

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

DISCUSSION ITEM

For Meeting of March 16, 2022

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A University of California degree certifies a student’s knowledge, skills, and abilities in particular fields and critical workforce areas. Ensuring academic integrity protects the value of those degrees to students and their families, the University, and to all who invest in higher education. It is the foundation of a university, particularly its teaching, research, and public service missions. Academic misconduct, on the other hand, harms all. This item describes ways campuses are promoting academic integrity, how the pandemic led to increased academic misconduct violations, and ways to reassert this critical university value post-pandemic.

BACKGROUND

Prior presentations to the Board of Regents have described some of the public and private benefits of a UC degree in economic and societal terms. These benefits can include a student gaining key skills and knowledge in critical workforce fields, such as health care and education. They can also include degree recipients becoming future business leaders, elected officials, or other public servants. When the University issues a diploma, it certifies a student’s knowledge, skills, and abilities and expects that a UC education reinforces critical values for citizenship, including integrity, respect, and fairness, that benefit society as a whole.

What is academic integrity and why does it matter?

Academic integrity is foundational to a university and the work it conducts, including research, teaching, and coursework. As UC Irvine describes, “academic integrity is the honest and responsible pursuit of knowledge, information, and an education without the use of improper resources or dishonest practices.”¹ UCLA describes academic dishonesty as including, but not limited to, “cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions or facilitating academic misconduct.”² UC Santa Cruz further explains that “academic dishonesty diminishes the

¹ “Anteater Guide to Academic Integrity,” UC Irvine, accessed February 13, 2022, (<https://aisc.uci.edu/documents-and-forms/AIToolKit.pdf>)

² Office of Student Conduct, UCLA, accessed February 13, 2022, (<https://deanofstudents.ucla.edu/academic-integrity>)

university as an institution and all members of the university community. It tarnishes the value of a UCSC degree.”³

There can be societal implications to academic misconduct. Within UC Davis’s academic integrity statement, it asks “who would you want to be your surgeon, your structural engineer, your son or daughter’s teacher: the person who was most qualified for the job or the one who cheated their way through school and is only faking competence? There’s no question: everyone would choose the person with competence and integrity. Choose to be that person—for yourself, for others. Integrity begins with you.” UC Berkeley’s honor code is to “act with honesty, integrity and respect for others” further emphasizing these qualities are “important to both our campus and society at large.”⁴

Academic misconduct prevents instructors from getting useful feedback on courses, what students are learning, and where there are gaps which may be addressed through revising the curriculum or teaching approach. Academic misconduct can also affect a student’s ability to learn, to get feedback on what a student knows and understands, and where one can improve. In addition, it can affect performance in subsequent courses or academic programs and possibly future behavior in the workplace or success in a chosen profession.

UC San Diego’s Director of the Academic Integrity Office describes academic integrity as part of a three-legged stool, along with equity and student success. Equity, defined as fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement, cannot exist without integrity. Student success, defined as making academic progress, being actively engaged in learning, and developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to lead in a global society, is not compatible with academic misconduct. Academic integrity is not only essential for equity and student success; it is central to maintaining the value of a University of California degree and UC’s reputation to offer a high-quality and transformative undergraduate and graduate educational experience. The University has a responsibility, therefore, to promote academic integrity.

How do campuses promote academic integrity?

Each campus has academic integrity and/or honor code statements with additional detail on what constitutes academic misconduct. Campuses leverage a variety of means to promote student awareness about the importance of academic integrity, including actions within courses.

A number of UC campuses emphasize the importance of academic integrity through student orientation materials, workshops, or awareness weeks. For example, UC Santa Cruz’s Office of the Registrar publishes a website called The Navigator⁵ that introduces a student to the campus and provides information on how to pay for and maintain academic progress and graduate. Within its introduction, it describes academic integrity, the responsibility of all University community members, and the disciplinary process.

³ UC Santa Cruz’s Academic Integrity, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://registrar.ucsc.edu/navigator/section1/academic-integrity.html>

⁴ UC Berkeley Honor Code, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://teaching.berkeley.edu/berkeley-honor-code>

⁵ UCSC Office of the Registrar, The Navigator, <https://registrar.ucsc.edu/navigator/index.html>

Figure 1.

Home / The Navigator / Section 1. Introduction to UCSC / Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education. Academic dishonesty diminishes the university as an institution and all members of the university community. It tarnishes the value of a UCSC degree.

All members of the UCSC community have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UCSC.

In the event a student is found in violation of the UCSC Academic Integrity policy, he or she may face both academic sanctions imposed by the instructor of record and disciplinary sanctions imposed either by the provost of his or her college or the Academic Tribunal convened to hear the case. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student's transcript.

