic integrity. If we establish a culture of academic integrity, and fairness, and kindness, and turn the other cheek, and all those lessons that we, we try to consider as good lessons for life; then, staying fair, and doing what's honorable means we don't need to - I would rather go in the, in the direction of being kind and, and caring, and having that kind of integrity, than focusing on the dis, dis, dishonest part. (Professor B)

Another science faculty member felt it was necessary to continually enforce the message cheating being unacceptable and each student must be responsible for his or her actions:

Don't cheat. And cheating is not the answer. It has to be reinforced. It has to be stated. I think it should be put in notice boards. It should be given to the students association. It should be part of every single course that is given. It should have a copy truncated form. It's unacceptable, it compromises and robs you of the integrity that makes you a responsible member of society, whatever the heck that means. It almost requires that society becomes more cognizant as to what's acceptable. How the hell do you do that? This college is a microcosm of society. It's in a society that doesn't seem to give a damn. I think what's happening on campus is indicative of the society at large and how do you change that. I think you have to get to students. I also think professors can be mentors and instructors can be mentors and to point out in no uncertain terms that what you're doing is unacceptable. I didn't get this way by cheating. Anybody who's successful, they don't get that way by cheating (Professor E)

For Business faculty some feel it is a cultural shift that needs to happen that students understand

Sometimes there is a little bit of a canyon between faculty or class by staff and the students. Because it's still like your mother or your father tellin' that you didn't cheat. So maybe there are gonna be some things we can do to bridge it We have great perception. And we just don't do cheating. Or for those that cheat, there's some consequences. But we're also trying to teach you something about life as well. And so trying to be able to blend the teaching moment that comes from having gotten caught and feeling like uh, oh, I may have blown everything. And

having to go before the Honor Council, and having a hearing board say we agree with the teacher. But I think our next steps will indeed be what do we have to do to educate students more. What do we have to do to educate faculty more. What do we have to do more of on the campus in general to make sure that there's really a cultural change and not a change in just regulations or words. Okay, we have this. But do people just click through. And they go about looking for the angle or the opportunity to cheat. So there may be some things that we can do on all fronts, to really improve what was a gold step for us. (Professor B)

A second Business faculty member felt that there was not much that could be done for those students who are determined to cheat:

I don't necessarily see any. To me, just because I'm an accountant, I wish it was more specific here, but I don't necessarily see there's a need to change it or anything wrong because I don't – you know if a student who's not going to cheat, reading this or not reading this, will deter them from cheat. For a student who is going to buy the solution manual because they don't want to spend time studying, it doesn't matter if this is crystal clear. They're still going to do it. (Professor D)

When asked about creating integrity, the faculty member felt the current punishment was not too much of a deterrent, but that after the second offense students should be required to attend a workshop or “traffic school” for cheating:

However, I think on the second offense, what I think the school needs to do, is to have something similar to a traffic school. You don't need to suspend the student or anything like that, but if you're caught speeding, you have to go to a class. Thus, a student caught cheating a second time will be required to go to maybe two on-ground meetings at night for maybe an hour or two. At the traffic school, maybe you could educate the student on topics such as plagiarism. For those students who bought and used the solution keys to cheat, at least they'll know they have to drive to campus twice, and sit there for an hour or two. They'll be thinking, “Maybe I should have used that time to study instead of cheating” (Professor D)

## **Students**

Student responses indicated that their decisions to be honest stem from their own values. Among all students who were interviewed the general perception was that students who were determined to cheat would do so regardless of efforts to stop them. To help create an environment of integrity faculty and the institution must provide examples

of how dishonesty in community college can impact their lives, but in the end it really is a personal choice whether to cheat or be honest as evidenced by this student's comment, "It is a moral thing for me I guess. So it hurts more to know that people think of me as a dishonest person then getting an "F"" (Student A). Another student comment agreed and indicated that provided examples to students would help:

Use examples. You can just show them that they're not gonna learn anything by being academically dishonest. You're never – if you don't write your papers, you're not gonna ever learn how to write a good paper and it will catch up with you when you go to university (Student C)

This student went on to suggest that students need to understand that going to school is a personal choice and for those that aren't interested, they should do something they truly want to do:

One of the biggest struggles, for instance, of transfer students is that they struggle with writing or something like that because you write term papers and everything like crazy in university, so – you're like, I know, I know, they're terrible. So, it's just – it all – it's for your own good. School is for your own good. If you don't want to go to school, then don't go to school. That's your choice. You can do something not academically related. You can become an actor or, you know, I don't know, go into film. Film has its own dishonesties too; there's plagiarism or other things like that, art has its own plagiarism, so even those, everything has its correct means of going about it. (Student C).

Another student comment also felt more examples of punishment were needed to help create a culture where students would value honesty:

I think they could give examples of what happened to past students. That's what they did in the nursing program. A teacher gave an example of one student who was getting 'A's and then one time she let someone else cheat off of her paper and she got dropped out of the program or she got kicked out of the program. So that kind made people, 'Oh, wow!' That could happen and it did happen, it could happen to me so I gotta be careful. So I think giving examples is a good way of teachers to let it be known this could happen, this did happen, it could happen to you, so don't let it happen. (Student D)

Punishment and threat of consequences appears to be a common conclusion to how to create integrity by putting fear into students, as stated by this student:

But also later on in the semester, we did have a mini talk about transferring and what happens if you have that on your record, and he showed us an example of an honor society student, on campus at [redacted] who had a 4.0 GPA, was on the, again, on the honor society, very well known, very like, applying to [redacted] and [redacted] and about to get in and then she got caught cheating on her final semester. And she was denied from all the colleges that she applied to. They kind of pulled out their interest in her because they said, that if you've cheated then how did you get those other grades type of thing. I mean because it is much different than just reading this article and actually giving them the verbal jargon and then saying, don't cheat. (Student J)

### **Overall Findings Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of twenty-three interviews with faculty and students in the disciplines of Business, English and courses in the sciences leading to careers in the medical or health professions on their perceptions of academic dishonesty by examining the main themes of prevalence, reasons, or factors for cheating, mitigation strategies, and creating integrity. For the theme of prevalence, nearly all faculty interviewed estimate the cheating rate for both their courses and the overall rate for the campus as low. For students the estimation of dishonesty is mixed. Students in sciences and English courses also view the cheating rate as low, while some business students feel it is higher due to many students are not caught.

While there are similarities among faculty in how they define academic dishonesty, faculty each create their own unique definition for their courses. In reviewing student responses, there are also some similar ways in which students define academic dishonesty, but again, each definition was unique. When comparing both groups there were some general agreement between faculty and student definitions of academic dishonesty, but no discernible standard definition emerged.

Nearly all participants believe academic dishonesty is deceitful and is an attempt to gain an unfair advantage and circumvents the educational process. Others elaborated

the definition to include certain specific behaviors such as copying, cheating on homework and fraudulent activities. Students feel it is not following school rules and provides an unfair advantage to those who are honest. When faculty and students were asked to provide examples of specific behavior, there is a range of sharing notes to exam and paper cheating to impersonation. Student responses also indicated a range from cheating on homework to more blatant exam and paper cheating. To complicate matters, the institution has adopted a definition of academic dishonesty and list of behaviors, but it seems that faculty make their own definition and although the definition is available online or in print, students aren't aware of the college definition.

Faculty and students evaluate cheating or dishonest behavior on a range of seriousness. Acts that are less serious for faculty are those when a student inadvertently forgets to cite a source and or copies homework from another student. Students make a distinction between less serious forms of dishonesty that occur when "helping" comes from tutors or peers.

The most significant factor for dishonest behavior identified by faculty and students is pressures either to get good grades to move onto the next course or goal and from parents to do well in school. An additional reason for cheating is due to academic procrastination due to lack of motivation and laziness for the course and/or time constraints that create poor judgment and result in cheating.

Faculty and students have strong feelings about cheating behavior. Faculty takes it extremely personally because it takes time away from helping students learn. Similar to faculty, students also react strongly to cheating and feel it is unfair and shows disrespect for the learning environment.

