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## Factors that Influence Faculty Actions: A Study on Faculty Responses to Academic Dishonesty

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## **Keywords**

Academic dishonesty, Academic integrity, Faculty perspectives on academic integrity, Academic honesty

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## **Factors that Influence Faculty Actions: A Study on Faculty Responses to Academic Dishonesty**

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### **Abstract**

Persistent academic dishonesty has perplexed researchers who focus their studies on why students cheat. There are limited studies regarding the faculty perspective of this issue. This study explores factors that influence faculty action when faced with dishonesty or evidence of dishonesty. A questionnaire consisting of thirty-five items was sent to all 242 faculty members of a mid-size state university in the United States. The results of the study indicated that a majority of the respondents agree that dishonesty is a major problem, and they agreed that it is critical to take proactive measures to deter dishonesty; however, the respondents did not agree on whether the judicial process is fair and impartial. A majority of the respondents stated that they would comply with the institution's honesty policy, but 82.9% indicated that it was difficult to compile evidence or proof of misconduct. Other results indicated that the amount of time required to pursue suspected incidents appeared to deter faculty from taking actions.

### **Introduction**

Researchers have found that mistrust in unethical business leaders in recent years is spreading to other established institutions including the government, news media, and higher education (Yankelovich & Furth, 2005). In the aftermath of major scandals in corporate America, many critics argued that higher education in the United States failed to teach and nurture ethical behavior in their students. The Ethics Resources Center pointed out that the scandals were correlated with a general disregard for ethics (2003). Numerous researchers assert that aside from the diffusion of knowledge, higher education is also charged with their students' moral and ethical development (Hickok, 2006; Rainey, 2006; Colby et al., 2000; Murray et al., 1996; Kibler et al., 1988; Kibler, 1993a, Kohlberg, 1981). The Ethics Resources Center posits that teaching business ethics in schools of business can significantly influence ethical behavior in business (2003). The American College Personnel Association concurs that faculty are charged with the responsibility to hold students accountable in issues that have ethical implications (2002, Section 2.9); furthermore, the American Association of University Professors Statement of Ethics (1987) made it very clear that faculty members are responsible for fostering honest academic conduct. Advocates of ethics education suggest that if universities were successful in teaching students the true meaning of ethics, then the students would not commit fraudulent actions when they joined

the workforce (Marino, 2004). The National Association of Colleges and Employers reported that employers ranked honesty and integrity as the second most desirable skill behind communication (Keying In, 2004).

Although it may be true that higher education does contribute to forming a student's perspective on doing the "right" thing, the rush to offer courses in ethics appears to be premature in an industry that has been plagued with dishonesty for decades. McCabe concludes that it is evident that academic dishonesty is on the rise and students perceived their institutions and faculties had failed to institute a strong culture of integrity (2005). Athanasou and Olasehinde (2002) posit that cheating devalues education because assessment validity depends on principles of equity and truthfulness. Unless the educational industry can rid itself of the plague of unethical behavior in the classroom, can it truly be charged to teach and prepare its students to distinguish between right and wrong? The Center for Academic Integrity (CAI) implores institutions of higher education to instill a sense of integrity in all of their students. CAI published *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity* which explains how honesty, respect, responsibility, trust, and fairness play a significant role in each student's education (Center for Academic Integrity, 1999).

### **Literature Review**

Academic integrity is at a crossroad in the United States. Many studies confirm that dishonesty has been a major predicament in academe for several decades (Bowers, 1964; Campbell et al., 2000; Gligoff, 2001; Thomas, 2001). A number of researchers studied the reasons why students commit acts of dishonesty (Barnett & Dalton, 1981; Derryberry & Thoma, 2000; McCabe & Trevino, 1996, Paldy, 1996; Rittman, 1996). Others focused on how to prevent dishonesty through honor codes (McCabe & Pavela, 2000; Kidwell, 2001; McCabe et al., 2001), preventive deterrence methods (Roach, 2001), and disciplinary proceedings (Karlesky & Stephenson, 1971), and fewer still considered academic integrity from the faculty's perspective (Lim & Coalter, 2006).

In an extensive study of geographically diverse institutions, McCabe (1993) found faculty preferred to handle dishonesty directly with the student offender and bypass university policy. Graham, Monday, O'Brien and Steffen (1994) concurred with their own findings that although 79% of their faculty observed cheating, only 9% penalized the students. Other researchers agreed with McCabe and Graham et al. that faculty predominantly preferred not to report incidents of dishonesty to the appropriate authorities (Wright & Kelly, 1974; Singhal, 1982; Nuss, 1984; and Jendrek, 1989). According to McCabe, the most prevalent reasons for faculty reluctance to follow through with institutional policy included extensive time and effort required, exhausting and extremely difficult endeavor in documentation, personal struggle with official penalties, and a discernment that faculty become the defendant instead of a dishonest student (1993).

