

Task Force on Integrity and Responsibility

Report on Academic Integrity Student/Faculty Survey with Recommendations

Introduction

This report provides a summary of the most salient conclusions from a recent (October, 2011) survey of undergraduates, graduate students and faculty on academic integrity at Hofstra University.¹ Drawn from a nationally normed instrument,² it makes clear that the vast majority of Hofstra students and faculty agree that academic integrity is central to Hofstra's mission, and that its pursuit is the shared responsibility of faculty, students and administrators. The survey also suggests that violations of academic integrity at Hofstra are no more frequent, but also no less frequent, than such violations at our peer institutions. In this context the shared recognition among faculty and students that academic integrity is an essential value, and that as a community we are obligated to sustain and foster this value, provides us with a real opportunity for improvement. To that end, the report concludes with two recommendations drawn from the information gathered here, and from previous Task Force deliberations.

I. Overall Awareness of Hofstra's Academic Integrity Policies

Hofstra students and faculty report high levels of awareness of academic integrity policies governing the university. 91% of all students and faculty at Hofstra indicate they have been informed about policies. Students (more so undergraduates than graduates) and faculty report that the topic is covered in syllabi and in classes, as well as on various resources such as websites, handbooks, etc. In fact, Hofstra's awareness numbers are significantly higher than is the case at peer schools or the overall national average.

II. Perceptions of Cheating at Hofstra – Students and Faculty

The survey suggests that faculty and students are largely convinced (faculty somewhat more so) that "cheating is a serious problem at Hofstra."

Interestingly, however, the data suggests that some faculty and students may believe the problem to be worse than the survey indicates. In fact, the mistaken notion that there

¹ The survey was administered October 6th – October 20th, 2010 and yielded a 15% response rate for students (N=1732), and a 29% response rate for faculty (N=343).

² Center for Academic Integrity, Clemson University, "Assessment Guide". "The Academic Integrity Assessment Guide is used throughout the US and abroad by colleges, universities, and secondary schools to assess the climate of academic integrity on their campuses." http://www.academicintegrity.org/assessment_guide/index.php

exists a widespread culture of cheating at Hofstra may be contributing to the problem by encouraging some students to feel as if they have to cheat in order to keep up with what they think “everyone else is doing.”

There is broad agreement among faculty and students about the seriousness that should be attached to various types of cheating behaviors. For example, among the top 10 behaviors likely to be considered the most serious, 9 overlap on faculty and student lists. Attitudes diverge somewhat over faculty vs. student expectations regarding collaborative work and homework. Students tend to see violations in this area as less serious than do faculty.

III. Perceptions regarding procedures for handling infractions.

Faculty and students indicate overall confidence in the existing systems. Students think faculty take the issue seriously (e.g. addressing the issue in syllabi and class) and that the penalties issued for violations are robust and appropriate. Approximately half of the faculty responding to the survey have cited at least one student for academic integrity violations in the previous 3 years, and most report satisfaction with the outcome and (where appropriate) follow up procedures. That said, a significant percentage of faculty report handling infractions “internally,” without filing an incident report in the provost’s office as Hofstra policy requires.

III. How much cheating and under what circumstances?

In general, Hofstra’s circumstances regarding academic integrity are consistent with what has been found on most other campuses of its size and type. While the percentages of students who engage in some specific “cheating behaviors” trend a bit higher than peer schools and national norms, the overall rates are roughly similar.

The percentage of Hofstra students who have engaged in what students and faculty agree are the most egregious forms of plagiarism is actually quite small, a pattern also followed by peer schools and in national averages.

	Ever	Once	More than once
Turning in a paper from a paper mill	2%	1%	1%
Submitting paper purchased	2%	1%	1%
Turning in work done by someone else	4%	3%	2%
Copying material almost word for word	4%	3%	1%

Cheating during exams is also relatively rare, except perhaps in the instance where a test is offered more than once and a student taking the later version asks someone who took it earlier about its contents.

	Ever	Once	More than once
Copying during a test w/ student’s knowl.	9%	5%	4%
Copying during a test w/o student’s knowl.	9%	6%	3%
Helping someone else cheat on test	12%	6%	5%

Unpermitted handwritten crib notes	11%	7%	4%
Getting answers from someone who took test	20%	12%	8%

The areas where student and faculty attitudes tend to diverge involve homework and group work. Significant percentages of students report ignoring explicit instructions to complete homework assignments on their own. This is consistent with findings at other institutions as well. But even in this area, where there might be either misunderstanding or disagreement over whether certain actions should be considered cheating, since approximately 2/3rds of Hofstra's students report following faculty instructions.

	Ever	Once	More than once
Working w/ others in person when told not to	36%	18%	18%
Working w/ others via email when told not to	26%	13%	13%
Copying another student's homework by hand	23%	13%	11%
Copying another student's homework digitally	13%	8%	5%

In sum:

The above numbers indicate that we are right to be concerned about promoting academic integrity at Hofstra. Not surprisingly, cheating does happen in ways that disadvantage those who play by the rules. Moreover, some students are receiving grades in courses without having mastered the relevant material. The good news, however, is that this study also reveals a large reservoir of good will among students committed to academic integrity. In developing programs to promote and enhance Hofstra's commitment to academic integrity we must look for ways to leverage this commitment as it aligns directly with goals of faculty and administrators.