Deterrence strategies for the institution come in the form of academic dishonesty



polices and apprehension. When asked most had vague recollections of academic dishonesty policies for the institution. While policies are available for students in print and online, the one that is given to students most is the “Honor Statement” which they see at the time of enrollment each semester. Both faculty and students recognized the honor statement but felt it was ineffective due it being written in vague and unclear language.

As to effectiveness, faculty appreciated it was in place, but felt students didn’t read it and it did nothing to deter academic dishonesty and enforcement of the policies was too weak and needed more punishment. Students had similar views and felt it needed to be written so students could have more detailed examples. Interestingly overall faculty felt that for a first offense a student should receive a warning but for additional offenses a more severe punishment is warranted. There is a miscommunication and misunderstanding between faculty expectations for how to handle reporting of academic dishonesty. Unfortunately, faculty do not report each incident and thus, by the time they do report and want stricter punishment, the office that handles investigating and adjudicating cases, only gives a warning feeling it is the first offense, when in reality the student could be a multiple offender. This leads to extreme frustration from faculty and the misperception that the administration is not providing sufficient sanctions for student cheating.

Finally, when faculty and students were asked about how to create an environment of integrity, faculty reactions were mixed. Some felt the institution should concentrate more on educating students on the value of integrity for their future endeavors, while others felt punishment would create an environment where fear would keep students from cheating. Faculty have begun talking about a “traffic school” where

apprehended students would need to go through a educational seminar on dishonesty before continuing their coursework. Students feel that being honest is a personal moral choice and all that faculty and the college could do is provide examples of what could happen to those caught cheating in order to use that fear as an incentive to act honorably.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### **Summary of Study**

This phenomenological study examined the perceptions academic of faculty and students at a two-year community college with an adopted honor code. Through interviews with twenty-three respondents the thick descriptions of the lived experiences of participants demonstrate the actions and beliefs of academic dishonesty in a community college. Research questions sought to examine similarities and differences of how faculty and students define academic dishonesty and understand what factors lead students to cheat and how faculty respond to cheating behavior. Further it was important to learn whether deterrence strategies on the campus in the form of academic dishonesty policies were effective in creating a community of integrity.

### **Evaluation of Research Questions and Themes**

The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What are the similarities and differences in how students and faculty at community colleges define academic dishonesty?
2. What factors do community college students and faculty cite for their behavior related to academic dishonesty, either to cheat and/or how to respond to cheating?
3. How do community college students describe the honor code as a factor affecting their behavior to cheat
4. How does the honor code at the community college impact faculty thoughts and behaviors in deciding whether to report violations of dishonesty and support a community of academic integrity?

In the first research question, 1 sought to understand the differences in perception of faculty and students in regards to a definition of academic dishonesty. Data from this question identified the themes of prevalence that included sub-themes of rates, definition, types of behaviors and seriousness of academic dishonesty. Question 2 sought to understand the reasons why students cheat and their responses to cheating. The themes identified by this research question included the reasons for cheating and their emotional responses to cheating. Question three sought to understand the effect of the honor code as a factor to mitigate student's decisions to cheat and produced the theme of mitigation that included sub-themes of deterrence strategies such as the knowledge and effectiveness of academic dishonesty policies such as honor codes. Question 4 attempted to understand the faculty perceptions of the academic dishonesty policies and produced themes of mitigation, deterrence, apprehension and creating a community of academic integrity.

## **Discussion**

This study identified the major themes of a) prevalence and definition (relating to the first research question), b) reasons for cheating behavior (responding to the second research question), c) emotional responses to cheating (responding to question four), d) mitigation (responding to question four), and e) creating integrity to understand the experiences of academic dishonesty (responding to question three) as a topic facing community colleges.

### **Prevalence and Definition**

Addressing research question one, the findings of this study reveal important findings about the perceived prevalence of academic dishonesty in community colleges. Several of these support existing studies of academic dishonesty at four-year institutions

and can contribute to the existing knowledge of the topic. First, the perceptions of the prevalence of academic dishonesty at this community college from faculty and students indicate important findings about the rate, definition, and type of cheating behaviors. This study found that most faculty perceive the cheating rate as low at less than 20% although data provided by the campus disciplinarian indicate the rate for the campus has risen 70% in two years. and students rate the cheating rate higher at levels of anywhere from 10% to over 90% based on the type of cheating involved and this is consistent with findings by Lanier (2006), McCabe & Trevino (1993), Schmelkin et al. (2008), that indicate the rate can be anywhere from 9% to as high as 95%. The potential reason for the disparity between faculty and student perceptions of cheating rate could be because faculty have gone to extreme lengths to deter cheating such as multiple color-coded test versions, scrubbing desks clean before tests, and elaborate procedures for essay tests such as reshuffling and redistributing booklets in order to keep students from cheating. Students on the other hand feel cheating is higher because they see the incredible lengths other students go to in order to cheat and believe that faculty don't know what cheating is actually going on. While other studies point to the different rates of cheating behavior among demographic factors, this was not a focus of this particular study.

As to definitions of academic dishonesty, while there is some agreement on certain types of behavior that constitute cheating, such as exam and paper, among faculty and students there is not a clear and concise definition of how each define academic dishonesty depending on the seriousness involved. For example, responses indicated that while both faculty and students felt that there could be cheating on homework or misuse of tutoring in order to complete assignments, it is viewed as less serious as exam and paper cheating. This finding supports previous studies that indicate rates of dishonesty

vary by size and type of behavior involved (McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Higbee & Thomas, 2002; Moeck, 2002; Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003; Smythe & Davis, 2004). The findings of this study in regards to prevalence and the corresponding sub themes of rates, definition, specific behaviors, and seriousness supports the first research question that sought to understand similarities and differences in community college faculty and student perceptions of academic dishonesty.

### **Factors for Cheating**

Faculty and students in this study indicated the most often cited factor for student cheating as academic pressures such as getting the best grades possible in order to reach goals, followed by lack of interest in the course and general procrastination. Many of the student responses indicated that not only did students fully comprehend they were cheating, but did so to gain advantages, which is consistent with existing literature such as studies by DeBruin and Rudnick (2007), and Wowra (2007). Further faculty and students also supported the findings of Petress (2008) who indicated that not all cheaters are under performing students and are sometimes good students who cannot resist the urge to increase their grade by cheating. Further these findings also support the belief of Dibartolo and Walsh (2010) and Wowra (2007), who posit that academic dishonesty has almost become a norm in a high stakes environment and leads to an erosion of a moral integrity.

Literature on the topic of academic dishonesty point to external pressures such as those from parents and peers as a factor for dishonesty (Alschuler & Bliming; Debruin & Rudnik, 2007; Simon et al., 2004; Wowra, 2007), that erode a student's ethical decision making ability. These studies indicate peer pressure to cheat overrides that belief that

they will be caught and allows “minimizing of consequences” in order to commit dishonest acts and disassociate this behavior. Student responses in this study did support these previous study findings. Student perceived that other students cheat when they feel the class is not in their major or a prerequisite for higher level courses and want to get it over with quickly.

The increase of online education has also brought entirely new challenges in regards to dishonesty. While it was not the original intent of this study to examine online cheating, faculty and student responses indicated that the availability to purchase publisher test banks, papers, cut and paste plagiarism, and previous instructor exams is a factor that makes it easier for students to engage in cheating behavior. This is consistent with studies such as Abdolmohammadi & Baker, 2008; Abilock, 2009; Gallant, 2008; Hard et al., 2006; and Lanier, 2006).

Lastly, a related factor for cheating behavior is found when the Western notion of individualized effort in academic work is contrasted with the collaborative notion of learning in other countries. An increase in foreign students attending community colleges has brought significant challenges for faculty as they are confronted with students who are unfamiliar with collaboration with peers as form of cheating. Faculty responses indicated frustration with students who do not understand the concept of individualized work and prefer to help each other succeed. Student responses similarly remarked about certain foreign students “over-helpfulness.” These findings are consistent with studies by Hill 1996; Jian et al., 2008; Lin & Wen, 2007; and Soldier, 1989. Faculty and students who identify internal factors for cheating such as perceived pressures to obtain goals such as grades or transfer to a four-year university and external factors such as those brought by pressures from family and peers creates a bias towards cheating (Samuels & Casebeer,

2005). This bias, called a fundamental attribution error (Samuels & Casebeer, 2005), where behaviors are attributed to individuals rather than to the external factors such as the high stakes environment. Further, the data clearly allows us an opportunity to understand the reasons that community college faculty and students perceive that students cheat and which responds to the second research question guiding this study.