For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the [Academic Integrity page](#) at the [Division of Undergraduate Education](#).

UC Merced's Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities hosted a workshop⁶ last fall to learn more about academic integrity, types of academic misconduct, and ways to find resources and avoid academic dishonesty. UC San Diego's Academic Integrity Office also organized and highlighted events, workshops, and resources with the goal of bringing awareness to integrity during Integrity Awareness Week.⁷ In addition, the campus requires all first quarter undergraduates to take an online Integrity Tutorial. This tutorial covers fundamental values of academic integrity, integrity standards, and expectations of the University, and challenges the students with typical cheating scenarios in which they might find themselves and how they could resolve them. It is taken by over 12,000 students each fall quarter.

The UC Systemwide Academic Senate sends Academic Senate Division Chairs an annual reminder about threats to academic integrity.⁸ It includes recommendations to remind students about actions that violate academic integrity through announcements in class and by including language within the course syllabus. UC Berkeley's Center for Teaching and Learning provides sample language and resources to include in syllabi⁹, including expectations when working

⁶ "Academic Integrity Workshop," UC Merced Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/events/academic-integrity-workshop-21>

⁷ "Integrity Awareness Week 2021," UC San Diego Academic Integrity Office, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/events/Integrity%20Awareness%20Week.html>

⁸ Robert Horowitz, "Recommendations for Protecting Academic Integrity and Intellectual Property," University of California, Academic Senate, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/reports/rh-senate-divisions-ucep-reminder-academic-integrity.pdf>

⁹ "Statements on Course Policies," UC Berkeley Center for Teaching & Learning, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://teaching.berkeley.edu/statements-course-policies#academic>

together on assignments or taking exams and links to the student conduct code. In addition, the Center for Teaching and Learning provides guidance on how to promote academic integrity through course design,¹⁰ including:

- Foster students’ intrinsic motivation by engaging students in open-ended, authentic problems, questions, or challenges
- Place emphasis on learning for mastery over performance
- Use frequent, low-stakes assessments
- Build student self-efficacy by conveying what it takes for students to be successful in a course
- Prepare students for ethical considerations in the field or profession, such as what it means and why it is important to have integrity within a particular field

Every campus has a responsible office and process for addressing academic misconduct; seven are student conduct offices that report to student affairs and the remaining two report to academic affairs units, including college provosts.

Figure 2.

| Reporting to Student Affairs | Reporting to Academic Affairs |
|--|--|
| UC Berkeley’s Center for Student Conduct | UC San Diego’s Academic Integrity Office |
| UC Davis’s Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs | UC Santa Cruz’s College Provost’s Office |
| UC Irvine’s Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct | |
| UCLA’s Dean of Students Office | |
| UC Merced’s Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities | |
| UC Riverside’s Office of Student Conduct & Academic Integrity Programs | |
| UC Santa Barbara’s Office of Student Conduct | |

UC Riverside’s Student Conduct & Academic Integrity Programs describes its work as “educating students about their rights, holding them accountable for their responsibilities, and supporting their ethical growth.” The unit is responsible for reviewing misconduct cases and assigning sanctions when necessary. Depending on the violation, including whether it is a first-time or repeat violation, sanctions can vary from a warning or censure to suspension or expulsion.

¹⁰ “Academic Integrity,” UC Berkeley Center for Teaching & Learning, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://teaching.berkeley.edu/resources/course-design-guide/design-effective-assessments/academic-integrity>

The graphic below describes what happens if a student is accused of academic misconduct.¹¹

Figure 3.

**I have been accused of academic misconduct.
What will happen?**

- First, your instructor will notify you of the alleged misconduct (with evidence with supporting information), in person or in writing.
- Your instructor will report the alleged misconduct to us.
- If you accept responsibility, your instructor will assign a grade penalty. If you deny responsibility, your instructor will assign a “GD” (Grade Delay) placeholder.
- We will send you an email and/or letter, schedule a meeting with you, and check your disciplinary history.
- If this is a typical first-time violation, we will handle the case directly, and set up a review meeting to determine if you violated a policy.
- If it is a repeat, egregious, or complex violation, we will refer your case to the College Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) after an initial review meeting. We will contact you to schedule the AIC, which will review your case, make a determination, and assign sanctions. You can also come to a helpful Pre-Committee Conference meeting that explains what will take place during the AIC Review.
- Once the meetings are over and a determination has been made, you and your instructor will be notified (via email) of the decision and your assigned disciplinary sanctions **disciplinary sanctions** (if applicable).
- If you were assigned a GD, your instructor will update it and assign a grade based on our decision.

