Transcript: School of Business Faculty Practices for Fostering Academic Integrity for Professional Success

Brent Duncan, PhD
Dean of Faculty
School of Business
Overview

Greetings. I'm Dr. Brent Duncan, Dean of Faculty for the School of Business. Thank you for joining me to explore faculty practices that foster academic integrity for professional success.

During our prior discussion, we focused on WHY students and faculty should develop academic integrity as a set of skills for professional success. Today, we'll look at survey results that identify School of Business faculty practices for understanding HOW to foster integrity in our classrooms and students. This will be in the form of four brief podcasts; heads up, there will be quizzes throughout each podcast.

We'll finish up by asking you to develop and share an intervention approach using university tools, resources, and personnel to help an at-risk student.

With that, let's get to work.

Establishing a Framework for Fostering Integrity in the School of Business Classroom

This section focuses on establishing a framework on which we can build integrity into our classrooms.

We'll start by reviewing key integrity practices that School of Business faculty already implement in their classrooms, and compare these practices to a research-based approach for addressing cheating behavior in higher education. We'll expand on this framework to consider best practices recommended by School of Business faculty for taking a more holistic approach to fostering integrity of faculty and student work. Finally, I'll show a practical approach for assuring the integrity of our assignments so we can encourage original work that returns greater value for students.
Practices for Fostering Integrity in the Classroom

Let's start by taking a quick look at how School of Business faculty generally foster integrity in the classroom.

Pulling from the School of Business Academic Integrity Survey, this chart shows the most common practices faculty deploy for helping students assure the integrity and credibility of their work, and how much we say we’re using each practice. We’ll review each of these during this presentation. For now, a brief look at the chart helps identify some areas of significant strength, while illuminating some important opportunities for improvement.

Let's see how these practices fit within a research-based higher education approach for addressing student integrity issues.

Traditional Framework for Addressing Cheating Behavior in Higher Education

As we covered in a prior presentation, research from traditional higher education has identified four basic steps for dealing with cheating behavior (Molnar & Kletke, 2012; Simkin & McLeod, 2010). The preferred approach we’re encouraging in the School of Business includes these general categories, but integrates important tools and practices for developmental interventions that foster academic integrity as a set of skills for professional success.

Let's see how the School of Business faculty and approach fits within this traditional framework.

How School of Business Faculty Define Expectations

Under “Define Expectations,” almost all School of Business faculty establish a foundation for fostering integrity of student work by communicating acceptable practices as follows:

- In their Faculty Policies documents
- By initiating and facilitating discussions in the classroom
- By demonstrating and modeling acceptable practices for the students

These practices help lay a foundation for effective intervention when we identify at-risk behaviors in student work.
How School of Business Faculty Explain Consequences

Under “Explain Consequences,” almost all School of Business faculty help students avoid the risks of bad behavior, but we have a need to shift our discussion to include an emphasis on the benefits of assuring the integrity and credibility of work. It is especially important for us to connect integrity practices to career success.

How School of Business Faculty Monitor Work

Under “Monitor Work,” most faculty are using basic monitoring tools, like Plagiarism Checker, to catch incidental and unsophisticated cheating.

An area for improvement here is for us to increase our awareness of cheat mills, cheat tools, and cheat practices that students might deploy. Another practice is to leverage Internet search engines and our own experience to investigate potentially problematic content. Also, when we run into situations that we’re not sure how to resolve, we should feel comfortable reaching out to the Academic Help Desk for guidance and support.
How School of Business Faculty Reinforce Standards

With “Reinforce Standards” being the control component of integrity strategy, lack of effective control can undermine even the best laid plans.

In this area, most faculty say they’re using developmental feedback to help students recognize the dissonance between performance and expectations, then coaching them to set goals for taking action to close the gap (Rangel, Camerer, & Montague, 2008). However, the survey results reflect a need for improvement by integrating university tools, resources, and personnel to support our in-class interventions. For example, very few faculty file Early Alerts, and even fewer use the Academic Violation Tracker. These are fundamental tools for engaging the university to support faculty in-class interventions. And, they are a reflection of faculty engagement, which can offset retaliatory SEOCs.