### **Emotional Responses to Cheating**

Faculty and student respondents indicated strong negative emotions towards cheating. Faculty and students share the perception that it is unfair and degrades the purpose of education, which supports the findings of previous studies such as Alschuler and Bliming (1995). Deliberate acts of dishonesty appear to produce the strongest emotional reactions by both faculty and students and are consistent with findings by East (2009) that indicate deliberate acts violate moral norms therefore “provoke emotional reactions” (East, 2009, p. 81). Less serious acts or inadvertent dishonesty such as not citing sources, incorrect paraphrasing, and unauthorized collaboration produces a lower degree of emotion and is limited to frustration and annoyance from both faculty and students as an emotional response, which is consistent with studies, such as Levy and Rakovski, 2006; Schmelkin, 2008. Students in this study were disturbed frustrated and angered by witnessing other student’s cheat. When the cheating students were not apprehended it provided a negative effect on their own cheating behavior and their own moral sense remained intact. The goal of research question two of this study was to learn how and why faculty and students react to incidents of cheating and the results from this study provides useful information and adds to the current knowledge on the topic of academic dishonesty.



## **Deterrence**

All faculty interviewed take standard actions to deter dishonesty and create a classroom environment that discourages cheating such as putting in a cheating policy into their syllabi and some classroom testing procedures such as vigilance in monitoring students during tests, not allowing cell phones, and keeping desks clear and when possible having space between students during testing. These forms of deterrence are supported by studies such as Davis et al., (1992). On the other hand, some faculty go to great lengths to deter cheating such as cleaning desks prior to testing, multiple test versions, shuffling and redistributing exam books. This form of faculty vigilance to change the classroom environment is consistent with studies such as by Aschuler and Bliming (1995), and Klein et al., (2006), who believe in precautions to deter cheating such as getting to know students.

There is clearly a range of deterrence strategies utilized among faculty. Students recognize that faculty members have varied strategies and responses indicate that some instructors are more vigilant than others to deter cheating. They perceive that faculty could do more to prevent cheating and some remarked that instructors leave the classroom during examinations. While faculty members understand the importance of integrity in the classroom environment, some responses from instructors indicate they are unable to do more to create a personalized environment. This is consistent with studies by Diekhoff et al., (1996) that demonstrate the importance of creating a more personalized classroom environment.

This college has an adopted an academic dishonesty policy in the form of an honor code. Existing literature supports the evidence that schools with honor codes have lower rates of cheating than non-code schools (Brown & Howell, 2001; McCabe et al.,

1999, McCabe & Trevino, 1999; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 1993, 2001, 2002, & 2003). At this institution, the students must electronically affirm to a statement each time they enroll called the “honor statement.” When asked, both faculty and students in this study could not easily recall the academic dishonesty policy for the institution and rather, defined it as something that was in the syllabus. When both groups were shown the honor statement, respondents recognized it but felt it was ineffective because it was vague, unclear, and lacked detail. Research studies while supportive of the inclusion of honor codes indicate that the wording of the message must be carefully crafted and in order for academic dishonesty policies to be effective, they must be easily understood and communicated widely and consistently, which is supported by the findings of Caboni et al., 2005 and Brown & Howell, 2001.

It is important to note that there is a peer reporting requirement in traditional and modified honor code institutions that is not required at this institution. This peer reporting requirement establishes an important social norm that integrity is the norm and dishonesty is penalized (Engler, 2008, Genereaux & McLeod, 1995). This is missing from this college’s adopted policy, although responses from students indicated that they would most likely not report cheating behavior feeling that it is not their responsibility and that they don’t want to get involved.

From a social norms perspective the results of this study have some particularly important findings. First, it is interesting to note that although students believe there is significant cheating going on in their courses and on campus, students do not feel this proscribes that it is acceptable to engage in cheating as well. In other words, just because other students are cheating, the students interviewed did not feel it was ok to cheat. Experts in social norms theory indicate in a high stakes environment dishonest acts have

become the norm (Dibartolo & Walsh, 2010). Findings from this study would seem to support this claim in that perceived pressure are strongly associated as a factor for a rise in cheating behavior at this institution.

Interestingly, although data from the campus disciplinarian and students point to cheating as a potential “norm,” students interviewed for this study indicate that they would not be inclined to cheat just because others are doing it and perhaps not be apprehended. This is opposite to findings of studies such as Hard, Conway, and Moran, (2006). This goes against the expectation that in a environment where cheating is a perceived norm students would feel it is acceptable to cheat since others are doing it and seemingly getting away with it.

### **Apprehension**

Apprehension as a deterrence was negatively viewed as a deterrent. Faculty feel the process is time-consuming and the punishments are not severe enough. What complicates these feelings is that not all faculty members report each instance depending on severity and practical factors. There is general consensus that if they cannot provide actual proof of plagiarism or cheating, the institution will not support them. This supports the existing studies such as those by Alschuler & Bliming, 1995; Caboni et al., 2005; Diekhoff et al., 1996; McCabe 1993). Faculty in this study feel that warnings are not enough and once they send in a report of a violation of academic dishonesty, they want the student to be appropriately punished. Unfortunately, because the faculty do not report every incident and handle some cases one on one, they are in effect taking over the responsibility of the institution. In other words, the institution believes this is the first offense, when in reality it could be a second or third offense but the faculty has only

reported the current incident. Faculty members then become frustrated when sanctions are not severe enough. Clearly, there is a misperception between faculty and administration about the reporting process how and when to report incidents.

Student responses indicate that there may be more cheating occurring than faculty and administrators detect. Unfortunately, students who witness cheating do not report other cheating behavior, preferring instead to not get involved and maintain their own integrity. Although students had strong negative reactions to cheating, it is not entirely clear why students do not report their peers. It could be that they fear reprisals; there are also no real incentives to report dishonest acts. Additionally, the same moral logic that may cause a person to not cheat (e.g, I am responsible for my own learning), may also inform an attitude of non-intervention when a peer is observed cheating (e.g., he/she is responsible for his/her own learning). Research question three of this study attempted to learn if academic dishonesty policies, specifically the existence of an honor code had a mitigating effect on cheating. Results from this study clearly indicate that although faculty was appreciative of having policies in place, it was not perceived as effective and underutilized. Additionally, students also recognized that there was a policy in place but did not believe it had a significant effect on deterring cheating behavior of students.

### **Creating Academic Integrity**

A final theme of this research study was to determine how best to create a community of integrity. Faculty and student respondents showed similarities in that they agree that some students will cheat no matter what forms of deterrent is enforced. Faculty feel the best way to counteract incidents of academic dishonesty is to engage the students and find ways to make each course valuable and not merely a means to an end. Faculty

and student responses support research studies that proscribe the belief that institutions must make integrity the norm, (Engler, 2008) and continue to ensure that faculty discuss integrity consistently and often (Genereaux & Mcleod, 1995). While there is general agreement that for first offenses warnings are appropriate, faculty and student respondents believe that for the students who knowingly violate academically dishonesty policies, punishment should be more severe; this attitude is consistent with studies such as Sasaki et al., 2011). Research question four of this study was concerned about how to create a community of integrity. Results from this study indicate that both faculty and students do not like cheating and want it stopped. Clearly there is a desire on the part of both faculty and students to instill a sense of integrity by seeking new solutions to deter and prevent cheating by finding creative and innovative solutions.