UC San Diego’s Academic Integrity Office¹² mission is to promote and support a culture of integrity in order to reinforce quality teaching and learning. The office not only manages the process for alleged academic integrity violations, it also

- provides faculty and Teaching Assistant (TA) training to reduce cheating and enhance integrity in the classroom
- educates students on integrity (academic and professional) and ethical decision-making
- works with other campus leaders (students, faculty, and staff) to promote and support integrity

¹¹ “Conduct Process,” UC Riverside Student Conduct & Academic Integrity Programs, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://conduct.ucr.edu/for-students/conduct-process>.

¹² “About Us,” UC San Diego’s Academic Integrity Office, accessed February 13, 2022, <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/about/index.html>.

It serves as a powerful structural and symbolic indicator that the campus values and supports academic integrity and is a resource for faculty, students, and staff. For example, the Academic Integrity Office works with faculty to provide one-on-one consultations, workshops, and departmental training to create classroom cultures of integrity through fostering mastery-oriented learning environments, communicating integrity in action, improving instruction, and protecting assessment.

The Academic Integrity Office is not only a place where students can report concerns about academic misconduct, it provides preventative support for students when faced with a challenging ethical situation related to academic work. The office approaches a violation of academic integrity as a teachable moment—an opportunity to learn and grow from an ethical error or failure through a series of trainings (e.g., Academic Integrity Seminars, Integrity Mentorship Programs, University prerequisites). For example, a student that violates academic honesty may have to complete a Telling Your Story assignment—a written reflection on what occurred, who was affected, and what can be learned, followed by a discussion with a peer about that reflection. This approach not only protects the integrity of a UC San Diego degree, it also advances the University’s goal to graduate a generation of ethical citizens and professionals.

The office is also integral to maintaining a culture of academic integrity on the campus. For example, the campus is in its 12th year of hosting its Integrity Awards Ceremony which recognizes campus community members who have made substantial contributions to academic, research, and professional integrity and is in its tenth year of its Excel with Integrity Contest, where this year, undergraduate and graduate students and post-docs can submit a vision of integrity.



While these approaches to advancing academic integrity and addressing student misconduct can be useful during normal circumstances and when individual students are cheating occasionally, these approaches were less successful in handling large-scale occurrences of academic dishonesty during an educational and social crisis, specifically the COVID-19 pandemic.

How did the pandemic and shift to remote instruction affect academic integrity?

When the University shifted to remote instruction, the entire University community mobilized to safeguard student educational progress and maintain the delivery of instruction. Instructors did their best to convert in-person courses to remote delivery without having sufficient time to redesign courses or assessments for an online learning environment. Students, who became more isolated and detached from the University community, created internet-based group chat communities as an additional means for learning and social support. Outside commercial online tutoring service providers began posting ads in these group chat communities and other social

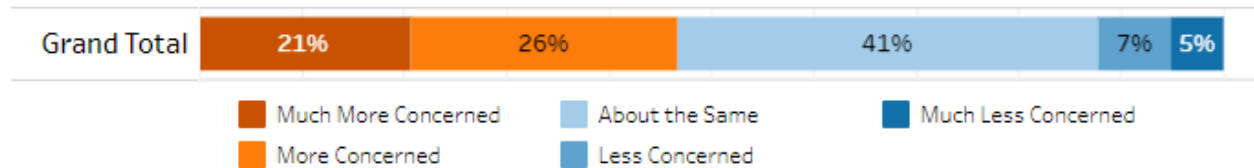
media sites, and paid social media influencers to promote services, including 24/7 help on homework or other assignments. These providers even contacted students directly, sometimes through a student’s University email address, to offer catered services. Some sites encourage students to upload lecture notes, quizzes, exams, or other course materials to create a collection of support materials. While advertised as support services, these commercial sites would respond to exam questions or provide content that students would use instead of producing work independently thereby facilitating academic misconduct.

