Cheating In An Online Environment: How To Prevent, Detect & Deter Dishonesty

Perry C. Francis
Eastern Michigan University
pfrancis@emich.edu
Your Presenter

Perry C. Francis, Ed.D., NCC, ACS, LPC

- Eastern Michigan University
  - Department of Leadership & Counseling
    - Professor of Counseling
  - College of Education Clinical Suite
    - Counseling Clinic Coordinator

  - Email: pfrancis@emich.edu
  - Office: 734.487.4410
  - Web: people.emich.edu/pfrancis/
Our Goals for the Next 90 Minutes

• Explore the reasons for cheating and how the online environment supports cheating

• Learn about the must have syllabus statements that help support honesty

• Acquire relationship-building techniques that encourage open communication

• Discover creative assessment tools that discourage cheating

• Identify creative tools to detect cheating if it occurs
Differing Online Platforms

Due to the number of different online learning platforms, I will only be able to offer general information about strategies to use within these platforms.
The Story of Mr. Smith

- Registered for online course with friends
- They got together to take the tests together online
- Shared test questions through Google Doc along with right & wrong answers
- First student usually did poorly, but all improved over time; rotated who went first
Why Cheat?

The reasons are the same as they would be for a face-to-face course

- Fear of failure
- Inability to handle difficult material
- Tedium
- Time management issues

- Cheating is unacceptable at anytime
  - 60% women
  - 35% men
- All truly understood cheating is unacceptable
- Cheating generally declines over the life of the course
Motivation to Cheat

The reason for obtaining an education has shifted over time

• Before…
  – Self-fulfillment
  – Love of learning
  – Obtaining critical thinking skills

• After…
  – Obtaining credential
    • Growing number of certification programs
  – Better job – Better life
  – $$$ Money
Pop Quiz #1

Prevalence of Cheating

• In High School
  – What is the percentage of HS students who admit to cheating?

• In High School
  – How many students see nothing wrong with cheating?
Prevalence of Cheating

• Depends on the setting

  ▪ High school:

    • 80% admitted to cheating

    • 50% did not see cheating as necessarily wrong

    • 95% who did cheat were not caught
Pop Quiz #2

Prevalence of Cheating

• In the college setting:  
  – How many college students admit to cheating?

• In the college setting:  
  – How many college students admit to cheating on a REGULAR basis?
Prevalence of Cheating

• Depends on the setting
  - College
    • 75% admitted to cheating
    • 20-30% admit to cheating on a regular basis
Does Everyone Cheat?

Ariely’s (2012) book: *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves* chronicles several different social science experiments that demonstrates most people, given the right set of circumstances, will cheat in small and large ways.
Last Question!

How many college students cheat in the online environment?
Prevalence of Cheating in an Online Environment

• Surveys present varied data
  
  ▪ Results from different schools and regions produce different results

  ▪ Range: 3% to 26%
## Perceived Seriousness of Cheating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/Exam</th>
<th>U/G %</th>
<th>G %</th>
<th>Fac %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning what was on the test from someone else</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping someone cheat on an exam</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copying from another student w/ their knowledge</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with others on assignments when told not to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing/copying w/o attribution (written source)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing/copying w/o attribution (internet)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving unpermitted help</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Faculty have observed the behavior in a course (McCabe, 2005)*
Do Faculty Contribute to Cheating?

YES!!

- Major reasons cheating continues:
  - Students rarely get caught
  - Faculty fail to follow through when cheating is observed
  - Fear of lawsuits
  - Time involved in pursuing cheating incidence
What’s a Professor to Do?
Build a Relationship

• Get to know your students

  ▪ The greater communication between you and the students helps to decrease the motivation to cheat

  • Students who feel a great “distance” with an instructor cheat more

  • Students were less likely to cheat if they respected and felt respected by the instructor
Build a Relationship

• First threaded discussion assignment
  ▪ Self introduction (including the instructor)
    • Everyone posts a picture
  ▪ Interact with the students by asking:
    • What are you hoping to learn?
    • How will this knowledge help you achieve your goals?
    • Other questions to promote “conversation”
Build a Relationship

• Second threaded discussion
  ▪ Review the syllabus
    • Academic Honesty & Dishonesty
      o Have clear examples and guidelines
      o Discuss academic integrity
      o Ask students for examples of cheating and how cheating impacts the course
Build a Relationship

- A student’s propensity to cheat increases when s/he thinks others are cheating
  - 42.6% of cheaters believed peers were cheating
Build a Relationship

- Second threaded discussion
  - As you discuss academic integrity, teach how to be successful

- NOT
  - How you are going to catch them cheating!
Academic Contracts

• Presenting students with an academic honesty policy can minimize dishonesty.

• Contract:
  - Clear, simple policies
  - Tailored to the specifics of the course
  - Clear examples of what IS and what is NOT acceptable
Sample Simple Contract

I affirm that I have read and understood and will comply with the following two texts:

1. The description of plagiarism given in the University’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters

   It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:

   (d) to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism.