It is especially important to realize that we are not alone in our commitment to support student success. When we identify at risk behaviors, we should feel comfortable conducting interventions that engage university resources and personnel so the students can get support outside of our classrooms.

A Holistic Approach to Fostering Integrity in the Classroom

Some faculty suggested in the survey results a best practice for fostering integrity. Some faculty suggested in the survey results a best practice for fostering integrity by developing cheat-resistant assignments to promote original work and enhance value. We can do this by checking the integrity of the default assignments and making changes to assure original work. Let’s drill down to see how this works.
Faculty Practices for Fostering Academic Integrity for Professional Success

Syllabus Modification Guidelines

Even before starting the course, faculty can lay a foundation for assuring the integrity of the classroom by customizing the default syllabus. The Faculty Handbook (University of Phoenix, 2014a) states that we’re expected to make a personalized syllabus, as long as we:

- Stay within course objectives.
- Use the course materials.
- Maintain academic rigor.
- Don’t change signature assignments.

Encouraging Integrity Through Syllabus Design

We can test the integrity of an assignment by using the same technique that some students use to find cheating material:

Copy the name of the assignment into a search engine to see how many cheat mill resources are available for that particular assignment.

The results can be disappointing, if not horrifying. But, this illuminates the universal challenge in higher education to assure the integrity of student and faculty work.

Fortunately, we as faculty are empowered to fix the problem at the syllabus level by making changes that promote originality in student work, while increasing learning value.

If we don’t find cheat mill resources for the assignment, then we can use the default, or make whatever changes we feel necessary to meet the needs of our students.

If we determine that the integrity of the default assignment is compromised, we should modify or replace the assignment to promote original work.
Modify Assignments to Promote Original Work

If you find that students of questionable ethics and competency have undermined the integrity of the assignment by posting their substandard papers on the Internet, we can make some simple changes that promote original work. For example:

- Change the name of the assignment.
- Develop the assignment as an experiential learning opportunity by changing “pick a company” to “pick your company or a company that you would like to work for”.
- Require that the student interview a manager responsible for the function or activity that they’re writing about.
  
  o Provide them with recommended questions for the interview.
  o Have the students include the interview as a primary source for the assignment.

- Require that students get value for their tuition investment by using course materials and University Library resources. For example:
  
  o Primary Source: Course Text
  o Secondary Source: Other course materials
  o Tertiary Source: Library

- Discourage lazy and risky research practices by restricting Internet search engines as primary research tools for course content. Allow Internet research only:
  
  o For tertiary sources and market research
  o After the students have exhausted the premium resources they’re paying for in the course and University Library
  o If the students know how to sift through the garbage to find the gems
Practices for Fostering Integrity in the Classroom

Concluding this section, let’s go back to the initial slide, which shows how School of Business faculty foster integrity in their classrooms and connect it to the traditional framework for dealing with cheating in the classroom.

The survey showed that faculty generally follow appropriate practices for communicating expectations and consequences and monitoring performance. It indicates that we have significant opportunity for improving our reinforcement practices.

School of Business Integrity Practices Within the Traditional Framework

For the rest of today’s workshop, let’s focus on the classroom-level steps for dealing with cheating. This will help us to:

- Celebrate our strengths in fostering integrity in student work.
- Illuminate some opportunities for improvement.
- Identify faculty practices for strengthening the integrity of student and faculty work.
Define Expectations & Explain Consequences

Under “Define Expectations,” almost all School of Business faculty establish a foundation for fostering integrity of student work by communicating acceptable practices. Under “Explain Consequences,” almost all School of Business faculty help students avoid the risks of bad behavior.