### **Implications**

The results of this study for this institution indicate some important challenges for faculty and administration if a college wishes to create a community of integrity. Community college faculty and students at this institution feel strongly that cheating is wrong. Student responses support faculty beliefs that cheating erodes the educational process. Having multiple definitions for academic dishonesty sends an inconsistent message to students. Subtle variations and nuances make it extremely challenging for students to differentiate between what constitutes dishonest behavior among several courses each semester. Efforts must be made to provide students with examples of what constitutes dishonest behavior and what consequences cheating will have on their future careers. Faculty do not appear to report incidents through the established process consistently and often prefer to deal with inadvertent or first offenses one-on-one due to

frustration with perceived lack of support from administration and a lack of clarity of exactly what types of incidents are appropriate to report. The implications of inconsistency in reporting and lack of understanding of the administrative process mean that many actual cases could be going unreported and the rates of dishonesty are significantly higher than what is reported. With these implications for creating more integrity at a community college campus with an established honor code, the next section provides recommendations for institutions considering establishing an honor code.

### **Recommendations for Institutions**

**Adopt and utilize a universal definition of academic dishonesty.** First, while community college faculty and students agree that cheating is wrong and provides an unfair advantage towards students who do not cheat, there is no universal definition that faculty use and students consistently can comprehend. Related to this is the finding that faculty and students tend to define the term academic dishonesty as behaviors such as cheating or plagiarism rather than distinguish it as a concept. Secondly, more information should be shared with faculty about the cultural differences in how foreign students view the concept of dishonesty as it relates to cheating behavior. As noted in this document foreign students come to Western education with different notions of what constitutes dishonesty and therefore more efforts need to be made to educate foreign students about American definitions and norms. Additionally, faculty members must be sensitive to the misunderstandings for foreign students as they adjust to the educational system in America.

The institution has adopted a definition of academic dishonesty, but it is included in a much lengthier document and while available both in print and online, it is not

widely known or understood. Currently, findings indicate that faculty put information about dishonesty in their course syllabi, and there is varying degrees of similarity with the adopted campus policies. Students who take several classes each semester will most likely struggle to remember and differentiate between the various definitions for each course. Faculty should continue to include academic dishonesty policies in their syllabi; but it needs to be connected to the larger institutional definition for it to be of maximum effectiveness. The campus disciplinarian or appropriate office should strongly urge faculty to use the adopted definition of academic dishonesty so that students receive the same message for all classes that will act as a consistent message.

The college honor statement is easily recognizable, but lacks clarity, and students merely click “agree” to get past the affirmative pledge without understanding its significance as a moral contract. Findings from this study suggest that students want more examples from faculty about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Any honor statement for which students must agree must be written in language that is meaningful and is free of idealistic and vague language. Faculty and students must be involved in any creation of a statement for which students must agree and be held accountable.

While this study was primarily concerned with perceptions of full time faculty, it is important to be aware that part-time faculty comprise a significant percentage of instructional faculty at community colleges. Due to probability of most part-time faculty teaching at multiple institutions, it is imperative that significant efforts be made to provide education and support to this group of instructors if the goal is a community of integrity. Part-time faculty often may feel disenfranchised and the fear of reprisal or potential loss of work for reporting students suspected of cheating must be acknowledged and mitigated.

**Faculty and student discussions about cheating behaviors.** From the responses of this study, it is clear that faculty and students differ as to the degree of seriousness of the various forms of cheating behavior. Faculty view homework cheating as less serious and knowing that it probably occurs, homework is worth a lower value of the student's course grade. The institution must send a clear message that any and all forms of academically dishonest behavior are unacceptable and find meaningful ways to engage in this dialogue with faculty. Students in this study strongly exhibited negative feelings about other students cheating behavior, which suggests that student's support faculty beliefs that academic dishonesty erodes the educational process. It is apparent from the interviews that faculty have the misperception that overall students don't care. Student responses indicate that they do in fact care and this needs to be communicated to faculty if there are hopes to create a community of integrity. Perhaps holding workshops with students to gain their insight on the student perspective of cheating in order to create more consistency.

**Hearing board process focus group.** It is clear from this research study was that faculty at this institution have only modest comprehension and confidence in the current academic dishonesty processes of this institution. Many faculty members don't report suspected incidents consistently and express overall frustration with the perceived lack of administrative support provided when going through the disciplinary process. It is important therefore that members of the Honor Council understand perceptions of faculty who utilize the process of reporting violations of the honor code to learn about their frustrations in order to make any necessary changes. Further faculty are discouraged by the severity in sanctions given to students once incidents are reported. Additionally, student responses indicate punishment for violations should be more



**Disseminate data of reported dishonesty reports.** Perceptions of the rates of academic dishonesty by faculty is low, although students perceive it higher perhaps because they believe faculty are unaware of actual cheating that is going on. Because faculty don't appear to report all incidents consistently, it is difficult to obtain an accurate estimate of cheating incidents. It would be beneficial therefore for faculty to receive yearly data of the types and frequency of incidents of dishonesty.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was conducted at one community college with an adopted honor code. It would be important to be able to compare perceptions of faculty and students at other community colleges who have adopted some similar form of policy on academic dishonesty. Additionally, comparing faculty and student responses at community colleges which do not have formal adopted policies would allow for comparative analysis to see if having an honor code has any effect on mitigating dishonesty. Further, because this was a qualitative study with twenty-three participants, it would be interesting to see future studies that use quantitative methods to see if an honor code is an effective deterrent with a larger population. This study was limited to utilizing full-time tenure track faculty who presumably had a depth and breadth of experience in handling incidents. Future studies could expand the study of part time faculty to learn if this affects the prevalence and other themes of this study. Finally, this study was also limited to certain disciplines and majors of business, English composition courses and certain science course leading to careers in the health profession. Expanding this qualitative study to include other majors and disciplines at community colleges would be important for study.

## **Concluding Statement**

Academic dishonesty is a large problem in all sectors of education and the prevalence continues to increase. Scarcity of funding resources means the availability of educational opportunities and jobs exacerbates the pressure for students and contributes to a rise in cheating behavior. Faculty and students have similar strong emotions related to cheating and agree about the severity of the problem of academic dishonesty and its effects on the erosion of the value of education. Deterrence strategies such as the use of honor codes, with inherent components of education and sanctions have been shown to be effective mitigating the incidents of cheating in four-year universities. Very little is known about the use of honor codes in community colleges and needs more study.

Creating a community of integrity requires a fundamental shift in the approach from apprehending incidents of academic dishonesty by supporting and encouraging integrity. To be sure, cheating and dishonesty will always exist, but the goal for educators is to instill a desire for learning and a respect for integrity that will create an environment where the educational process is valued and learning is what really becomes the norm.

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## Appendix A

### Academic Dishonesty Study Interview Guide – Students

Program: \_\_\_\_\_  
Facilitator: Tony Prestby, Principal Researcher \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Site \_\_\_\_\_  
Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Introduction/Background

##### Welcome and introduction:

Good morning. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. I will be leading today's interview about student perceptions of academic dishonesty.

##### Purpose of the interview:

I've invited you to this interview so that I can learn from you about your experiences as a student with respect to academic dishonesty in a community college that has an honor code. I would like to examine perceptions of academic dishonesty at a community college that has a policy on academic integrity. This interview is part of a comprehensive evaluation of the culture of integrity in community colleges in effort to effectively and efficiently assess the integrity issues for improvement of policy development.

##### Confidentiality:

Any information you share with me today will be used for research/evaluation purpose only. I (Tony Prestby) will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. You will not be identified by name or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports. Today's interview session will be audio-recorded. I (Tony Prestby) will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in my office until completion of interview analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed after one year. Only I (Tony Prestby) will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. However, the protection of confidentiality does not constitute legal protection. You have the right to know that your information and responses cannot be legally kept confidential, if subpoenaed by a court of law.

##### Informed consent:

This consent notice communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for subjects, potential benefits to subjects, payment to subjects for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research subjects. Procedures in this

interview are limited to semi-structured interviews. Because the topic deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a professional and/or personal nature, including experiences with and/or perceptions of college coursework, programs, instructors, and/or other students that are served by the institution. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this interview is part of the evaluation that will assess the effects of academic integrity policies. Thus, findings of this study may lead to improvements in policies for students and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Interview participants and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this interview. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty of any kind. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time, including up to 30 days after the interview session has been conducted. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview. Data of this interview are not protected from subpoena and may be surrendered with valid court order.

