

SWAP SESSION NEWSLETTER

None of us is as smart as all of us. -Roy Disney

**SWAP SESSION TOPIC: "Collaborative Learning and Academic Integrity:
Issues and Opportunities"**

Dr. Don McCabe, Professor of Organization Management, Rutgers University

No. 14

Swap Session held: 11-18-99

Sponsored by the Faculty Exchange for Teaching Excellence,
Dr. Ann Stalheim-Smith, coordinator.

An Introduction to the discussion of Collaborative Learning and Academic Integrity by Dr. Ann Stalheim-Smith

Integrity is an important characteristic for us personally and in our relationships with other people. We expect our colleagues to have integrity and we expect our students to have integrity. Without it, it is difficult to build trusting relationships and to work together well with colleagues and students. When academic integrity exists in our K-State community, learning and scholarship are facilitated.

Dr. Don McCabe is a professor of Organization Management at Rutgers University and is founding president of the Center for Academic Integrity, a consortium of 200 colleges and universities united to promote academic integrity in college students.

The Center has been working with its various member schools, including Kansas State University, to identify the fundamental values of academic integrity. Dr. McCabe also described the Center's efforts to develop tools to assess academic integrity on each campus. The Center is currently conducting a survey on what faculty and students think about collaboration and academic integrity at schools with and without honor codes.

The research shows that even at a large, public institution like K-State which has little experience with honor codes, the honor code seems to be working! Simply talking about the honor code seems to help it succeed.

Dr. McCabe suggested that we carefully consider the following collaboration issues:

- 1) Collaborative learning has great value, but so does teaching students to accept responsibility for their own work.
- 2) Many students have difficulty knowing where to draw the line between when collaboration is allowed and when it is not, and faculty often provide little guidance.
- 3) Unpermitted collaboration is prevalent, perhaps even rampant, in some disciplines.
- 4) A related issue is receiving unpermitted help on assignments (e.g., take-home exams).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Dr. McCabe presented the following strategies to reduce unpermitted collaboration:

Preventive:

1. Reduce the relative importance of assignments high in unpermitted collaboration potential (e.g., busy work, repetitive problem sets).
2. Assign unique essay topics and take-home exams.
3. Minimize individual assignments when the course thrust is collaborative.

Proactive:

1. **Discuss collaboration with your students from the start.**
2. Explain to your students what constitutes collaboration.
3. Clarify for students your expectations regarding collaboration.

Dr. McCabe shared some results from a survey of K-State faculty and students on their views of collaborative work:

	Collaboration is not cheating	It is trivial	It is serious
KSU students	25%	51%	24%
KSU faculty	4%	50%	46%

Dr. McCabe pointed out that, while although most faculty believe collaboration is cheating, half of them believe it is trivial cheating.

He also shared the data collected on the prevalence of cheating on KSU's campus:

	Collaboration	Using/giving unpermitted help
KSU students admitting to instances of...	39%	48%
KSU faculty aware of instances of student...	24%	44%

Dr. McCabe issued a caveat: cheating on KSU's campus may be underrepresented by the survey results because (1) 75% did not respond and (2) the surveys called for self-report.

Differences between schools with honor codes and schools without honor codes:

III Students at schools with honor codes exhibit an attitude of "we're all in this together."

Students at schools with no honor codes display an "us against them" mentality.

III Surveys find lower levels of self-reported cheating at schools with honor codes, despite the fact that students at these schools are more likely to respond to surveys.

Some questions to consider when thinking about collaboration and academic integrity:

- ? Is it reasonable to "prohibit" collaboration on assignments in any courses?
- ? If we don't pursue violations of academic integrity, why prohibit them? Not pursuing violations of academic integrity puts students in a dilemma. They may not want to cheat, but may do so because they feel "everyone else is."
- ? What are appropriate guidelines for academic integrity in courses that involve collaboration? We cannot assume it is black and white for students.
- ? How much guidance do students need?
- ? Should a university policy on collaboration and academic integrity be included in the KSU honor code?

Audience members shared the following thoughts on collaboration and academic integrity:

- ❧ Before deciding upon guidelines for collaboration and academic integrity, it is important to first define collaboration. We need to be specific when defining for our students what we consider to be collaboration.
- ❧ How do we make it clear to students when it is and is not acceptable to collaborate? For example, in some disciplines, it is important to use team assignments in class to prepare students for teamwork in their future professional lives. This situation creates a gray area for students in drawing the line between what is and what is not collaboration.
- ❧ Many of us use collaborative work and we find that often not every member of the collaborative team does his/her share. It is very important to discuss ahead of time guidelines for participation in collaboration. For example, teams may be given the right to “fire” team members who do not fulfill their responsibilities.
- ❧ We have a duty to help students learn to decide for themselves and become responsible for their own behavior. If the honor code is seen as just a bunch of rules, students may observe them while in school, but will not abide by a personal code of integrity in the long run.
- ❧ We should keep in mind that students can be confused by case-specific guidelines for collaboration and academic integrity. We need to make it clear for them, class-by-class, case-by-case. We need to decide whether each faculty member should decide on his/her own specific guidelines for collaboration, or should there be more uniformity across a discipline.
- ❧ We should consider what is of greatest benefit to students (e.g., collaboration or no collaboration).
- ❧ We have to talk to our students. We should ask students what they think collaboration and academic integrity mean. It is important to discuss these issues in a way that the students take ownership and feel a part of the development of the system of rules that you are going to use.

More issues regarding the effectiveness of honor codes:

- ❧ Schools may see a brief period of increased cheating after instituting honor codes. The cheating will not sustain itself, however, especially if you talk to new students about the honor code as soon as they begin school.
- ❧ It is important to share the logic and philosophy behind a school’s honor code with its students.
- ❧ We must remember cultural issues when developing and implementing an honor code.
- ❧ There seems to be a high correlation between the prevalence of cheating at a school and how serious faculty and students consider cheating to be.

The Good News:

- 👍 A change is occurring. The prevalence of cheating in universities is hitting a plateau. Students are getting fed up and they want faculty to do something about cheating.

The Bad News:

- 👎 The Internet is posing new hazards to academic integrity. Students don't know how to use and cite information obtained from internet sources. This is an issue we need to address.

Ten Principles of Academic Integrity

- 1) Affirm the importance of academic integrity.
- 2) Foster a love of learning.
- 3) Treat students as ends in themselves.
- 4) Foster an environment of trust in the classroom.
- 5) Encourage student responsibility for academic integrity.
- 6) Clarify expectations for students.
- 7) Develop fair and relevant forms of assessment.
- 8) Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty.
- 9) Challenge academic dishonesty when it occurs.
- 10) Help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.

Dr. Don McCabe is featured in the November 22, 1999 issue of US News & World Report.

For more information on collaboration and academic integrity,
go to the US News & World Report website:
<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/home.htm>

ANNOUNCEMENTS: An opportunity to write on your calendar

Faculty
Exchange
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- **Workshop: an "Introduction to Cooperative Learning- Featuring Academic Controversy"** given by Dr. Barbara Licklider, Iowa State University, on Wednesday, January 12th, 8:30-11:30 AM in the Big 12 Room, K-State Union.

Consider this another option on your menu of educational opportunities.