Simon and his colleagues (2003) proposed that administrators and faculty work closely together to curtail further increases of academic dishonesty. McCabe (1993) reported that 25% of faculty who conformed to institutional policy articulated dissatisfaction with the process. McCabe (2005) also discussed the lack of ownership in academia in response to increased dishonesty and found many students perceived integrity policies on campus as "ill-defined, outdated, biased against students, and rarely discussed by faculty." Furthermore, McCabe (2005) reported that students are extremely concerned with faculty who dismissed obvious cheating and those who punished suspected cheating without following respective integrity policy.

There is very limited research on the factors that influence faculty actions when faced with incidents of dishonesty. Faculty input is an important factor in upholding academic integrity that had not been extensively explored. It is relevant to understand why faculty would prefer not to follow through with institutional policy and even more important why they would choose to not take action in the face of academic infractions. There is no doubt that faculty plays an important role in molding the behavior, work ethics, and perceptions of their students. Why then do faculty members choose to not report a dishonest student to proper authorities? What factors influence their decision making process? According to Marcoux (2002), an understanding of faculty perceptions, attitudes, and practices toward dishonesty can help in changing the culture to deter student-cheating.

### **Background**

To understand the problem of academic dishonesty, we must first understand what constitutes academic integrity. Zoll (1996, p.7) defined academic integrity as "the value of independent and honest scholarship in educational endeavors." The Center for Academic Integrity refined the definition of academic integrity as "a commitment even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, respect, trust, fairness, and responsibility" (1999, p.4). It is clear that academic integrity calls for all its constituents to be honest in all educational undertakings.

After years of student-oriented deterrents, integrity in academia continues to plummet. Many researchers point out that students' propensity to cheat is strongly correlated to their perceptions of faculty attitudes. Students are less likely to cheat if they perceive that their faculty pays attention, responds appropriately, and enforces institutional policy regarding acts of dishonesty (Jendrek, 1989; Hall, 1996; Wajda-Johnston et al., 2001; Zelna and Bresciani, 2004; and Lim & Coalter, 2006). Wajda-Johnston et al. (2001) further reported that at research-oriented universities, only 57.2% of the faculty is concerned about academic dishonesty and an even lower percentage (53.0%) of the faculty would take any actions against an infraction.

### **The Current Study**

Research on faculty perspectives of academic integrity is scarce but crucial to academic integrity. Faculty has responsibilities to uphold academic integrity to their institutions, students, and themselves. Our society is demanding that higher education nurture and graduate students who can distinguish between right and wrong. An understanding of students' perspective is important but to restore integrity in higher education requires a better understanding of faculty perspectives.

The current study is an examination of selected factors and attributes associated with how faculty at a medium-sized public university responds to academic dishonesty in their classrooms. The authors intend to establish an empirical foundation of the factors faculty consider when faced with dishonesty in their classrooms. The abundance of literature on academic dishonesty forms the theoretical basis for the current study. The findings of this study will provide insights to the often overlooked aspect, faculty perspective, of academic dishonesty in university settings.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The current study was the result of the authors' continued concerns about the deterioration of integrity in academia; furthermore, the authors believed that there is a lack of empirical research on how faculty form their decisions to charge students in cases of academic misconduct and what factors they consider when faced with such a dilemma. The purpose of the current study is to explore those factors faculty consider when faced with academic misconduct in their classrooms.

## **Methods**

### **The Instrument**

To explore faculty responses and the factors that faculty take into consideration when faced with evidence of academic dishonesty, we created a two-page instrument composed of thirty-five items. The first fifteen items, designed to measure attitudes regarding academic dishonesty, were based on a combination of items used by McCabe (1993), Simon et al. (2003), and Serra (2001). The items in the current instrument were modified to reflect factors deemed potentially important to faculty in previous research conducted on cases and the appeals process of academic dishonesty by Lim and Coalter (2006) who found that although faculty deemed academic integrity to be important, there were areas of concerns about institutional judicial process and faculty rank and years of experience. These fifteen questions asked participants to report a level of agreement (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree) to fifteen question stems noted as "Attitude Measures" in Table 1.

Question sixteen was "If you were convinced that a student had engaged in academic dishonesty, what would be your three most likely actions?" followed by eight options noted in the "Response to Academic Honesty" in Table 2(a). Question seventeen was "Have you ever not taken action (for any reason) when you suspected academic dishonesty in one of your courses?" Participants who marked "Yes" were allowed to select any number of the eight potential actions noted in the section marked "Reasons for Not Taking Action" in Table 2(b).

Six questions measured beliefs regarding the frequency of different types of academic dishonesty in different class sizes, six questions measured beliefs regarding faculty responses to incidents of academic dishonesty in graduate and undergraduate classes, and one question measured the size of classes taught. Four demographic questions (academic rank, tenure status, department, and sex/gender) and one open-ended question ("Please provide any comments you have about academic dishonesty") completed the instrument.