We hope to shift our emphasis from focusing only on risks of cheating to the benefits of assuring the integrity and credibility of work. It is especially important for us to help students connect academic integrity to professional success.

Defining Expectations Lays the Foundation for Effective Intervention

“Define Expectations” serves as the feed forward step. This is important for laying a strong foundation for later intervention through which we can help struggling students recognize disconnects between performance and expectations so we can coach them to set goals for taking action to close the gap (Rangel, Camerer, & Montague, 2008).

Without the “Define Expectation” step, any intervention attempt is mostly reactionary, mitigating potential efforts to help students develop success competencies. This is why it was so good to see that almost all School of Business faculty say they are taking necessary steps to define expectations at the start of a class.
How School of Business Faculty Define Expectations

92% of School of Business faculty include verbiage in their Instructor policies document that reinforces the Student Code of Academic Integrity, while 74% require students to acknowledge that they understand and will adhere to the Student Code of Academic Integrity in the classroom.

In addition to this, other faculty:

- Provide students with links to student resources for APA and plagiarism, like the Plagiarism Guide and Plagiarism Tutorial in the Center for Writing Excellence.
- Review and demonstrate those resources in the classroom.
- Integrate the resources into classroom activities.

Some faculty have noticed that their emphasis needs to shift from “preventing plagiarism” to “assuring integrity” by emphasizing benefits along with the consequences. Which takes us to the next step…
How School of Business Faculty Explain Consequences

75% of School of Business faculty communicate possible consequences of cheating practices at the start of classes. Their explanations tend to be in line with university training, which includes a bad grade for a paper, a failing grade for the course, a warning letter, suspension, and expulsion (University of Phoenix, 2010). A limitation of this approach is that it focuses on academic consequences, without helping the students understand the risks of developing bad practices that can harm their careers.

Some faculty help students understand how such behaviors not only undermine the value of their diplomas, they can also threaten their careers. But, negatives can only go so far as motivators. So, some faculty emphasize the benefits of developing integrity as an academic competency for professional success. For example, by assuring the credibility and integrity of their work, students will:

- Develop the knowledge, skills, and practices they are paying for.
- Put legitimate value into a diploma that can help to advance their careers.
- Build a foundation for career success.
Monitor Work

Under “Monitor Work,” most faculty are using basic monitoring tools, like Plagiarism Checker, to catch incidental and unsophisticated cheating. Let’s also consider how we might increase our awareness of cheating tools and resources, leverage some of these tools to investigate potentially problematic content, and connect with university resources and personnel for guidance and support.

Why Monitoring is Important

Goals theory research helps us understand the importance of actively monitoring student performance to assure ethical practices that lay the foundation for academic and professional success. In short, demanding, goal-driven environments can drive increases in unethical behavior (Schweitzer, Ordonez, & Douma, 2002). That does not mean that goals are bad; goal-setting is the most research-supported motivation tool we have. However, awareness that intense, goal-driven environments can influence unethical behavior helps us understand the importance of monitoring performance in academic and professional settings.

Social psychology research helps us to understand that even the perception of observation influences behavior (Aronson, 2008). When individuals think they’re being watched, they tend to do what they think they’re supposed to do. This can also result in the Hawthorne Effect—"the boss is watching, so look busy." It is important to make sure the attention event, the monitoring, is accompanied with substantive feedback or coaching that influences permanent changes in behavior (Duncan, 2013).
Faculty Use of Plagiarism Checker

70% of School of Business faculty use Plagiarism Checker to monitor similarity. While that sounds good on the surface, let’s dig deeper to see how faculty are using Plagiarism Checker to monitor student work. 35% of faculty run through Plagiarism Checker every paper in a course. 15% of faculty run one set of papers per course through Plagiarism Checker. 45% of faculty only use Plagiarism Checker for papers they suspect of containing plagiarism. About 5% never use Plagiarism Checker.

