Tips for Preventing Academic Dishonesty

Tips for Fostering Academic Integrity & Preventing Honor Code Violations

- Get to know your students so they feel a greater sense of personal investment in the course, and therefore may be more motivated to act with integrity.

There are greater risks of cheating in classes in which students feel anonymous or uninvolved. Consider ways in which teaching methods that foster active participation can be used so that students develop intrinsic motivation to learn and to perform at a high level.

- Design tests and writing assignments so that cheating isn’t easy.

On tests, ask students to show their work, not just their answers. If using multiple choice questions, use alternate forms (which can be keyed in on Scantron answer sheets) or alternate short answer (at the top of the page) and multiple choice at the bottom where it’s not so easy to copy. On major research papers, require students to submit the work in several phases (such as a list of sources with summaries, an outline, and the paper itself).

- Before an Exam

In order to reiterate the Honor Code’s expectation of student academic integrity, many faculty members take special care to emphasize how seriously they take academic integrity before distributing exams.

Some strategies include:

1. Reiterate the reasons why the Honor Code exists;
2. Require that everyone to sign the Honor Pledge before the instructor leaves the room;
3. Indicate that papers on which the Pledge is not signed will not be graded;  
4. Reiterate the high expectations of student conduct; and  
5. Reiterate faculty’s obligation to report suspected misconduct to the Honor System.

- **Communicate expectations clearly.**

Include a statement regarding the application of the Honor Code on the syllabus and on each assignment or exam. Provide specific information on the extent to which students may work together and style of citations they should use. Written instructions can avoid unnecessary disputes about these ground rules later on. Help students understand that they are responsible for asking questions if they have any doubt about what is permitted, and make it easy for them to inquire. Consider providing a handout or an attachment to the syllabus that addresses the issue of collaboration specifically, and give special consideration to issues that may arise due to the culture of instant/shared information via online resources.

- **Don’t assume that students understand what plagiarism is and why it’s a problem.**

Recognize the points of tension and potential confusion such as those portrayed in the handout developed by the Purdue University Writing Center: Online Writing Lab: Avoiding Plagiarism [1]. Additionally, recognize that not all students will come from an educational background where citation is practiced in the way demanded in U.S. higher education. Lastly, consider the special concerns or resources that may need to be addressed and utilized to help those students from unintentionally committing an act of academic dishonesty.

- **Become familiar with the easy ways you can detect plagiarism or other academic misconduct, should it occur.**

Signs can include lack of references, strange formatting, language that is out of character for student writers (such as unfamiliar words), and more. There are also a growing number of plagiarism detection tools and strategies (including simple internet search techniques) that instructors can use to check the academic integrity of students’ work.

- **Enlist student support in maintaining the Honor Code.**

UNC’s Honor System process is largely student-administered. UNC has no formal requirement that students report suspected misconduct, but students nevertheless play a vital role in ensuring the academic integrity of the Carolina community. Encourage students both to discourage cheating by their peers and to share information about instances of cheating faculty and other appropriate parties, on a confidential basis, if necessary.