### **Procedure and Subjects**

The instrument referenced above was distributed to all full-time faculty (N = 241) of a medium-sized Midwestern public university through the university mail system. After a period of two weeks, a reminder postcard was distributed to all faculty in a like manner requesting that those who had not yet completed the study do so in the following week. Participants were provided contact information for each researcher, and a web link to obtain an additional copy of the instrument in the event that a potential participant had lost or misplaced the instrument distributed earlier. Additional instructions on the instrument included that participation in the study was voluntary, participation may stop at any time

without penalty, participants need not answer all the questions, and the information contributed would be completely anonymous.

## Results

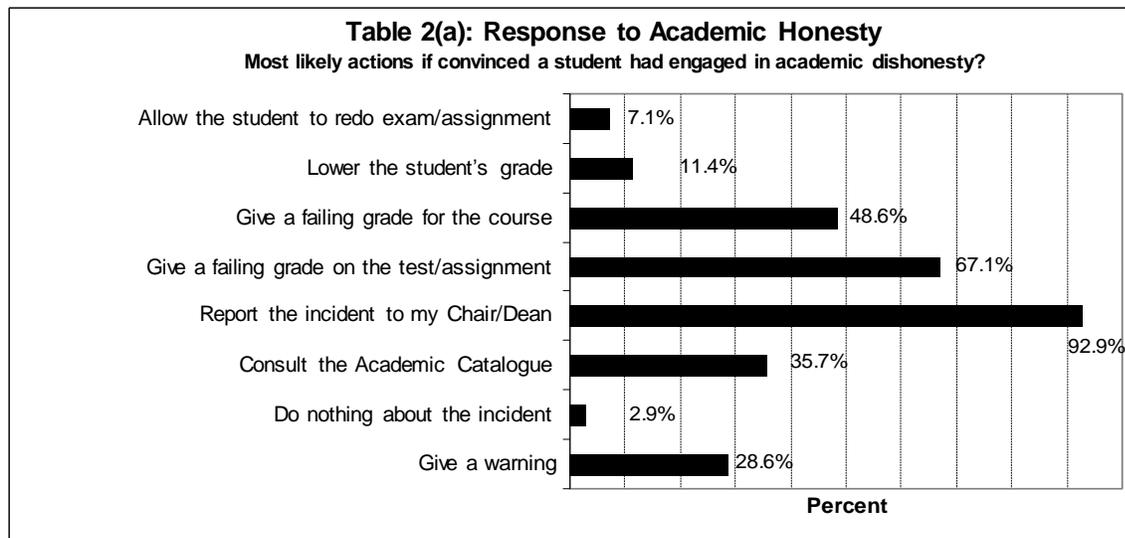
In the three weeks allowed to respond, seventy-three usable instruments were returned, yielding a response rate of 30.3%. Of the respondents, 30 (41.1%) were female compared to approximately 50.0% in the in the actual population, 38 (52.1%) male, and 5 (6.8%) did not respond to the question. Nineteen (26.0%) of the respondents were tenured, and 51 (69.9%) were non-tenured (with 3 or 4.1% not responding) closely matching the makeup of the university's faculty. With regard to academic rank, 1 (1.4%) respondent was an adjunct member of the faculty, 12 (16.4%) were instructors, 35 (47.9%) were assistant professors, 18 (24.7%) were associate professors, 6 (8.2%) were full professors, and 1 (1.4%) did not mark academic rank. Of the demographic questions, department affiliation proved to be the most reactive with 25 (34.2%) of the participants choosing not to respond to the question. Of those who reported departmental affiliation, all departments were represented (range = 1 to 9) with no department representing more than 9.6% of the total responses. Statistical information for the all remaining items is reported in Table 1. Approximately one third of the respondents (38.4%) provided written comments regarding academic honesty. Relevant comments are included in the discussion area below.

Table 1: Attitude Measures  
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

	<b>Item Stem</b>	<b>mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
1	Upholding the academic integrity of the institution is an important part of my job	4.7	0.50
2	I give written instructions about what constitutes academic dishonesty	4.4	0.91
3	I take class time to discuss what constitutes academic dishonesty	4.2	1.06
4	I believe that part of my job as an instructor is to help students learn ethical behavior	4.4	0.81
5	I do not believe that dealing with academic dishonesty is a good use of my time	1.9	1.13
6	I am uncomfortable with formally charging a student with academic dishonesty	2.7	1.27
7	Charging a student with academic dishonesty makes it appear that I do not manage my classes well	1.7	0.94
8	I am familiar with the procedures of charging students with academic dishonesty	4.0	1.01
9	It is hard to collect enough evidence to charge students with academic dishonesty	3.3	1.14
10	Faculty at the institution try hard to detect academic dishonesty	3.0	0.94