It is important to consider which approach might be more effective? Obviously, the Never category is not the solution. But, does “one set of papers per course” offer a “just right” feeling between “every paper” and “suspected papers?”

Limitations of Plagiarism Checker

Many faculty seek a common ground by placing responsibility for checking on the student, with 64% saying they require students to submit a Plagiarism Checker report with their papers. While this can be a highly effective tool for helping honest students avoid accidental plagiarism and develop effective proofing practices that can enhance integrity of their work, understanding the limitations of Plagiarism Checker can help illuminate practices for improving monitoring.

In short, all Plagiarism Checker does is compare the submitted work to content on the Internet; the faculty report also includes a comparison with other student papers (University of Phoenix, 2014b). This makes Plagiarism Checker a good tool for catching accidental, incidental, and unsophisticated cheating. However, it does not catch the most egregious forms of intentional cheating, like paying someone to write an original paper, feeding papers through a paraphrasing tool, or colluding to help others cheat.

Also, some students can misinterpret the results, thinking that their clean report means the paper is plagiarism free. When faculty confront these students with a faculty report that shows high amounts of similarity with other student papers, the student reaction can range from confused to hostile, and even belligerent.
Best Practices in Monitoring

This leads to one of the best practices for improving monitoring effectiveness and the potential interventions that follow. In short: Explain the monitoring process during the “Define Expectations” stage. This helps assure potential problems are at least covered in your feed forward. This can help anticipate and reduce cheating behaviors, while providing a more solid foundation for later interventions. The Plagiarism Manual in the Center for Writing Excellence is a good tool you might consider introducing to students during your “Define Expectations” stage.

Other practices faculty recommend for improving monitoring include:

- Spot check posts with an Internet search engine. This is especially important for online environments, in which an increasing number of students and faculty are copying content directly from the Internet and pasting it as their participation posts.
- When we find a suspect post or recognize a pattern, we can copy a set of student posts into a Microsoft Word document and run it through Plagiarism Checker.
- While only 15% of faculty are running the first set of papers for a course through Plagiarism Checker, this seems to be an effective practice for identifying potential problems early in a course so faculty have time to conduct interventions to support student success. The practice can also help students understand that faculty members are actively working to support the integrity of their work and the classroom. Put another way, this helps the students know you’re watching, so they should be on their best behavior. And, if we follow up such attention events with substantive coaching and support, that best behavior can become habit.
Reinforce Standards

The most powerful car won't go far without a steering wheel and breaks.

In this section, we're going to look at the steering wheel and brake elements of integrity strategy, including, faculty practices in feedback, intervention, and engagement to correct at-risk behaviors and support student success. At the end, we'll ask you to apply the lessons and practices to develop and share an intervention strategy for helping an at-risk student in your class. So, from here, let's take a look at how School of Business faculty say they reinforce standards to foster integrity in their classrooms and student work.

Reinforcement is the “Control” of Integrity Strategy

“Reinforce Standards" is essentially the “control” mechanism of integrity strategy. As we know from strategic management practices in business, lack of effective controls can undermine even the best laid plans, inhibiting strategic success and learning (Hitt, Ireland, & Hoskisson, 2015; Schermerhorn & Bachrach, 2015). Looking at the survey results, this seems to be an area where we have the greatest opportunity for improvement. This could be illuminating discovering why some at-risk students can advance through the program without correction.

Faculty Reinforcement Practices

88% of faculty say they’re using developmental feedback to help students recognize and correct practices that undermine the integrity and credibility of their work. However, the limited use of university intervention tools indicate that most faculty may feel they’re alone in fostering integrity of student work.

