

Resolutions on Academic Honesty
Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate
October 6, 2009

The Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate has been researching issues of academic honesty since the beginning of the fall semester of 2008 and is concerned about issues of academic honesty at the University. In a year-long investigation, the Senate has identified points of contact between students and faculty where interventions and information could have a positive effect on the problem. Research done both at the University and by external entities suggests a disconnect between what students and what faculty consider cheating. Therefore we recommend (1) additional and more detailed orientation for students on The Academic Code of Honor and the implications of violations, (2) annual updates to faculty on the types and relative frequencies of violations, and (3) reminding faculty of their obligations to explicitly inform students of academic honesty standards for each type of assignment.

Student Orientation to The Academic Code of Honor

Recommendation 1: The Faculty Senate recognizes that incoming undergraduate students need a more detailed explanation of what types of actions constitute academic dishonesty than can be provided during the orientation period at the beginning of the Fall Semester. Furthermore, understanding that freshmen are trying to incorporate a lot of information in a short period of time, this initial orientation should not be the final one students receive. The Faculty Senate therefore recommends that a second orientation be provided to all undergraduate students following the declaration of an academic major.

The second orientation in Recommendation 1 should explain The Academic Code of Honor and other issues of professionalism and norms of conduct in the student's chosen discipline. We discovered in our fact-finding that certain matters, such as the degree to which collaboration is appropriate, when sharing is stealing, etc. can be different across disciplines. We see this second orientation as having benefits beyond the honor code and being a general introduction to professionalism in a discipline.

Informing Faculty of the Scope of Academic Dishonesty

Different kinds of honor code violations may have different solutions. For instance, cheating in an exam may be resolved by having multiple versions of an exam, while plagiarism can be policed through some of the available computer programs. Trying to solve the problem requires targeted interventions. Moreover, faculty reported to the committee that the lack of information about the types of violations common at Notre Dame makes it harder for them to design assignments and exams that could minimize opportunities for academic dishonesty. This concern was especially true for new faculty despite the fact that all incoming faculty are given an orientation to The Academic Code of Honor. The information collected by the University and provided to the committee contained rare numbers, with no break down by type of violation.

Recommendation 2: The Faculty Senate recommends that the Office of the Provost provide the faculty annual updates about the number of each type of honor code violation as well as any trends in this information.

Faculty Responsibilities Under The Academic Code of Honor

Research done by the University and outside entities have demonstrated that faculty and students do not always agree on what constitutes “cheating.” As a result, the Faculty Guide to The Academic Code of Honor states that each instructor is “responsible for articulating the principles of academic integrity” to his or her students and for “explaining how these principles apply to work done” in the course.¹

Recommendation 3: The Faculty Senate recommends that prior to the beginning of every semester, each department remind faculty of their obligations under The Academic Code of Honor and encourage all faculty members to place on their syllabi specific instructions describing the principles he or she will use to judge whether an action constitutes a violation of The Academic Code of Honor for each category of assignment or exam.

During the course of the committee’s investigation of academic honesty issues, several faculty practices were identified that the committee feels should be shared, and recommended, to the faculty in general. These are measures that faculty members can take to minimize the number of honor code violations that occur as part of their courses and to reduce claims that a student “did not know an action was cheating”. One measure that is expected of all faculty in the Faculty Guide to The Academic Code of Honor is to explain the amount of collaboration allowed on each type of assignment. Recommendation 3 encourages faculty to include this information on his or her syllabus.

¹ Faculty Guide to The Academic Code of Honor, University of Notre Dame, p.6.