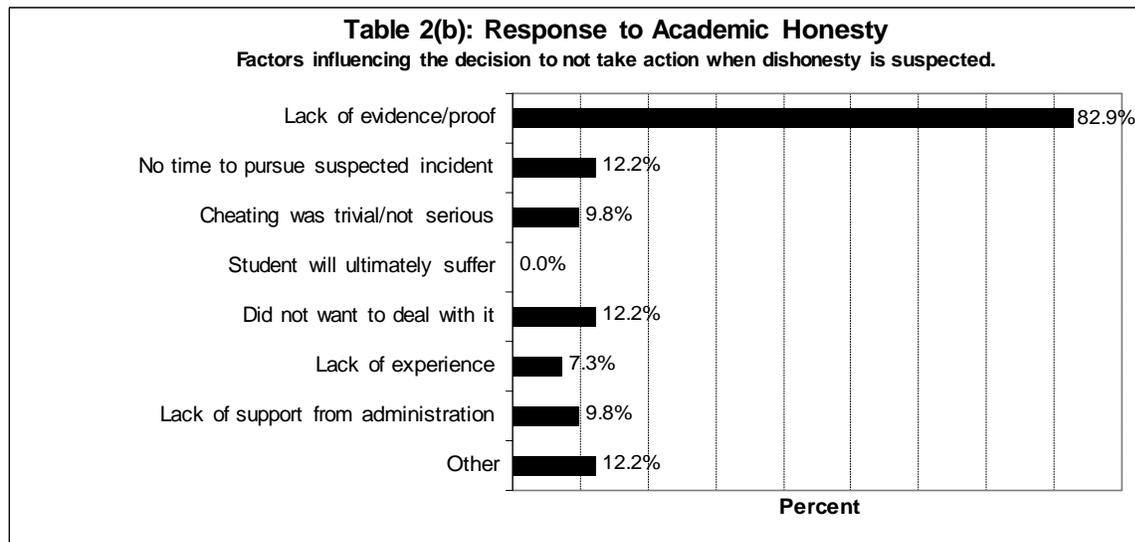
11	Faculty at the institution handle academic dishonesty in a uniform manner	2.1	0.82
12	The judicial process at the institution is fair and impartial	3.3	0.85
13	I consider plagiarism a form of academic dishonesty	4.7	0.51
14	I disregard a dishonest behavior unless such behavior affects/disrupts other students	1.6	0.84
15	Academic dishonesty is a serious problem at the institution	3.5	1.03

Table 2(a)



Note: Totals do not equal 100% because subjects were asked to select up to three most likely actions.

Table 2(b)



Note: Subjects were asked "Have you ever not taken action (for any reason) when you suspected academic dishonesty in one of your courses? Over half (57.5%) responded in the affirmative. When asked why no action was taken, the responses above were given. Totals do not equal 100% because subjects who were asked to select all the applicable reasons for not taking action.

Table 3: Beliefs Regarding Academic Dishonesty

<b>"In the past two academic years, how frequently do you think the following occurred in your classes?"</b>			
Responses	Class Size (number of students)*		
	20 or fewer	21-50	>50
Plagiarism on any assignment	1.4 (0.38)	2.6 (3.00)	0.7 (1.72)
Unauthorized collaboration on any assignment	1.2 (0.30)	4.6 (0.72)	0.6 (0.90)
Copying exam answers	0.8 (0.24)	1.5 (1.41)	0.3 (7.47)
Copying another student's assignment and turning it in	1.2 (0.46)	2.3 (1.50)	0.4 (2.37)
Using unauthorized materials during a quiz	0.4 (0.21)	1.2 (2.00)	0.2 (2.13)
Using unauthorized materials during an exam/final	0.6 (0.23)	2.7 (0.75)	0.2 (1.61)

\*The data are presented in the form: mean (rate per class taught)

Note: This table reports the frequency of academic dishonesty in relation to class sizes. As indicated in the table, it appears that the frequency of academic dishonesty increases as the size of a class goes up, but only in some instances. It may be that as the class size increases beyond a critical point, instructors present fewer assignments that are susceptible to certain types of dishonesty (e.g., larger classes may result in fewer written assignments offering a decreased opportunity for plagiarism).

Table 4: Other Measures

<b>Class Sizes Taught (In the past two years)</b>		
Classes of 20 or fewer	4.5	
Classes of 21-50	8.2	
Classes of 50 or greater	1.1	
<b>How often have you responded to the following incidents of academic dishonesty (two years)?</b>		
	Undergraduate	Graduate
Accidental or unintentional plagiarism	2.5	0.2

Deliberate plagiarism	0.9	0.1
Cheating on an in-class exam	0.3	0.0
Cheating on an online exam	0.1	0.0
Submitting another student's work as their own	0.9	0.0
Submitting a paper taken from the Internet	0.2	0.0

Note: The table above reports the breakdown in the size of undergraduate and graduate classes taught by the respondents in the past two years. As indicated in the table, it appears that there are more incidents of academic dishonesty in the undergraduate level.

## Discussion

We consider this study the first small step to better understanding the attitudes and opinions of faculty as they consider academic integrity and dishonesty. Most of the previous research has considered the issue from the student's perspective or by comparisons between schools with and without honor codes. We believe that, while that line of research has significant value, omitting the faculty perspective and the limitations that faculty members face prevent us from understanding this issue in its entirety, and thus, prevent us from working toward solving the problem. We learned that, at least at the institution studied, faculty are very interested and involved in the topic. We also learned that they feel significant restrictions.

