

2019 Hartnell Academic Dishonesty Survey Summary

“It’s a huge problem.”

—Tricia Bertram Gallant, UCSD Academic Integrity Office

Thank you to all faculty who responded to the May 2019 Academic Dishonesty survey. Facilitating cheating was reported by 40% of respondents. Fraud, misrepresentation or lying by students was reported by 65%. Approximately two-thirds report averaging five cases yearly. 30% say they experienced administrative reprisal or lack of support, and 5% reported student complaints after reporting cheating.

Highlighting the lack of faculty confidence in administrative support, 62% responded that they do NOT report academic dishonesty; they deal with it themselves. While understandable, underreporting has contributed to the minimization of the problem.

The most common recommendations in the survey were faculty training and calls for the administration to vigorously enforce existing policy. (Subject to correction, our understanding is that Hartnell College has had no suspensions or expulsions for academic dishonesty in the last seven years.) The time is ripe to address this issue. In the September 7, 2019, *New York Times* article about contract cheating, “Cheating Inc.,” the director of the Academic Integrity office at UCSD declaims, “If we don’t do anything about it, we will turn every accredited university into a diploma mill.”

Melissa Hornstein

Ron Waddy

Ann Wright

Excerpts of Faculty Comments on Academic Dishonesty

“I found answers written on the desk.”

“I met with the dean of students at the time, but after the meeting it was clear to me that the administration wouldn’t do anything about it.”

“I was told to find points.”

“I don’t assign much writing anymore . . . They can plagiarize off of each other.”

“Canvas is not as secure and we’ve had reports of students cheating easily using Canvas.”

“I am concerned with this survey, are we forgetting who the customers are?”

“It turns out it was more work for me to re-test the student.”

“Kick them out of college.”

Cheating Methods and Scope

“12-20 [cases per year] . . . but that’s putting a number on something that can vary a lot. Also, disclaimer: those are the cases I catch.”

“I have seen an increase in cheating instagram cases this year an especially this semester compared to other semesters. I do not know why this is the case, but it is very disturbing.”

“My experience so far has been that students will hide a cell phone in their lap. The other instance I observed was a blatant copying of Scantron responses at group tables”

“There was a pattern of all of a sudden of about 10 students, usually male, having bathroom emergencies. Students reported they were discussing the exam during the bathroom visits.”

“The most common type [of plagiarism] . . . is just DELIBERATE copying of material online without proper attribution, and I see that with about 20% of all students; this despite being taught to not plagiarize.”

“What do we prioritize here: damage or malice? . . . If the student fakes that [research paper] those three units are a lie.”

“In canvas it is much harder to follow the plagiarism. In the older system for Etudes it was easier to get an idea of plagiarism. In canvas I am checking constantly against in class writing samples and written turned in assignments”.

“Aside from the occasional wandering eyes during a test, which I prevent early, the cheating I have experienced has come in the form of plagiarism; that is, mosaic or patchwork plagiarism in a research essay. Usually the student does not fully understand why this is a problem, so I make it a teaching moment and have student rewrite paper for a passing grade.”

“Failing grade and written reprimand (survey won’t let me choose both!)”

“On a number of instances I have observed collaborative cheating efforts (facilitating, maybe should be ranked higher here), but outright fraud in requesting delay of exams, etc. is quite common Students who do resort to cheating seldom achieve a passing grade (in this course), of is they do higher than a 'C'; too low of a grade to be acceptable to ultimate pursuit of further credentialing in medical related professions.”

“I feel that the misrepresentation is a regular occurrence They complete multiple group projects so unfair distribution of workload, writing the same responses, etc. is a regular occurrence.”

“I treat initial incidence of plagiarism and cheating as teachable moments to address all students of the incident without naming the individuals, but addressing students in terms of personal integrity and reputation for themselves and others who may depend on them. I also follow up with instruction on voice, paraphrasing, quoting, and citing sources in MLA format. Individually, I note my finding on their papers and talk with them about it and its consequences per the college policy on academic dishonesty. If it happens again, I send my dean my findings along with a copy of the paper in question and cc the student via email.”

Administration

“Each case required about ten emails to the Student Life Office requesting follow-up.”

“The response took almost a semester then the student was just counseled [by Student Life]. I had already done the counseling. They were referred to admin with the expectation of suspension.”

“The administration tried to hide behind the excuse of student privacy for their failure to follow-up.”

“Augustine Nevarez and I worked to resolve the issue.”

Suggestions

“On Flex days we should get workshops on how to spot different types of cheating (especially electronically-based cheating)”

“I would love a database that contains serial cheaters, but I don’t know if this violates FERPA.”

“I think cheating should be explicitly addressed during Orientation.”

“I believe we should have contracts that students read and accept.”

“I remind students to be conscious of the meaning of process I ask them to write about their art ‘journey.’”

“My preference would be to have a better recording of how often it happens and clearer communication with students on how to avoid it and why.”

“Maybe the faculty experiencing this level of cheating, needs to consider a change in the teaching style and a change in the way the students are given assignments and exams.”

“Clearer guidelines in 5500 and 5200 outlining definitions of cheating”

“Knowing that cheating is rampant in the high schools (according to my high school-age daughter), it doesn't surprise me that it is super common here. Faculty should know about and use Turnitin on written assignments - they should also know about the ways students try to get around turnitin. Online exams should be proctored - and that means that we need to be able to use Proctorio.”

“Targeted workshops [for students]. . . . Maybe make Lib 1 a co req for classes with heavy writing.”

“I've started unpublishing Canvas materials during exams because I realized that one way that students cheat during exams is by looking at course materials on their phones during exams. I also institute a strict policy of having nothing on their desks during exams.”

“When I can, I spread students out in a classroom so that it is harder for them to look at each other's papers. I separate them from their stuff and their phones, and have recently required them to take off their smart watches. I haven't quite gone so far as to forbid bathroom breaks, but I'm close. If the student is gone too long, I take notice. I think facilitating dishonesty is a bigger problem than we might realize. The consequences for dishonesty (re BP and AP) are too mild. I don't report to administration because I don't expect to be supported. Students are fighting back now even when caught red handed, and the administration always caves. So even the mild punishments (failing grade on an assignment, letter in the file) often don't hold up. Faculty will continue to be as diligent as they can, and modify assignments to make it more difficult for students to be dishonest, but I think we need to work on the culture at the college, so that we all define dishonesty the same way, express it to the students the same way, and take severe action. That will not be easy, since dishonesty is so pervasive in the wider culture. As a start, I would like to see a college wide discussion of academic dishonesty and include students as well!”

“One must document everything: conversations, the circumstances surrounding probable cheating, attendance records. The best advice, however, is probably to watch students like a hawk and to be prepared to defend one's decision to the administration when necessary, especially in the event of pushback.”