In addition to this informed consent notice, please find an informed consent form as part of your interview session packet. At this time, I ask you to read, review, and sign the informed consent form. If you have questions, please ask them now.

Identification and contact information of evaluator:

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact Tony Prestby. at his mailing address, email address, or telephone number listed here.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Are there any questions before we get started?

## II. Interview

1. Please tell me what does the term "academic dishonesty mean to you?"
2. Can you describe specific actions and examples of what is academically dishonest behavior and why?
3. From your own perspective, what kind of student commits academic dishonesty?



4. In your opinion, why do you think students cheat and/or plagiarize?
5. Think back on your experiences in classes here at this college. Describe your recollections of witnessing cheating in class. What were your thoughts as you watched students cheat?
6. What do you know about this colleges' academic dishonesty policies?

#### Closing Questions

I would like give you a final opportunity to help me understand the phenomenon of academic dishonesty. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have any other issues related to the evaluation of academic dishonesty? Have you said everything that you anticipated wanting to say but didn't get a chance to say?

#### III. Debriefing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any published reports or documents. Only de-identified data will be used for published reports of academic integrity. I (Tony Prestby) will be combining information gathered in the interview with information gathered from the other data sources (e.g., document and archival analysis). The data from this interview will be stored and maintained in a password-protected flash drive of the researcher. Further, de-identified data will be maintained in a password-protected laptop of the researcher for a period of one (1) year after the date of this interview session, after which the data will be destroyed. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

## Appendix B

### Academic Dishonesty Study Interview Guide – Faculty

Program: \_\_\_\_\_  
Facilitator: Tony Prestby, Principal Researcher  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Site: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Introduction/Background

##### Welcome and introduction:

Good morning. Thank you for taking the time to come together for this interview discussion with me today. I will be conducting today's interview about faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty.

##### Purpose of the interview:

I've invited you to this interview so that I can learn from you about your experiences as a faculty member with respect to academic dishonesty in a community college environment that has an honor code. I would like to examine perceptions of academic dishonesty at a community college that has a policy on academic integrity. This interview is part of a comprehensive evaluation of the culture of integrity in community colleges in effort to effectively and efficiently assess the integrity issues for improvement of policy development.

##### Confidentiality:

Any information you share with me today will be used for research/evaluation purpose only. I (Tony Prestby) will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. You will not be identified by name, department or office, position, or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Today's interview session will be audio-recorded. I (Tony Prestby) will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a locked cabinet of Tony Prestby until completion of interview analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed after one year. Only I (Tony Prestby) will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. However, the protection of confidentiality does not constitute legal protection. You have the right to know that your information and responses cannot be legally kept confidential, if subpoenaed by a court of law.

##### Informed consent:

This consent notice communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts

for subjects, potential benefits to subjects, payment to subjects for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research subjects. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured interview sessions. Because the sample program deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a professional and/or personal nature, including experiences with and/or perceptions of students, programs, and/or colleagues, that are served by the institution. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this interview is part of the evaluation that will assess the effects of academic dishonesty and academic integrity policies. Thus, findings of this study may lead to improvements in policies for students and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Interview participants and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this interview. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty of any kind. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time, including up to 30 days after the interview session has been conducted. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview. Data of this interview are not protected from subpoena and may be surrendered with valid court order.

In addition to this informed consent notice, please find an informed consent form as part of your interview session packet. At this time, I ask you to read, review, and sign the informed consent form. If you have questions, please ask them now. If you would like to ask a question in private, please let me know.

Identification and contact information of evaluator:

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact Tony Prestby, at his mailing address, email address, or telephone number listed here.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

## II. Interview

1. Please tell me what does the term "academic dishonesty mean to you?"
2. Can you cite specific actions and/or examples at this college of what is academically dishonest behavior and why?

3. From your experience at this college, please describe what kind of student commits academic dishonesty?
4. Please describe for me your thoughts and feelings when you discover a student has cheated or plagiarized?
5. Thinking back to when you discover a student has cheated can you describe for me how you handle these incidents and how these behaviors support your beliefs about academic dishonesty?
6. What factors do you believe lead students to cheat? What factors do you believe lead students not to cheat?
7. Please describe in your own words how you believe students are informed about academic integrity policies at this institution?
8. What do you know about academic dishonesty policies at this college?
9. From your perspective as a faculty member, what effect does having an academic dishonesty policy and academic dishonesty committee have on creating a culture of integrity?

#### Closing Questions

I would like give you a final opportunity to help us evaluate the academic dishonesty research study. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have any other issues related to the evaluation of the academic dishonesty? Have you said everything that you anticipated wanting to say but didn't get a chance to say?

#### III. Debriefing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any published reports or documents. Only de-identified data will be used for published reports of sample program performance. I (Tony Prestby) will be combining information gathered in the interview with information gathered from the other data sources (e.g., document and archival analysis). The data from this interview will be stored and maintained in a password-protected laptop of the researcher and transcriptionist (only during transcription). Further, de-identified data will be maintained in a password-protected laptop of the researcher for a period of three (3) years after the date of this interview session, after which the data will be destroyed. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

## Appendix C

### Definitions for Participants

#### Honor Code

Faculty, students, and administrators are committed to uphold an environment conducive to learning characterized by academic integrity.

#### Honor Code Mission Statement

The college is committed to the academic, social, and ethical development of our students. We strive to create a learning environment that is challenging and supportive of the community at-large. We are committed to upholding fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, civility, and community. In recognition of this effort we hereby establish this Honor Code and Honor Council.

#### Honor Code Principles

General principles guiding the Honor Code and Honor Council include the following:

**Honesty:** means fairness and straightforwardness of conduct; implies a refusal to lie, steal, or deceive in any way.

**Integrity:** implies that one is true to a trust; one adheres to a code of moral values.  
**Social Responsibility:** is demonstrated by adherence to policies of the institution, departments, labs, libraries and individual classes.

**Respect and Civility:** implies that one will conduct oneself in a courteous and respectful manner in our communications and actions toward members of the campus community.

#### Student Honor Statement

As testament to their commitment and readiness to join the college academic community, all students are expected to uphold the Honor Code. At the time of admission students will certify the following statement:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Honor Code, Code of Academic Conduct, and Student Conduct Code. I will conduct myself honorably as a responsible member of the college community in all endeavors I pursue.*

At the direction of a faculty member or testing officer, students may be requested to affirm or re-affirm their commitment to the Honor Code as they participate in any given examination, paper submission, or any other academic exercise.

## Appendix D

### Invitation Letter Student

June 20, 2011

Invitee name  
Address 1  
Address 2  
City State Zip

#### Invitation to Participate in an Academic Dishonesty Research Study

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Tony Prestby, and I am a doctoral student) in the Michael D. Eisner College of Education at California State University, Northridge. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in educational leadership, and I would like to invite you to participate. I am studying the perceptions of students and faculty in regards to academic dishonesty at a community college.

If you decide to join the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview about academic dishonesty. In particular, you will be asked questions about your feelings and thoughts about why students cheat and the affects of an academic dishonesty policy on creating a culture of integrity. As compensation for being part of the study, each student will be given a gift card worth \$10.00 to Subway Restaurant. Any information you share with me will be used for research/evaluation purpose only. You will not be identified by name or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

The interviews will take place in the conference room located in the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, and should last about 45 minutes. Taking part in the study is your completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (310) 434-4271 or by email at, [Prestby\\_tony@smc.edu](mailto:Prestby_tony@smc.edu) or my faculty advisor, Dr. Diane Gehart, 818 677-7468, or by email at [diane.gehart.74@csun.edu](mailto:diane.gehart.74@csun.edu) if you have study related questions or problems.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the number listed below to discuss participating.

With kind regards,

Tony Prestby  
Santa Monica College

1900 Pico Boulevard  
[Telephone Number Redacted]  
[Prestby\\_tony@smc.edu](mailto:Prestby_tony@smc.edu)

## Appendix E

### Participation Letter – Faculty

June 20, 2011

Invitee name

Address 1

Address 2

City State Zip

#### Invitation to Participate in an Academic Dishonesty Research Study

Dear Potential Faculty Participant:

My name is Tony Prestby, and I am a doctoral student) in the Michael D. Eisner College of Education at California State University, Northridge. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in educational leadership, and I would like to invite you to participate. I am studying the perceptions of students and faculty in regards to academic dishonesty at a community college.