Although we do consider this study an important additional component in the understanding of academic dishonesty, we only see this as a first, small step. This study was conducted at a single, public, medium-sized, rural university in the Midwest of the United States that is considered a "teaching" (as opposed to "research") institution. To determine if these findings have a broad application, it is necessary to undertake the study at other institutions of all types, sizes, and in a variety of locations. Furthermore, additional work needs to be conducted to more completely validate the instrument used in this study. As noted above, most of the items in this study were adapted from previous research, but when we review that research, we can find very little evidence of rigorous statistical validation of the items. In this study, we have taken the first step in that direction by conducting an exploratory factor analysis of our results, but we feel more data is needed under other conditions and at other institutions to provide evidence of the stability of the factors we identified and whether those factors apply to other institutions.

### Attitude Measures

The respondents confirmed that upholding academic integrity is an essential aspect of the teaching profession. This finding is an important cornerstone in instituting academic integrity at any institution. It is noteworthy that the respondents indicated that faculty should prevent dishonesty even if it might reflect negatively on their ability to manage their classrooms. Although the respondents do not believe that academic dishonesty is a serious problem at the institution, a majority of the respondents indicated that it is indeed a faculty's responsibility to proactively clarify, provide guidelines, and assist students to avoid dishonesty. It was further indicated that faculty needed to be familiar with institutional procedures to maintain academic integrity.

On the other hand, the respondents indicated concerns with the institution's judicial process. This finding shows that institutional procedure can significantly influence faculty decisions on whether they will file charges in light of suspected or documented academic dishonesty. Part of the problem raised by the respondents is the lack of uniformity in the

implementation of academic honesty policy. Furthermore, it appears that some respondents do not perceive the current judicial process to be fair and impartial. This is a significant concern because if the faculty do not perceive that the judicial process would protect all parties involved, it is reasonable to assume that faculty would be less likely to follow protocol and charge student offenders with academic dishonesty.

### **Response to Academic Honesty**

On the question of "If you were convinced that a student had engaged in academic dishonesty, what would be your three most likely actions?" The top three most frequently selected options were "report the incident to my Chair/Dean" (92.9%), "give a failing grade on the test or assignment" (67.1%), and "give a failing grade for the course" (48.6%). The first and third options are in accordance with the academic honesty policy of the institution; however, the second most frequently selected option supports the respondents' perception that there is a lack of uniformity among faculty in handling academic dishonesty. This finding also contributes to respondents' lack of confidence in the judicial process.

### **Reasons for Not Taking Action**

Regarding the question of "Have you ever not taken action (for any reason) when you suspected academic dishonesty in one of your courses?" (See Table 2). The majority of the respondents (57.5%) indicated that they had not taken any action in at least one case when they suspected academic dishonesty in their courses. The most frequently selected factor was "lack of evidence/proof" (82.9%) while three other factors "no time to pursue suspected incident," "did not want to deal with it," and "other" appear to be equally influential (12.2%) to the respondents' decision to refrain from taking any actions. These results are not unexpected and provide an area where further research is necessary. We did not ask any quantitative questions that would help us to better understand issues regarding lack or proof of evidence, but the comments provided by participants provide some interesting insight. Those comments are discussed below.

### **Beliefs Regarding Academic Dishonesty**

Table 3 considered Beliefs Regarding Academic Dishonesty. On the question of how frequently academic dishonesty occurred in the classroom, the most frequent incident (4.6) was "unauthorized collaboration on any assignment" in class sizes of 21 to 50 students. Interestingly, the respondents also indicated that the frequency of dishonesty drops when the class size is bigger than 50 students. It appears that class size has an impact on the belief of the respondents in the occurrence of dishonesty in the classroom. We suspect that the types of assignments existing in various size classes might play a role in these results.

Finally, Table 4 considered the question: "How often have you responded to the following incidents of academic dishonesty?" The respondents indicated that they encountered "accidental or unintentional plagiarism" more frequently than any other form of dishonesty both at the graduate and the undergraduate levels. The comments provided by the respondents in "Analysis of Comments Provided by Study Subjects" section below indicate that many faculty members are trying to implement a number of preventive measures, but it seems that in some cases such steps are not preventing students from engaging in activities that the faculty members feel constitute academic dishonesty. There is a need for clarifying to students exactly what it is that they need to do to uphold academic integrity and avoid any potential unethical behavior.