Put simply, since peer pressure is often the most effective tool in encouraging changes in student behavior, Hofstra should look for ways to enlist the cooperation of students already committed to earning their degrees honestly. At the same time, this survey indicates that students look to their faculty and administrators for leadership on this issue. Building on and extending that partnership ought to be the primary focus of all Academic Integrity programs and policies at Hofstra.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Extending the P.R.I.D.E Principles – Hofstra's Honor Code

Currently, upon entry into the Hofstra community every student is introduced to the P.R.I.D.E. Principles that represent core values central to Hofstra's mission and aspirations.

Personal and Social Responsibility
Respect for Self and Others
Integrity, Ethics and Leadership

Diversity and Community Expression and Free Exchange

In an effort to extend and deepen the commitments outlined in the P.R.I.D.E. Principles, the Task Force on Integrity and Ethics is recommending that Hofstra faculty and students adopt an Honor Code with the following features:

1. A Code
2. A Process
3. An aspiration

The Honor Code

Full version: As a member of the Hofstra community I pledge to demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in all aspects of my life both inside and out of the classroom. I understand that I am accountable for everything I say and write. I will not misrepresent my academic work, nor will I give or receive unauthorized assistance for academic work. I agree to respect the rights of all members of the Hofstra community. I will be guided by the values expressed in the P.R.I.D.E. Principles. I accept the responsibility to follow this Honor Code at all times.

Short version: I pledge on my honor that I have done this work with honesty and integrity, without giving or receiving unauthorized assistance.

Every member of the Hofstra community will be given multiple opportunities to commit to the full version of the pledge. Subsequent to its adoption all new members will be expected to “take the pledge” as a condition of admission into the community.

The short version of the pledge is to be used in conjunction with the submission of assignments (e.g. papers, blue books, online work). It is meant to serve as a persistent reminder that this community is explicit about its dedication to academic integrity.

Original pledge when entering the university to be signed by student.
On all blue books and all assignments only notification of the Honor Code.

The Process

Upon adoption a web-based form containing the full pledge and explanatory information will be positioned in such a way that every member of the Hofstra community will have multiple opportunities to “take the pledge.” A student run campaign encouraging current students to “take the pledge” will be mounted. Public tabulation of the percentage or number of students, faculty and administrators who have taken the pledge will be part of the campaign.

All new members of the community will be required to “take the pledge” as a conditional component of the invitation to join the Hofstra community. Information about the

pledge will be woven into recruiting and admissions materials and the signing of the pledge will become a ritualized part of entrance into the Hofstra community. After adoption of the Honor Code, the short version of the pledge will be printed in blue books, added to online assignments, and become a routine feature of all other assignments. In short, *all* students will be asked to affirm the short version of the pledge each time they submit work for faculty review.

The Aspiration

The aspiration behind this program is to render visible the commitment of the overwhelming majority of students, faculty and administrators to academic integrity. Both the initial pledge and the regular reiteration of the shorter version will make known in a way that has not been the case till now, the extent to which the Hofstra community values and expects academic integrity on all levels.

While this effort will not eliminate cheating at Hofstra (nothing will!) it is our expectation, based upon our recent survey of student and faculty attitudes about academic integrity and the experience of colleges and universities with long-standing honor codes, that the steps outlined above will help reduce the percentage of students who engage in cheating behaviors. These expectations draw directly upon our conviction that it is harder to engage in cheating behaviors when one's friends and colleagues make public their resolve not to do so.

II. A Student, Faculty, Administrative Honor Board

The Task Force recommends the creation of a standing Honor Board with student, faculty and administrative representatives. This recommendation is based on the understanding that academic integrity is a responsibility shared among all community members. An Honor Code board with faculty, student and administrative members would represent to the community this sense of shared responsibility in a way that nothing else could.

The Charge: The Honor Board is responsible for promoting, protecting and upholding academic integrity at Hofstra University.

Membership: The Honor Board will be led by 3 co-chairs consisting of a faculty member, a student and an administrator. Additional membership will include 4 faculty, 4 students, 2 academic administrators and 2 student affairs administrators. Faculty members will be elected. Student members will be appointed jointly by the Provost and Vice President of Student Affairs. Academic administrative representatives will be appointed by the Provost. Student Affairs administrative representatives will be appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs. Given the responsibilities outlined below, the Honor Board should also have as ex-officio members a representative from University Relations and Admissions.

Responsibilities:

1. To oversee ongoing efforts to maintain the visibility and effectiveness of Hofstra's Honor Code via marketing campaigns, websites, and other promotional activities. This responsibility entails close coordination with University Relations, Admissions and the Student Government Association.
2. To form ad hoc appeals committees to resolve appeals involving academic integrity violations. The ad hoc committee will consist of 3 voting members chosen from the honor board, including 1 student, 1 academic administrator, and 1 faculty member. In addition the board will contain 3 non-voting members including representatives from the Provost's office, Student Affairs, and the department (normally the Department Chair) where the alleged violation was said to have occurred.
3. To coordinate the development of instructional and informational resources (including workshops, websites, visiting speakers etc.) designed to support community members (both faculty and students) in the area of academic integrity.
4. To undertake a comprehensive review of honor code policies and procedures, including the recommendation of updates and improvements at least once every three years.
5. To provide an annual report describing Honor Board activities to the Provost, the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association.

Meetings: The Honor Board would meet as needed, but normally conduct most work via sub-committees set up at the beginning of each academic year.

Terms: Members will be elected or appointed to 3 year terms with the exception of the initial board membership whose terms will be staggered as 3, 2 or 1 year to ensure the regular rotation of membership and the preservation of institutional memory.