SoTL Commons Conference

Mar 11th, 4:00 PM - 5:45 PM

Academic Integrity Institutionalization in an Online RN-BSN Program

Leigh Hart
Jacksonville University, lhart@ju.edu

Lesley Morgan
Baker College, Lesley.Morgan@Baker.edu

Recommended Citation

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JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY

Leigh Hart, PhD, ARNP-BC; Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, Fl

**Lesley Morgan, PhD, ARNP; Baker College, Allen Park, MI**

Background

The number of universities and colleges offering online programs continue to expand. Online education is still a relatively new method of instruction that warrants extensive classroom research and evaluation. Previous research on academic integrity reported higher levels of cheating among students that are male, single, and with lower GPAs (Rakovski & Levy, 2007; Finn & Frone, 2004; Hughes & McCabe, 2006; Lanier, 2006; McCabe & Revino, 1997). Current research also indicates there may be more cheating in online classrooms (Lanier, 2006).

Model

Model of Academic Integrity Institutionalization

Gallant and Drinan (2008)
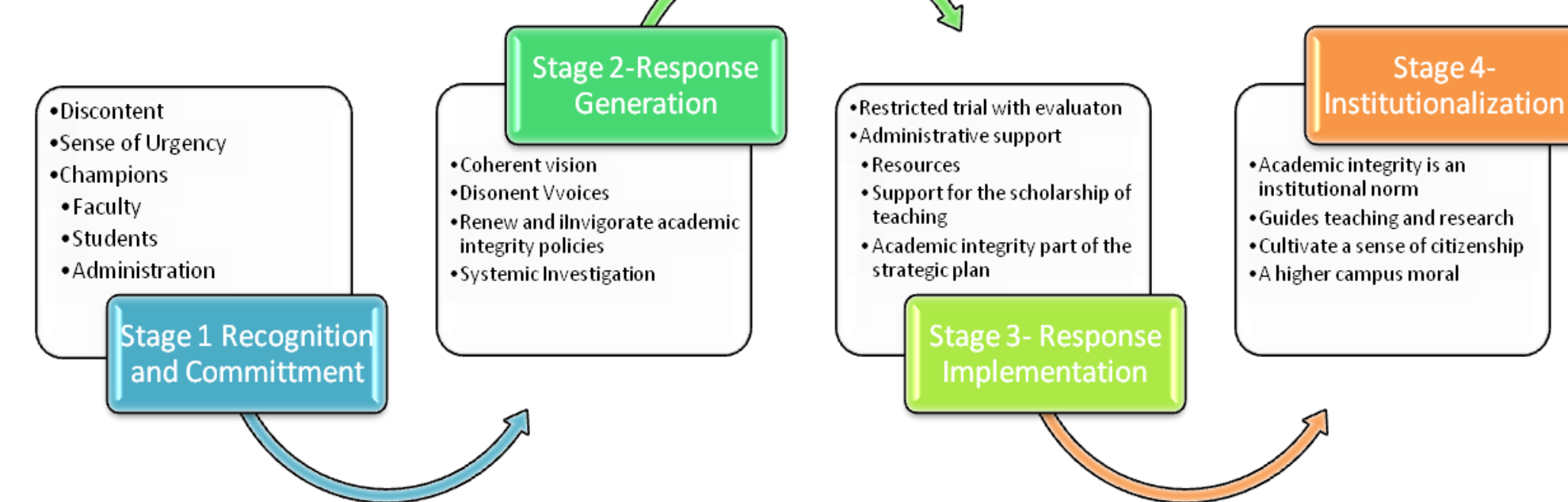
Stage 1-Faculty Concern

Discussion among nursing faculty revealed concern that there May be a difference in academic integrity in the online and Traditional RN-BSN program.

Stage 2- Method

A descriptive comparative design was used to evaluate academic integrity in an online RN-BSN program and a traditional face-to-face RN-BSN programs. The two cohorts had identical curriculum and many of the same faculty. The cohorts differed only in method of content delivery and testing. The McCabe Academic Integrity assessment survey was sent to all RN-BSN students enrolled in the 2008-2009 academic year. This included 2048 online students and 100 traditional classroom students.

Stage 2-Conclusion

Overall cheating in the RN-BSN program ,for both online and traditional students ,was very low. This may be related to the unique demographic profile of these students and their exposure to ethics in practice and their ADN programs.

This study did not support concerns that there may be more cheating in online programs. This study found higher levels of cheating in the traditional classroom, especially in students age 40 and under. The majority of cheating involved collaboration among students.

Results- Stage 2- Response Generation

The traditional classroom cohort reported higher levels of cheating compared to the online cohort. The traditional classroom students age 40 and younger reported more instances of cheating than the 41 and over age group. The majority of the cheating that occurred involved student collaboration.

Category	Online RN-BSN		Traditional Class RN-BSN	
	n	%	n	%
Age*				
40 or below	100	30.4	21	47.7
41 or above	229	69.4	23	52.3
Gender				
Female	305	93.3	37	84.1
Male	22	6.7	6	13.6
Race				
Caucasian	269	83.3	39	90.7
Non Caucasian	54	16.7	4	9.3
Marital Status				
Married	235	72.1	34	77.3
Not Married	91	27.9	10	22.7
Plans for graduate school				
MSN	191	57.8	20	45.7
PhD	7	2	1	2.3
DNP	16	4	3	6.8
Other	51	15	6	45.7
No reply	65	19.7	14	31.8
N=	330		44	