## **Exploratory Data Analysis**

To better understand the data, we proceeded with several exploratory statistical analyses. First, we submitted the fifteen attitudinal measures (items 1-15 in Table 1) to an exploratory factor analysis. The purpose of this technique was to reduce the number of measures and to better understand and identify the underlying constructs related to the actions that teaching faculty take when they suspect or discover instances of academic dishonesty. Based on eigenvalues and scree plot analyses, the rotated results indicated six factors which collectively explained approximately 69.0% of the variation. The factors, items that make up the factors and the variance explained for each is included in Table 5. We then calculated factor scores for each of the six factors by combining the item scores for each item that made up the respective factor. To determine whether there were response differences related to academic rank, tenure status, academic department, or sex, we compared factor scores across the various levels of the demographic variables. Rank and department were analyzed using ANOVA and tenure status and sex were analyzed using t-tests. We should note that there were no statistical adjustments for the number of tests conducted, so any significant results are suspect as mere statistical anomalies. Because none of the results reached the level of significance, the results for those tests were omitted although we believe the implication of this finding is extremely important—based on the results of this study, responses to academic dishonesty are not related to *any* of the demographic variables we explored. Mining of the remaining data collected failed to reveal any significant findings relevant to the research questions presented, so those finds are omitted as well.

Table 5: Factor Analysis Extraction Results with Promax Rotation

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Factor Name</b>	<b>Variance Explained</b>	<b>Cumulative Variance</b>	<b>Items Comprising Each Factor</b>
1	Fairness/ Equity	17.9%	17.9%	7. Charging a student with academic dishonesty makes it appear that I do not manage my classes well 12. The judicial process at this institution is fair and impartial 14. I disregard a dishonest behavior unless such behavior affects/disrupts other students
2	Process/ Prevention	14.7%	32.6%	8. I am familiar with the procedures of charging students with academic dishonesty 2. I give written instructions about what constitutes academic dishonesty 3. I take class time to discuss what constitutes academic dishonesty
3	Teaching Outcome	11.9%	44.4%	5. I do not believe that dealing with academic dishonesty is a good use of my time 4. I believe that part of my job as an instructor is to help students learn ethical behavior

4	Institutional Integrity	9.2%	53.6%	13. I consider plagiarism a form of academic dishonesty 1. Upholding the academic integrity of this institution is an important part of my job 15. Academic dishonesty is a serious problem at this institution
5	Application of Rules	7.9%	61.5%	6. I am uncomfortable with formally charging a student with academic dishonesty 11. Faculty at this institution handle academic dishonesty in a uniform manner 10. Faculty at this institution try hard to detect academic dishonesty
6	Evidential Issues	7.5%	69.0%	9. It is hard to collect enough evidence to charge students with academic dishonesty

Note: The table above reports the results of the exploratory factor analysis. The statistical analysis indicated that the six factors explain approximately 69% of the variance in the responses. For each factor, we assigned a descriptive name and indicate the specific items that comprise the factor.

### Analysis of Comments Provided by Study Subjects

It is evident from this study that the faculty members at the university studied do recognize that academic dishonesty is an important issue that needs to be addressed. In fact, they appear to be taking appropriate measures that would reduce the occurrences of dishonest behaviors. Some of the preventive measures taken include a non-required departmental plagiarism statement, clarifying what constitutes academic dishonesty so that students do not commit the offence as a result of ignorance, avoid assigning little weight to assignments that are susceptible to cheating, requiring discussion papers that allow students to express their views, and restructuring assignments. What is interesting, however, is that the respondents perceived that academic dishonesty is not a serious problem at the institution. This appears to contradict the perception a few respondents hold with expressions such as the institution has "a culture of academic dishonesty," and "students get away" with cheating. There is also a feeling that it is not worthwhile to grade assignments or give assignments much value because students cheat too much on assignments completed outside the classroom. These concerns need to be addressed.

When we examined the factors that influenced whether the faculty took any action or what actions they took in the event that academic dishonesty is suspected or discovered, we found that lack of evidence/proof appears to be a major problem. There is a concern within the faculty as to how to deal with a dishonest or questionable behavior when such behavior is "witnessed" by only the faculty, the student claims to be innocent, and there is no other clear evidence to substantiate the act. Also, there appears to be a significant level of resistance to spend any time assembling evidence since it does not seem like a good use of time if institutional policy is not uniformly implemented. This leads to the sense of helplessness experienced by some of the respondents. The underlying perception according to one faculty member was that "the student's word is holy and always outweighs the faculty" is disconcerting. Although institutional policy can clearly specify what constitutes

dishonesty, respondents perceive that faculty bear the sole responsibility of documenting and charging students who choose to commit acts of dishonesty. This perception clearly hinders faculty's desire to pursue any form of dishonesty because of the feeling that students "get away with cheating" and also because proving dishonest conduct is often difficult. Another concern appears to be the existence of the perception that superiors (department chairs) do not take the issue seriously with expressions such as "it is not worth pursuing." Such incidents compel faculty to act on their own and without following departmental or university procedures. The notion that some cases are more worthy than others creates a basis for faculty to charge when it is convenient. This certainly sends the wrong message that faculty could choose to handle acts of dishonesty using their judgment and thus break away from a specific institutional protocol. Other factors include a lack of clarity on what actually constitutes academic dishonesty, what should be done about it, and how serious it is. For example, students can supersede a course in which they earned an "F" as a result of dishonest behavior. According to one study participant, in some instances, students are allowed to drop a course after being charged with academic dishonesty so that the student can actually avoid any penalty completely. One faculty member noted that instances like this can frustrate a faculty member to the extent that he felt "forced" to overlook such incidents.