If you decide to join the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview about academic dishonesty. In particular, you will be asked questions about your feelings and thoughts about why students cheat and the affects of an academic dishonesty policy on creating a culture of integrity. Any information you share with me will be used for research/evaluation purpose only. You will not be identified by name or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

The meeting will take place in the conference room located in the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs, and should last about 45 minutes. Taking part in the study is your decision, and I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (310) 434-4271 or by email at, [Prestby\\_tony@smc.edu](mailto:Prestby_tony@smc.edu) or my faculty advisor, Dr. Diane Gehart, 818 677-7468, or by email at [diane.gehart.74@csun.edu](mailto:diane.gehart.74@csun.edu) if you have study related questions or problems.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the number listed below to discuss participating.

With kind regards,

Tony Prestby  
Santa Monica College  
1900 Pico Boulevard  
[Telephone Number Redacted]  
[Prestby\\_tony@smc.edu](mailto:Prestby_tony@smc.edu)



## Appendix F

### Student Participant Invitation - Email version

# Student Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty in a community college. To be eligible to participate in the study, you must meet the following criteria:

1. Currently be a full-time student (12 units or more) for fall
2. Have completed 25 units or more of college credit; and
3. You are a:
  - a) Business Major
  - b) Health- Related Science Major; or
  - c) Have completed English 1, 2, or 31

***You will be compensated with a \$ 20.00 gift card to the Santa Monica College Bookstore for your participation in a 30-45 minute interview.***

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact:

Tony Prestby  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
California State University, Northridge  
[tprestby2010@gmail.com](mailto:tprestby2010@gmail.com)  
310.488-0762

## Appendix G

### Faculty Participant Invitation – Email Version

# Faculty Invitation to Participate in a Research Study of Academic Dishonesty

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty in a community college. To be eligible to participate in the study, you must be

1. a full-time tenured faculty member; and
2. teach in the disciplines of Business, English, or Science courses leading to health care professions.

***You will be compensated with a \$10.00 gift card to Subway for your participation in a 30-45 minute interview.***

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact:

Tony Prestby  
Graduate Student  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
California State University, Northridge  
[tprestby2010@gmail.com](mailto:tprestby2010@gmail.com)  
310.488-0762

## Appendix H

### Faculty Informed Consent

#### California State University, Northridge Consent to Participate in Research Academic Dishonesty in Community Colleges Faculty Form

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You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tony Prestby (Student Investigator), M.A., and Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor), Ph.D., from the Michael D. Eisner College of Education, at the California State University, Northridge. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are (1) a tenured faculty member; and (2) teach courses in the disciplines of English, Business, or the Sciences; and (3) are willing to share your experiences. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

This consent form includes sections that explain (1) the purpose of the study, (2) procedures, (3) potential risks and discomforts for subjects, (4) potential benefits to subjects, (5) payment to subjects for participation, (6) audio recording of subjects, (7) confidentiality, (8) uses of data; (9) participation and withdrawal, and review; (8) identification of investigator, (9) rights of research subjects; and (10) signature of research subjects and investigator.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study is an evaluation that assesses the student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty. This research study is part of my dissertation. I am interested in examining the perceptions of why students commit acts of academic dishonesty in order to evaluate existing policies for effectiveness. The goal of the evaluation is program improvement.

#### Procedures

If you elect to participate in this study, you may be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in a 30-45-minute focus group interview session;
2. Possible participation in a 30-45 minute focus group interview session at the completion of the study.

### **Potential Risks and Discomforts to Subjects**

Because the program deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a professional and/or personal nature, including experiences with and/or perceptions of policies, instructors, and other students. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study.

### **Potential Benefits to Subjects**

You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this evaluation addresses the needs of future students. Thus, findings of this study may contribute to our limited knowledge on the subject. The information gleaned from the study may lead to greater awareness of issues surrounding academic dishonesty and integrity policies. The findings may also inform members of the larger higher education community to help educate and inform students about the seriousness and effects of academic dishonesty.

### **Payment to Subjects for Participation**

Interviewees and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this study, but will be given a gift card worth \$10.00 at Subway.

### **Audio Recording of Subjects**

During the course of the project, subjects may be audio recorded. Your initials here \_\_\_\_\_ signify your consent to be audio recorded. You will be audio recorded for reasons related to data analysis and interpretation. During the audio recording, you may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Digital audio recordings (i.e., files) will be stored on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator. De-identified records in the form of transcriptions (i.e., files) will be maintained on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator for the period through which findings from the study will be disseminated. After this period digital audio files and transcription files will be destroyed.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The information that you provide and responses that you give cannot be legally kept confidential. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a random, three-digit number to protect you. No identifying information will be used, and your institution and/or program will not be identified by name in any published report.

### **Uses of Data**

The information that you provide in this study may be used in institutional

reports, instructional material, and/or scholarly presentation and publications. Any information that you provide in connection with this study will not be associated with your name or your personally identifying characteristics. That is, any direct quotations of what you say in connection with this study will be used in published or publically available documents in a way that cannot be associated with you.

### **Participation, Withdrawal, and Review**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audiotape be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. Once your participation in interviews has concluded, you will have a period of 30 days (from the date of the final interview) to review digital audio files and/or transcriptions (whichever are available) from your interviews and/or withdrawal consent and participation in this study. If you withdrawal consent after participation in the interviews has concluded, digital audio files and/or transcription files (whichever are available) from your interviews will be immediately destroyed.

1. Tony Prestby (Student Investigator) via email at [tprestby2010@gmail.com](mailto:tprestby2010@gmail.com)
2. Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor) via email at [diane.gehart.74@csun.edu](mailto:diane.gehart.74@csun.edu)

### **Rights of Research Subjects**

You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You can halt your participation in the study at any time. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the office of Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge 18111 Nordhoff Street Northridge, CA 91330-8222, (818)-677-2138.

### **Signature of Research Subjects**

I have read and understand the procedures described in this “Consent to Participate in Research.” My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

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Name of Subject

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Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Investigator or Designee

In my judgment the research subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

---

Name of Investigator or Designee

---

Signature of Investigator or Designee

---

Date

## Appendix I

### Student Informed Consent

#### California State University, Northridge Consent to Participate in Research Academic Dishonesty in Community Colleges Student Form

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You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tony Prestby (Student Investigator), M.A., and Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor), Ph.D., from the Michael D. Eisner College of Education, at the California State University, Northridge. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are (1) a student, and (2) are willing to share your experiences. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

This consent form includes sections that explain (1) the purpose of the study, (2) procedures, (3) potential risks and discomforts for subjects, (4) potential benefits to subjects, (5) payment to subjects for participation, (6) audio recording of subjects, (7) confidentiality, (8) uses of data; (9) participation and withdrawal, and review; (8) identification of investigator, (9) rights of research subjects; and (10) signature of research subjects and investigator.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study is an evaluation that assesses the student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty. This research study is part of my dissertation. I am interested in examining the perceptions of why students commit acts of academic dishonesty in order to evaluate existing policies for effectiveness. The goal of the evaluation is program improvement.

#### Procedures

**If you elect to participate in this study, you may be asked to do the following:**

- 3. Participate in a 30-45-minute interview session;**
- 4. Possible participation in a 30-45 minute focus group interview session at the completion of the study.**

#### Potential Risks and Discomforts to Subjects

**Because the program deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a professional and/or personal nature, including**

experiences with and/or perceptions of policies, instructors, and other students. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study.