Specific Behavior	Student Age 40 and Younger		Student Age 41 and Older	
	Online (%)	Traditional (%)	Online (%)	Traditional (%)
Getting questions or answers from someone who has already taken a test.	2	47.6*	.80	13.0*
Helping someone else cheat on test	2	28.6*	0	0
Copying (by hand or in person)another student's homework.	1	9.5	0	0
Working on an assignment with others(in person) when the instructor asked for Individual work.	0	19*	2.2	13*
Working on an assignment with others (via email or instant Messaging) when the instructor asked for individual work.	0	19*	0.4	4.3
Using digital technology(such as text messaging) to get unpermitted help from someone during a test or examination.	0	0	0	0
Receiving unpermitted help on an assignment.	1	4.7	1.3	0
Copying using digital means such as Instant Messaging or email) another student's homework.	0	0	0	0
Turning in a paper copied, at least in part, from another student's paper, whether or not the student is currently taking the same course.	0	0	1.3	0
Turning in work done by someone else.	0	0	1.3	0
N	100	21	229	23

Specific Behavior	Student Age 40 and Younger		Student Age 41 and Older	
	Online (%)	Traditional (%)	Online (%)	Traditional (%)
Using an electronic/digital device as an unauthorized aid during an exam.	2	0	.5	0
Using a false or forged excuse to obtain an extension on a due date or delay taking an exam.	8	4.8	1.7	0
Fabricating or falsifying lab data.	2	0	0	0
Fabricating or falsifying research data.	2	0	0.4	0
Copying from another student during a test or examination without his or her knowledge.	0	4.8	0.4	4.3
Paraphrasing or copying a few sentences from a book, magazine, or journal (not electronic or We-based) without referencing them in a paper you submitted.	21	47.6*	15.8	13
Turning in a paper from a 'paper mill'(a paper written and previously submitted n other student) and claiming it as your own work. by a	0	0	0	0
Paraphrasing or copying a few sentences of material from an electronic source without referencing them in a paper you submitted.	22	38	17.8	13
Submitted a paper you purchased or obtained from a Web site (such as www.schoolsucks.com) and claimed it as your own work.	0	0	0.4	0
Using unpermitted handwritten crib notes (or cheat sheets) during a test or exam.	3	0	3	0
Using electronic crib notes (stored in PDA, phone, or calculator) to cheat on a test or exam.	2	0	0	0
Copying material, almost word for word, from any written source and turning it in as your own work.	2	4.7	0.4	0
Cheating on a test in any other way.	7	9.5	4	8.7
N	100	21	229	23

• Three dimensional Chi-Square Analysis with the row variable of cheating behaviors, the column variable of group and age as the layering factor * $P \leq .05$

Stage 3- Response Implementation

As online nursing programs continue to proliferate, academic nurse educators must thoroughly evaluate academic integrity and outcomes of online nursing programs. Measures to increase the awareness of academic integrity polices and to clearly delineate academic integrity expectations should be included in all nursing programs.

An academic integrity intervention study is in progress in the online cohort. For the intervention study students are randomized into a class as usual or a class with a message board discussion about faculty expectations for academic integrity and a testing policy pop up before each exam.

Dear Student:
    One of the program outcomes for the Jacksonville University (JU) on-line RN-BSN program states that students will exhibit professional values and behaviors, affirmed by a code of ethics, professional standards, and legal statues. As a faculty, we want to facilitate your achievement of that program outcome by fostering a culture of academic integrity in the classroom. Academic integrity brings forth thoughts of not plagiarizing or cheating on test and examinations. The JU SON faculty believes this definition is extended to include actions beyond the classroom. Academic integrity includes personal and professional integrity. Dr. William M. Taylor, from Oakton Community College gives the following example to illustrate this point:

"Would you want to be operated on by a doctor who cheated his way through medical school? Or would you feel comfortable on a bridge designed by an engineer who cheated her way through engineering school. Would you trust your tax return to an accountant who copied his answers from his neighbor?"

    Since we are all practicing nurses the above concepts should not be foreign to you. We practice them every day, in multiple forums. It is the surgical conscience in the operating room, when only you know the surgical field is contaminated, it is reporting your own medication error, or informing the provider of a missed procedure. We are here for the people we serve. We are their advocate and often their voice. As nurses, we are trusted.

    As your faculty we pledge to foster academic integrity throughout your coursework. We promise to adhere to the same standards we expect of our students. We pledge to maintain professional competence and to monitor course content and assignments to assure the value and applicability of your coursework.

    As students, we expect you to foster academic integrity among your classmates. We expect you to review and abide by the academic honesty statements in the JU catalogue, handbook and course syllabi. We expect you to follow assignment and testing guidelines as they are presented. Please remember to bring your professional integrity to the academic environment.
Sincerely,

Nursing Faculty

Intervention Part A- Message board discussion on faculty expectations of Academic integrity based This letter to the students

Testing Policy

Testing is an essential mechanisms faculty use to evaluate student learning. Since examinations are completed on-line, it is important to maintain an environment of academic honesty.

Tests are considered closed book tests. Using any written or electronic material to answer questions is prohibited. The student may not exit the test site or access any electronic devices or the internet during the exam.

The test is to be taken by the student without the assistance of others. Test questions are not to be copied or reproduced. Test questions are not to be discussed with anyone except the course faculty.

Violation of this testing policy will result in failure in the course. Violations will be reported to the Director of the On-line program, Dean of the School of Nursing, and the Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

☐ By checking this box and entering the test site I am verifying that I have read and understand the above testing policy for the JU RN-BSN program.

Intervention Part B- Testing policy students must acknowledge prior to each online Exam.

Stage 4-Future Research

Although the McCabe survey of academic integrity has been used extensively for over a decade, the survey is not tailored to assess online programs.   An academic integrity tool designed to specifically assess online programs is in development. This study will be replicated with a larger population from different universities.