Another factor noted in the comments provided by participants that can influence whether faculty would vigorously search to prove an academic dishonesty has occurred, though not very common, is that students may feel they cannot be trusted. The mistrust of faculty could stem from the lack of uniformity in the implementation of institutional policy. Whenever actions taken that deviate from set standards and rules, confusion comes about where students do not know what to expect. Communication between faculty and students suffers as a result of multiple opposing precedents. A related factor that might be unique to this institution is a concern that accused students might anonymously use an internal "comment card" procedure that allows anyone to report a problem to the university's president in retaliation to such charges.

### **Conclusion**

Academic integrity is a very emotionally charged issue that clearly has "right answers" and "wrong answers." In the current study, we were able to identify some factors that faculty take into consideration when faced with suspected or proven acts of academic dishonesty. The most prevalent factor that faculty consider is the judicial process at the institution. It appears that faculty action varies depending on their perception of whether the judicial process is fair and impartial. Other factors such as time constraints and documentation were also identified as a hindrance to faculty decisions in cases of dishonesty. These findings confirm the need for faculty and administrators to work closely together to curtail unethical behavior in their institutions. One can further infer that if the judicial process in place at the institution is perceived to be fair and impartial, it might encourage faculty to more readily follow the institutional protocol. Confidence in the judicial process can set the foundation to change the perception of whether faculty time and emotional energy spent in documenting the incidents and charging student offenders is appropriate.

A limitation in this study is the self-report data collection method used. It is possible that the participants in this study were responding the way they thought they should respond. Further investigations should consider other data collection techniques that might provide other insights or confirm the findings of this study.

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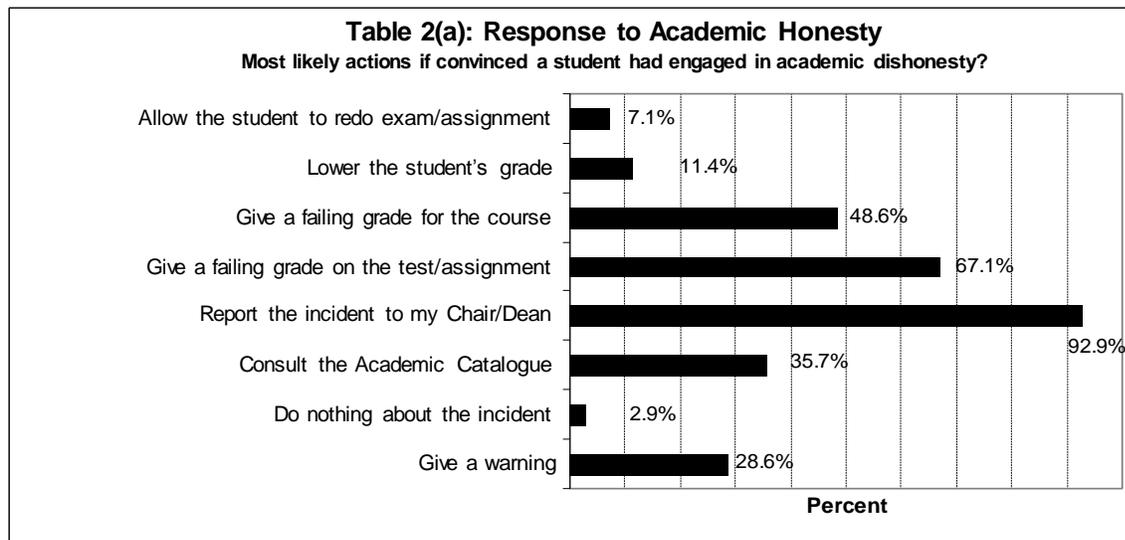
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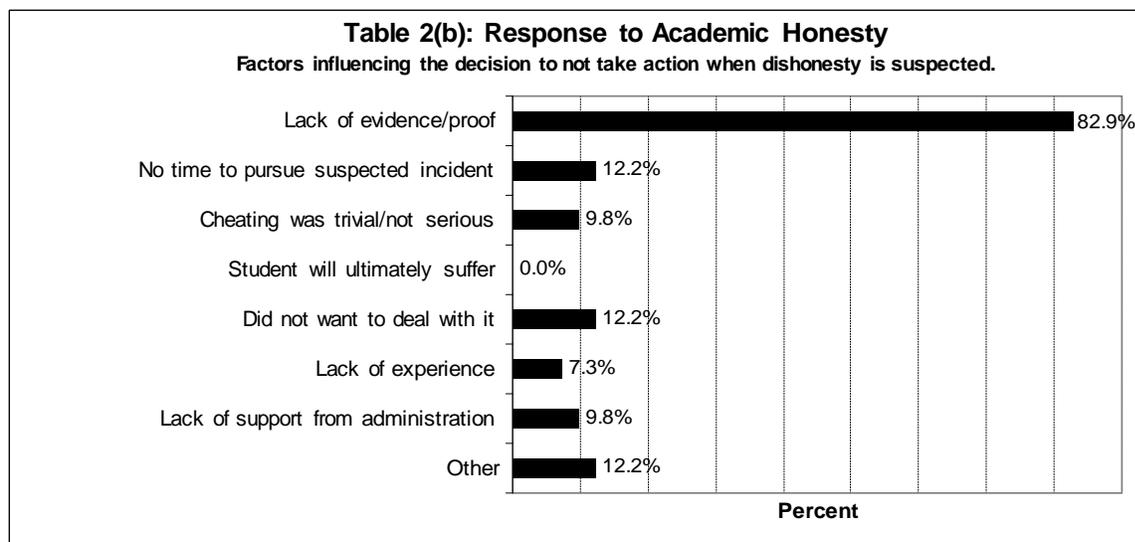
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Table 1  
 Attitude Measures  
 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