While the Early Alert System is designed specifically for faculty to engage the university to support in-class interventions (University of Phoenix, 2014c), only 34% of faculty submit Early Alerts for students. Fewer than 13% of faculty occasionally use the Academic Violation Tracker system. 60% of faculty report that they never file AVTs, while 25% rarely file AVTs. It is important to note that any classroom sanctions beyond a warning should result in an AVT so that the student can get university-level support beyond the classroom. Sanctions that should trigger an AVT include assignment resubmission, deducted points, and reduction of grade.
What this seems to suggest is that we may be good at providing students with feedback on integrity issues, but we have an opportunity to learn more about organizing and conducting interventions to realign some students with performance expectations.

Let’s dig deeper into these areas to see where we might improve, and to explain more of what is happening behind the scenes when a faculty member engages the university to support in-class interventions for at-risk students.

Faculty Use of Early Alerts

The Early Alert System and Academic Violation Tracker are essential tools for organizing and conducting interventions to support struggling students, but, they seem to be highly underutilized:

- Nearly 60% of faculty say they either never or rarely use the Early Alert System.
- 27% say they occasionally use it at a rate of 2 to 3 times a course.
- Only about 7% of faculty seem to regularly use the Early Alert system, from 4 to 6 times a course, while 2% use it quite frequently, more than 6 times a course.

Missed Benefits of Early Alert System

The limited use of the Early Alert System is unfortunate, because student success research generally shows that early intervention is a key to helping students overcome behaviors that could inhibit academic and professional success, and interventions are more effective when we can coordinate efforts of faculty and university to connect students with resources and training (Bean, 2005).

The Early Alert System is especially important for engaged faculty, for the following reasons:

- Help us know that we’re not alone in helping the student.
- Help assure that the student will get university-level support outside of our classroom, even when we’re no longer working with the student.
- When used correctly, the Early Alert System can also provide us with guidance, feedback, and support for our in-class intervention efforts.
Why Faculty Don’t Use the Early Alert System

If an Early Alert System is such an important intervention tool for supporting struggling students, then why don’t so many School of Business faculty use it?

• 50% of faculty believe their students don’t need it.
• 45% say they believe that in-class interventions are sufficient.
• 22% say the Early Alert Form does not include options relevant to student needs.
• 8% say it’s not their job; that the student should take responsibility for contacting their counselor.
• 3% say they don’t know how to use it.
• 15% say that they believe the EAS is ineffective.
Myth Busting the Early Alert System

Let's individually address and dispel each myth driving these perceptions.

Too late once the problem is noticed

Early Alerts are important even if a faculty member identifies issues while processing final grades. Even engaged faculty can only do so much for students who are struggling with integrity and ethics issues. By processing an early alert late in a class, we can help assure the student continues to get support beyond our class.

Not aware of the form

The Early Alert System and Academic Violation Tracker forms are available through the Performance link in the course syllabus. Within the syllabus, go to the Classroom home page and select Performance. Select the Alert icon next to the student’s name. Select the most appropriate option and send the form. If you don’t feel the form contains a sufficient option or want to provide additional information, send an e-mail to academic.services@phoenix.edu.

Not my job

For faculty who feel it’s not their job to engage the university to support student success, fostering integrity and credibility of student work is a fundamental role of School of Business faculty. In our mission to develop leaders for business excellence, we should implement intervention steps when we discover students are engaging in behaviors and practices that could threaten their careers. In-class interventions can include using the Early Alert System to engage counselors to support your in-class efforts to support student success.

Black hole

Legal and institutional barriers prohibit direct contact between counselors and faculty, so, by design, the Early Alert Form is a one-way information flow with legally-approved descriptors. But, please understand that counselors DO receive and respond to the Early Alerts. You can open a two-way dialog with counselors through the Academic Help Desk, which can serve as a liaison between you and the counselor. Let me show you how this works.
Coordinating Interventions Through Early Alerts

Because legal and structural barriers prohibit direct communication between faculty and counselors, each party can be unaware of what the other does, yet both are on the front line in their roles to support student success. The Early Alert System provides the legally approved process through which faculty can engage counselors to support in-class interventions. However, as we saw earlier, some faculty perceive that the Early Alert form is ineffective, while others are not aware of the form.