#### Potential Benefits to Subjects

**You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this evaluation addresses the needs of future students. Thus, findings of this study may contribute to our limited knowledge on the subject. The information gleaned from the study may lead to greater awareness of issues surrounding academic dishonesty and integrity policies. The findings may also inform members of the larger higher education community to help educate and inform students about the seriousness and effects of academic dishonesty.**

#### Payment to Subjects for Participation

**Interviewees and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this study, but will be given a gift card worth \$10.00 at Subway**

#### Audio Recording of Subjects

**During the course of the project, subjects may be audio recorded. Your initials here \_\_\_\_\_ signify your consent to be audio recorded. You will be audio recorded for reasons related to data analysis and interpretation. During the audio recording, you may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Digital audio recordings (i.e., files) will be stored on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator. De-identified records in the form of transcriptions (i.e., files) will be maintained on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator for the period through which findings from the study will be disseminated. After this period digital audio files and transcription files will be destroyed.**

#### Confidentiality

**Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. The information that you provide and responses that you give cannot be legally kept confidential. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a random, three-digit number to protect you. No identifying information will be used, and your institution and/or program will not be identified by name in any published report.**

#### Uses of Data

**The information that you provide in this study may be used in institutional reports, instructional material, and/or scholarly presentation and publications. Any information that you provide in connection with this study will not be associated**



**with your name or your personally identifying characteristics. That is, any direct quotations of what you say in connection with this study will be used in published or publically available documents in a way that cannot be associated with you.**

#### Participation, Withdrawal, and Review

**Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audiotape be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. Once your participation in interviews has concluded, you will have a period of 30 days (from the date of the final interview) to review digital audio files and/or transcriptions (whichever are available) from your interviews and/or withdrawal consent and participation in this study. If you withdrawal consent after participation in the interviews has concluded, digital audio files and/or transcription files (whichever are available) from your interviews will be immediately destroyed.**

- 1. Tony Prestby (Student Investigator) via email at [tprestby@gmail.com](mailto:tprestby@gmail.com)**
- 2. Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor) via email at [diane.gehart.74@csun.edu](mailto:diane.gehart.74@csun.edu)**

#### Rights of Research Subjects

You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You can halt your participation in the study at any time. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the office of Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge 18111 Nordhoff Street Northridge, CA 91330-8222, (818)-677-2138.

#### Signature of Research Subjects

I have read and understand the procedures described in this “Consent to Participate in Research.” My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

---

Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Signature of Investigator or Designee

In my judgment the research subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix J

### Faculty Focus Group Interview Guide

#### Academic Dishonesty Study Focus Group Interview Guide Faculty

##### I. Introduction/Background

###### **Welcome and introduction:**

Good morning. Thank you for taking the time to come together for this focus group discussion with me today. I will be leading today's discussion about faculty the findings from the study on student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty.

###### **Purpose of the focus group:**

I've invited you to this focus group so that I can present the findings of my study with respect to academic dishonesty in a community college environment. This focus group is part of a comprehensive evaluation of the culture of integrity in community colleges in effort to effectively and efficiently assess the integrity issues for improvement of policy development.

###### **Confidentiality:**

Any information you share with us today will be used for research/evaluation purpose only. I (Tony Prestby) will be aggregating results from all focus groups and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. You will not be identified by name, department or office, position, or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Today's focus group session will be audio-recorded. I (Tony Prestby) will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a locked cabinet of Tony Prestby until completion of focus group analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed after one year. Only I (Tony Prestby) will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. However, the protection of confidentiality does not constitute legal protection. You have the right to know that your information and responses cannot be legally kept confidential, if subpoenaed by a court of law.

###### **Informed consent:**

This consent notice communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for subjects, potential benefits to subjects, payment to subjects for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research subjects. Procedures in this focus

group are limited to semi-structured focus group sessions. Because the sample program deals with issues that are sensitive, some focus group questions may involve issues of a professional and/or personal nature, including experiences with and/or perceptions of students, programs, and/or colleagues, that are served by the institution. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these focus group questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this focus group is part of the evaluation that will assess the effects of academic integrity policies. Thus, findings of this study may lead to improvements in policies for students and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Focus group participants and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this focus group. Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the focus group at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty of any kind. You can halt your participation in the focus group at any time, including up to 30 days after the focus group session has been conducted. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this focus group. Data of this focus group are not protected from subpoena and may be surrendered with valid court order.

In addition to this informed consent notice, please find an informed consent form as part of your focus group session packet. At this time, I ask you to read, review, and sign the informed consent form. If you have questions, please ask them now. If you would like to ask a question in private, please let me know.

**Identification and contact information of evaluator:**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact Tony Prestby. at his mailing address, email address, or telephone number listed here.

**Timing:**

Today's focus group will last approximately 30 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

**II. Focus group**

1. One at a time, please tell me what the findings presented from the study mean to you as a faculty member in regards to how faculty perceive students who commit incidents of dishonesty?
2. Please describe for me how the findings of this study will affect your thoughts and behaviors in regards to handling academic dishonesty incidents?

3. Thinking on this study's findings, can you identify any new strategies to promote integrity either in your own teaching or as general practice for all faculty ?
4. Have any of the study findings altered your perceptions of how or why students cheat?

### **Closing Questions**

I would like give you a final opportunity to help us evaluate the academic dishonesty research study. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have any other issues related to the evaluation of the academic dishonesty? Have you said everything that you anticipated wanting to say but didn't get a chance to say?

### **III. Debriefing**

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. The purpose of this study is to understand how students and faculty perceive incidents of academic dishonesty at a community college with an established honor code. This study will provide greater insight into the specific reasons students at community colleges cheat and identify whether an established honor code is an effective tool to mitigate acts of academic dishonesty. While many community colleges may have established academic integrity policies and regulations, very little is known about the effects of such statements and policies on community college students.

I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any published reports or documents. Only de-identified data will be used for published reports of sample program performance. I (Tony Prestby) will be combining information gathered in the focus group with information gathered from the other data sources (e.g., document and archival analysis). The data from this focus group will be stored and maintained in a password-protected laptop of the researcher and transcriptionist (only during transcription). Further, de-identified data will be maintained in a password-protected laptop of the researcher for a period of one (1) year after the date of this focus group session, after which the data will be destroyed. Should the subject matter of this interview bring you distress and you wish to speak with a counselor, The Santa Monica College Psychological Services Director, Sandra Rowe will be able to assist you and I can provide you with her contact information. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this focus group. Do you have any questions at this time?

## Appendix K

### Student Focus Group Interview Guide

#### Academic Dishonesty Study Focus Group Interview Guide Students

##### I. Introduction/Background

###### **Welcome and introduction:**

Good morning. Thank you for taking the time to come together for this focus group discussion with me today. I will be leading today's discussion about the findings from the study on student perceptions of academic dishonesty.

###### **Purpose of the focus group:**

I've invited you to this focus group so that I can present the findings of my study with respect to academic dishonesty in a community college environment. This focus group is part of a comprehensive evaluation of the culture of integrity in community colleges in effort to effectively and efficiently assess the integrity issues for improvement of policy development.

###### **Confidentiality:**

Any information you share with us today will be used for research/evaluation purpose only. I (Tony Prestby) will be aggregating results from all focus groups and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. You will not be identified by name, department or office, position, or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Today's focus group session will be audio-recorded. I (Tony Prestby) will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a locked cabinet of Tony Prestby until completion of focus group analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed after one year. Only I (Tony Prestby) will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. However, the protection of confidentiality does not constitute legal protection. You have the right to know that your information and responses cannot be legally kept confidential, if subpoenaed by a court of law.

###### **Informed consent:**

This consent notice communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for subjects, potential benefits to subjects, payment to subjects for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research subjects. Procedures in this focus

group are limited to semi-structured focus group sessions. Because the sample program deals with issues that are sensitive, some focus group questions may involve issues of a personal nature, including experiences with and/or perceptions of students, programs, and/or teachers, that are served by the institution. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these focus group questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this focus group is part of the evaluation that will assess the effects of academic integrity policies. Thus, findings of this study may lead to improvements in policies for students and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Focus group participants and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this focus group. Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the focus group at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty of any kind. You can halt your participation in the focus group at any time, including up to 30 days after the focus group session has been conducted. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this focus group. Data of this focus group are not protected from subpoena and may be surrendered with valid court order.

In addition to this informed consent notice, please find an informed consent form as part of your focus group session packet. At this time, I ask you to read, review, and sign the informed consent form. If you have questions, please ask them now. If you would like to ask a question in private, please let me know.

**Identification and contact information of evaluator:**

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact Tony Prestby. at his mailing address, email address, or telephone number listed here.