	Item Stem	mean	S.D.
1	Upholding the academic integrity of the institution is an important part of my job	4.7	0.50
2	I give written instructions about what constitutes academic dishonesty	4.4	0.91
3	I take class time to discuss what constitutes academic dishonesty	4.2	1.06
4	I believe that part of my job as an instructor is to help students learn ethical behavior	4.4	0.81
5	I do not believe that dealing with academic dishonesty is a good use of my time	1.9	1.13
6	I am uncomfortable with formally charging a student with academic dishonesty	2.7	1.27
7	Charging a student with academic dishonesty makes it appear that I do not manage my classes well	1.7	0.94
8	I am familiar with the procedures of charging students with academic dishonesty	4.0	1.01
9	It is hard to collect enough evidence to charge students with academic dishonesty	3.3	1.14
10	Faculty at the institution try hard to detect academic dishonesty	3.0	0.94
11	Faculty at the institution handle academic dishonesty in a uniform manner	2.1	0.82
12	The judicial process at the institution is fair and impartial	3.3	0.85
13	I consider plagiarism a form of academic dishonesty	4.7	0.51
14	I disregard a dishonest behavior unless such behavior affects/disrupts other students	1.6	0.84
15	Academic dishonesty is a serious problem at the institution	3.5	1.03



Note: Totals do not equal 100% because subjects were asked to select up to three most likely actions.



Note: Subjects were asked "Have you ever not taken action (for any reason) when you suspected academic dishonesty in one of your courses? Over half (57.5%) responded in the affirmative. When asked why no action was taken, the responses above were given. Totals do not equal 100% because subjects who were asked to select all the applicable reasons for not taking action.

Table 3  
 Beliefs Regarding Academic Dishonesty

"In the past two academic years, how frequently do you think the following occurred in your classes?"			
Responses	Class Size (number of students)*		
	20 or fewer	21-50	>50
Plagiarism on any assignment	1.4 (0.38)	2.6 (3.00)	0.7 (1.72)
Unauthorized collaboration on any assignment	1.2 (0.30)	4.6 (0.72)	0.6 (0.90)
Copying exam answers	0.8 (0.24)	1.5 (1.41)	0.3 (7.47)
Copying another student's assignment and turning it in	1.2 (0.46)	2.3 (1.50)	0.4 (2.37)
Using unauthorized materials during a quiz	0.4 (0.21)	1.2 (2.00)	0.2 (2.13)
Using unauthorized materials during an exam/final	0.6 (0.23)	2.7 (0.75)	0.2 (1.61)

\*The data are presented in the form: mean (rate per class taught)

Note: This table reports the frequency of academic dishonesty in relation to class sizes. As indicated in the table, it appears that the frequency of academic dishonesty increases as the size of a class goes up, but only in some instances. It may be that as the class size increases beyond a critical point, instructors present fewer assignments that are susceptible to certain types of dishonesty (e.g., larger classes may result in fewer written assignments offering a decreased opportunity for plagiarism).

Table 4  
 Other Measures

Class Sizes Taught (In the past two years)		
Classes of 20 or fewer	4.5	
Classes of 21-50	8.2	
Classes of 50 or greater	1.1	
How often have you responded to the following incidents of academic dishonesty (two years)?		
	Undergraduate	Graduate
Accidental or unintentional plagiarism	2.5	0.2
Deliberate plagiarism	0.9	0.1
Cheating on an in-class exam	0.3	0.0
Cheating on an online exam	0.1	0.0
Submitting another student's work as their own	0.9	0.0
Submitting a paper taken from the Internet	0.2	0.0

Note: The table above reports the breakdown in the size of undergraduate and graduate classes taught by the respondents in the past two years. As indicated in the table, it appears that there are more incidents of academic dishonesty in the undergraduate level.