2. Dr. Margaret Proctor's advice on “how not to plagiarize”
   http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html

I also understand the necessity of:

1. Acknowledging dependence on another’s ideas with proper citations

2. Acknowledging the use of another’s words with quotation marks or indenting and proper citations.
Sample Contracts

• Purdue engineering
  ▪ https://engineering.purdue.edu/ee364/acad_honesty_contract.txt

• Professor Darnell
Beware…

- The 90/10 rule…
  - People generally focus on the 10% of their lives that are going wrong and overlook the 90% of their lives that are going normal or well
  - Do not over focus on cheaters…it builds defensiveness in the students who are then more likely to cheat
Going too Negative

• When presenting information about academic integrity:
  - Balance the “Should Nots…” with the “Here is what successful students do…”
  - Give positive examples of writing style, success, and study hints
Walk the Talk

• As previously noted…
  ▪ Students cheat if they believe they will not be disciplined
  ▪ If they think you will not act, they might…
Use Multiple Assessments

- Never depend on one type of assessment
  
  - Multiple forms create a more in depth picture of the student
  
  - Makes it harder to cheat throughout the course
Writing Assignment Strategies

- Writing assignments are generally the same online as well as face to face

1. Give clear instructions

2. Electronically archive all written assignments for comparison

3. Review online sources (term paper sites) prior to giving written assignment
Writing Assignment Strategies

4. Use extensive threaded discussion to obtain writing sample for students

5. When possible, use short answer/essay questions on exams

6. Use plagiarism detection websites as tools to improve writing

7. Give written assignments that are directly related to specific material discussed online to prevent ghost writing
Teach How to Write

• Include within your platform a section on how to write

• Research supports idea teaching is more effective than deterrence
  - Dee & Jacobs (2010)
Small Clues
(Krask, 2007)

• Unusual line breaks, margins, or spacing

• Inconsistent quote marks
  - Microsoft Word and WordPerfect use curly quotation marks (“and”), while material copied and pasted from the World Wide Web may use straight quotes

• The paper may cite a “mystery instructor” from another college
Small Clues
(Krask, 2007)

• Unusual spelling, as is used in other English-speaking countries. “Colour” and “flavour” are typical examples

• References that refer to publication cities of publishers that are outside the United States.
  - For example, Prentice-Hall publishes in Sydney within Australia, while it publishes in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey here in the United States
Small Clues
(Krask, 2007)

Paper may be somewhat off-topic with occasional paragraphs that the student has inserted that are on-topic
Meaningful Assessments

• Give students a clear rationale for all assignments
  - Assignments that are perceived as worthless, too hard or easy, promote cheating
    - “What’s the point…I’m not learning anything…”
  - Assignments that require application of knowledge to a related situation give students a chance to apply what they know and demonstrate mastery
Exams & Quizzes

• Major Exams
  ▪ When possible and necessary have student arrange for proctoring
    • Testing centers (may involve $$$)
    • Local Community College Testing Center
    • Public Libraries
    • Police/Fire Stations
    • Places of worship & clergy
  ▪ Proctor receives password to access the exam on the day of the exam
Exams & Quizzes

• Use of a Test Bank

  ▪ Some online platforms allow the instructor to create a test bank
    • Create 2 test banks and change sources from semester to semester or rotate questions throughout the quiz
    • Change order of the answers in 2\textsuperscript{nd} test bank

  ▪ Create two exams and randomly assign students to one of the exams
    • Access granted through password
Exams & Quizzes

• Short answer justification for quizzes

  ▪ Adding short answer justification sections for randomly chosen multiple choice questions calls for higher order thinking and discourages cheating
Exams & Quizzes

• Time Limits

  ▪ Most platforms allow for time limits on quizzes

  • After time is up, quiz closes down and is graded

  • Prevents student from exceeding time limits

  • Allows for you to see how much time student is spending taking the exam
Exams & Quizzes

• Chat Room Quizzes
  ▪ For those who are chat room savvy, creating a private chat room for each student to take the exam at specific times helps defeat group cheating work
  ▪ Allows flexibility to create different exams for specific students
    • Work intensive
Question Construction

How you create an exam or quiz also promotes honesty by making it more difficult to cheat.
Exams & Quizzes
(Krask, 2007)

• Design questions that could not be answered easily unless the individual has done the previous work in the course

• Have students apply personal experience when answering questions

• For courses that test using calculations, give each student the same exam with numbers changed slightly (rotating the answers)
Exams & Quizzes
(Krask, 2007)

• Use multiple-choice questions only for ungraded assignments

• Use “rote memory” questions for “gauging the pace of the course and identifying students who are lost”

• Use multiple-choice tests to emphasize important terms and concepts
Exams & Quizzes
(Krask, 2007)

• Nelson said that he permits referring to the textbook for answers
  ▪ “so much the better; for some, sad to say, it may be the only time they read the text” (1998, pp. 7-8)

• Design open book questions so that they are more than “scavenger hunts” for correct answers
Exams & Quizzes

• Locking computer down

  ▪ Secureexam Browser service (and other platforms like it, e.g., Resondus LockDown) offer high tech solutions to taking exams
    • Fingerprint technology
    • Facial recognition
    • Proctoring services

  ▪ Additionally, it locks down the computer so no other program can run while the exam is running
Group Projects

• Vote you off the island
  ▪ Randomly assign students to groups
  ▪ At the end of the assignments, students evaluate one another (confidentially) as to the quality of work
  ▪ Becomes a simple gauge as to who worked and who did not
    • Look for consistency in the evaluations
Summary

• Cheating does happen and there is no magic way to stop all cheating

• Use multiple meaningful assessments
  - Structure threaded discussion
  - Quizzes/Exams
  - Papers (short and/or long)
  - Projects
Summary

• Prevention is the best way to stop cheating before it happens
  ▪ Build relationship with students at the beginning of the course
  ▪ Teach how to be successful
  ▪ Review the meaning of Academic Integrity
Summary

- Prevention is the best way to stop cheating before it happens
  - Get buy in from the students (contract)
  - Openly discuss cheating and let students know you are willing to help them succeed and willing to act if they cheat
Summary

• Test banks are good
  ▪ Rotate questions and answers
  ▪ Split form tests

• Time limits for exams

• Short answer justification for random quiz questions
Summary

• Use plagiarism software as teaching tool

• Know the small “cut and paste” mistakes for papers
Contact Information:

Email: pfrancis@emich.edu
Office: 734.487.4410
Web: people.emich.edu/pfrancis/

www.innovativeeducators.org