**Timing:**

Today's focus group will last approximately 30 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

**II. Focus group**

1. One at a time, please tell me what the findings presented from the study mean to you as a student in college in regards to why students commit incidents of dishonesty?
2. Please describe for me how the findings of this study will affect your thoughts and behaviors in regards to committing acts of dishonesty in college?

3. Thinking on this study's findings, can you identify any new strategies to promote integrity either at this college or as general practice for all students at a community college?
4. Have any of the study findings altered your perceptions of how or why students cheat in college?

### **Closing Questions**

I would like give you a final opportunity to help us evaluate the academic dishonesty research study. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have any other issues related to the evaluation of the academic dishonesty? Have you said everything that you anticipated wanting to say but didn't get a chance to say?

### **III. Debriefing**

Thank you for participating in today's focus group session. I appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any published reports or documents. Only de-identified data will be used for published reports of sample program performance. I (Tony Prestby) will be combining information gathered in the focus group with information gathered from the other data sources (e.g., document and archival analysis). The data from this focus group will be stored and maintained in a password-protected laptop of the researcher and transcriptionist (only during transcription). Further, de-identified data will be maintained in a password-protected laptop of the researcher for a period of three (3) years after the date of this focus group session, after which the data will be destroyed. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this focus group. Do you have any questions at this time?



## Appendix L

### Faculty Focus Group Informed Consent

#### California State University, Northridge Consent to Participate in Research Academic Dishonesty in Community Colleges Faculty Focus Group Form

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You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tony Prestby (Student Investigator), M.A., and Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor), Ph.D., from the Michael D. Eisner College of Education, at the California State University, Northridge. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are (1) a student, and (2) are willing to share your experiences. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

This consent form includes sections that explain (1) the purpose of the study, (2) procedures, (3) potential risks and discomforts for subjects, (4) potential benefits to subjects, (5) payment to subjects for participation, (6) Audio recording, (7) confidentiality, (8) participation and withdrawal, (9) identification of investigator, (10) rights of research subjects, and (11) signature of research subjects.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study is an evaluation that assesses the student and faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty. This research study is part of my dissertation. I am interested in examining the perceptions of why students commit acts of academic dishonesty and how faculty perceive why students commit acts of dishonesty in order to evaluate existing policies for effectiveness. The goal of the evaluation is program and policy improvement.

#### Procedures

If you elect to participate in this study, you may be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in a 30-minute focus group interview session;

#### Potential Risks and Discomforts to Subjects

Because the program deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a professional and/or personal nature, including experiences with and/or perceptions of policies, students, and/or colleagues. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study.

### **Potential Benefits to Subjects**

You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this evaluation addresses the needs of future students. Thus, findings of this study may contribute to our limited knowledge on the subject. The information gleaned from the study may lead to greater awareness of issues surrounding academic dishonesty and integrity policies. The findings may also inform members of the larger higher education community to help educate and inform students about the seriousness and effects of academic dishonesty.

### **Payment to Subjects for Participation**

Interviewees and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this study.

### **Audio Recording of Subjects**

During the course of the project, subjects may be audio recorded. Your initials here \_\_\_\_\_ signify your consent to be audio recorded. You will be audio recorded for reasons related to data analysis and interpretation. During the audio recording, you may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Digital audio recordings (i.e., files) will be stored on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator. De-identified records in the form of transcriptions (i.e., files) will be maintained on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator for the period through which findings from the study will be disseminated. After this period digital audio files and transcription files will be destroyed.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a random, three-digit number to protect you. No identifying information will be used. Further, your institutions and program will not be identified by name. With your permission, the interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. You may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Prior to the finalization of the study, you have the option of reviewing and editing your comments as included in the report. Audiotapes will be stored in a locked drawer at the office of the principal investigator. Audiotapes will be

retained for one year, after which they will be erased. De-identified records in the form of transcriptions will be maintained for a period of one year after they have been transcribed.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audiotape be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind.

### **Identification of Investigator**

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about this research and your participation in this study, you may contact the following:

1. Tony Prestby (Student Investigator) via email at [tprestby2010@gmail.com](mailto:tprestby2010@gmail.com)
2. Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor) via email at [diane.gehart.74@csun.edu](mailto:diane.gehart.74@csun.edu)

### **Rights of Research Subjects**

You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You can halt your participation in the study at any time. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the office of Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge 18111 Nordhoff Street Northridge, CA 91330-8222, (818)-677-2138.

### **Signature of Research Subjects**

I have read and understand the procedures described in this “Consent to Participate in Research.” My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

---

Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Signature of Investigator or Designee**

In my judgment the research subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator or Designee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix M

### Student Focus Group Informed Consent

#### California State University, Northridge Consent to Participate in Research Academic Dishonesty in Community Colleges Student Form

---

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Tony Prestby (Student Investigator), M.A., and Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor), Ph.D., from the Michael D. Eisner College of Education, at the California State University, Northridge. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are (1) a student who participated in the original research study, and (2) are willing to share your experiences. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

This consent form includes sections that explain (1) the purpose of the study, (2) procedures, (3) potential risks and discomforts for subjects, (4) potential benefits to subjects, (5) payment to subjects for participation, (6) audio recording of subjects, (7) confidentiality, (8) uses of data; (9) participation and withdrawal, and review; (8) identification of investigator, (9) rights of research subjects; and (10) signature of research subjects and investigator.

#### Purpose of the Study

This study is an evaluation that assesses the student perceptions of academic dishonesty by students. This research study is part of my dissertation. I am interested in examining the perceptions of why students commit acts of academic dishonesty in order to evaluate existing policies for effectiveness. The goal of the evaluation is program improvement.

#### Procedures

If you elect to participate in this study, you may be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in a 30-minute focus group interview session;

#### Potential Risks and Discomforts to Subjects

Because the interview deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a professional and/or personal nature, including

experiences with and/or perceptions of policies, instructors, and other students. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study.

### **Potential Benefits to Subjects**

You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this evaluation addresses the needs of future students. Thus, findings of this study may contribute to our limited knowledge on the subject. The information gleaned from the study may lead to greater awareness of issues surrounding academic dishonesty and integrity policies. The findings may also inform members of the larger higher education community to help educate and inform students about the seriousness and effects of academic dishonesty.

### **Payment to Subjects for Participation**

Interviewees and/or research subjects will not be paid for their participation in this focus group.

### **Audio Recording of Subjects**

During the course of the project, subjects may be audio recorded. Your initials here \_\_\_\_\_ signify your consent to be audio recorded. You will be audio recorded for reasons related to data analysis and interpretation. During the audio recording, you may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Digital audio recordings (i.e., files) will be stored on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator. De-identified records in the form of transcriptions (i.e., files) will be maintained on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator for the period through which findings from the study will be disseminated. After this period digital audio files and transcription files will be destroyed.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a random, three-digit number to protect you. No identifying information will be used. Further, your institutions and program will not be identified by name. With your permission, the interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. You may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Prior to the finalization of the study, you have the option of reviewing and editing your comments as included in the report. Audiotapes will be stored in a locked drawer at the office of the principal investigator. Audiotapes will be retained for one year, after which they will be erased. De-identified records in the form of transcriptions will be maintained for a period of one year after they have been transcribed.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audiotape be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind.

#### **Identification of Investigator**

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about this research and your participation in this study, you may contact the following:

2. Tony Prestby (Student Investigator) via email at [tprestby2010@gmail.com](mailto:tprestby2010@gmail.com)
3. Diane Gehart (Faculty Sponsor) via email at [diane.gehart.74@csun.edu](mailto:diane.gehart.74@csun.edu)

### **Rights of Research Subjects**

You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You can halt your participation in the study at any time. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the office of Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge 18111 Nordhoff Street Northridge, CA 91330-8222, (818)-677-2138.

### **Signature of Research Subjects**

I have read and understand the procedures described in this “Consent to Participate in Research.” My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

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Name of Subject

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Signature of Subject

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Date

### **Signature of Investigator or Designee**

In my judgment the research subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

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Name of Investigator or Designee

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Signature of Investigator or Designee

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Date