For their part, counselors can be frustrated when they receive an early alert, because the form tends to provide insufficient information for helping them understand what needs to be done to support the student.

Fortunately, the process includes a solution that almost everyone tends to miss: An e-mail option through which faculty can provide details that cannot be communicated through the form. The following is the recommended approach to engaging counseling to support in-class integrity intervention efforts using Early Alerts:

1. **Send the Early Alert.** Check your faculty e-mail for the auto-response from the Academic Help Desk. This e-mail provides the contact information for the Academic Help Desk.

2. **Send an e-mail to the Academic Help Desk** with details that can help the counselor know what is wrong, what you’re doing about it in class, and what you hope the counselor can do. The Academic Help Desk will filter the e-mail for any possible information that might be considered a FERPA violation, then forward it to the counselor. The Academic Help Desk representative typically also follows up with the faculty member.
Faculty Use of Academic Violation Tracker (AVT)

A huge gap seems to exist between the number of papers faculty feed through the Plagiarism Checker and the number of plagiarism issues faculty file through the Academic Violation Tracker. While nearly 95% of faculty say they either occasionally or often feed student papers through Plagiarism Checker, only 13% report that they regularly file plagiarism issues through the Academic Violation Tracker.

Reasons faculty give for not filing AVTs include:

- They are able to correct integrity issues in class so they don’t feel it’s necessary to escalate to the university.
- The violations are not egregious enough to justify intervention.
- They don’t identify any integrity issues.
- It’s too much of a hassle.
- It’s not their job.
- They don’t know how.

This would be acceptable if it reflected a reality in which virtually no cheating is occurring. However, external research in general higher education trends and internal classroom audits suggest a different reality in which we must ask to what degree we as faculty contribute to student integrity issues through inattention, unawareness, and unintentional modeling.
Faculty Best Practices in Reinforcement

Let's wrap up this section by returning to the initial findings that illuminate opportunities for improving our reinforcement practices, and review some best practices some faculty recommended through the Integrity Survey.

Some faculty feel they're alone in supporting student success. This is only the case if we don’t know how to reach out for help. The university has well-established processes for supporting faculty in their effort to foster student success. This includes the Early Alert System and Academic Violation Tracker system we already discussed.

But, it is also important that we recognize that the Academic Help Desk is always ready to answer our questions and guide us through challenging situations in class and with students.

As faculty, we should feel empowered in our efforts to assure the integrity and credibility of student work, even if it creates uncomfortable situations. Our job is to prepare future leaders for business excellence—and the school applauds faculty who support student success through the university framework.

That student who graduates lacking basic competencies in academic integrity and professional ethics may become poised for business failure, which reflects on the university and faculty. In other words, fostering integrity and credibility of student work helps assure the value of the diploma, while strengthening our credibility as faculty. It is also important for us to recognize as faculty that documenting intervention efforts through Early Alerts, AVTs, and outreach to the Academic Help desk communicates to the university that we are engaged in supporting student success.
REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY

Let’s work together to develop and share specific practices for conducting interventions for supporting academic integrity as a competency for professional success.

For this exercise, do the following:

1. Review the Plagiarism Guide and other Academic Integrity resources in the Center for Writing Excellence. Consider taking the Plagiarism Mastery Test in the Plagiarism Guide to test your knowledge.
2. Consider an integrity issue from one of your courses.
3. For this situation, develop an intervention approach that integrates the Academic Integrity resources, your verbiage for initiating a dialog with the student, an Early Alert, and an Academic Violation tracker (if egregious).
4. Answer the following questions:
   a. What are the intervention steps you would take to help the student recognize and change practices?
   b. What is the verbiage you would use to initiate a dialog that helps the student recognize and correct the practice?
   c. At what point would you file an AVT?
   d. What do you do if the student drops after you initiate an intervention?
5. Post your response and discuss with your colleagues.
References