When undergraduate students, through the UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) and instructors through the Faculty and Instructor Remote Instruction Survey, were asked to compare the amount of academic misconduct in remote instruction courses to in-person classes:

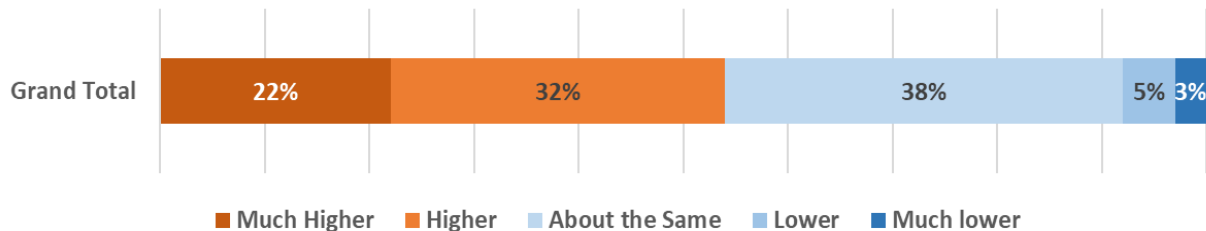
- 47 percent of undergraduates responded they were “more” or “much more” concerned about academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating) on tests and homework assignments
- 54 percent of instructors responded there was a “higher” or “much higher” amount of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating) on test and homework assignments

Student and instructor perceptions about academic dishonesty during the pandemic

Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating) on tests and homework assignments



Amount of academic honesty (cheating) on tests and homework assignments

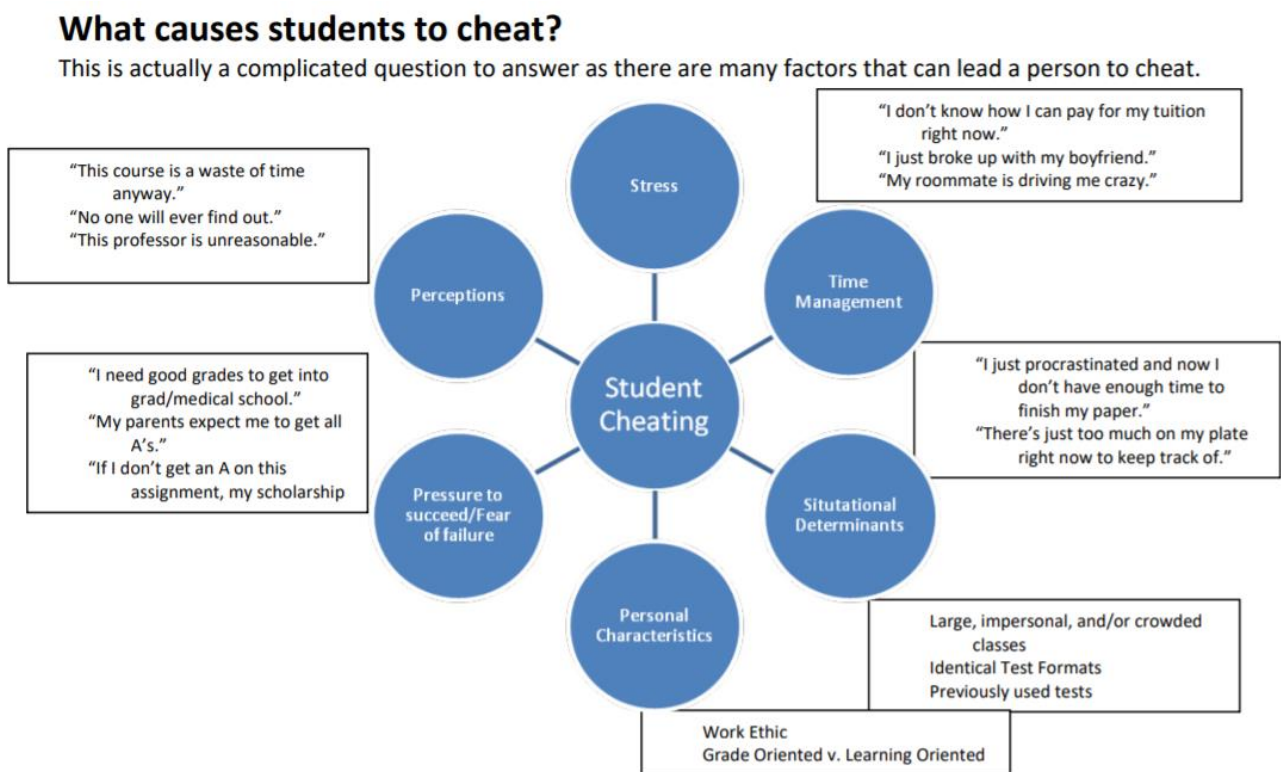


Source: Spring 2020 UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/ucues-covid-19>) and Spring 2021 Faculty and Instructor Remote Instruction Survey (<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/faculty-instructor-remote-instruction-survey>)

UC campuses also reported an increase in the number of academic misconduct reports. For example, UC Berkeley’s Center for Student Conduct had 300 reports of academic misconduct in 2018–19. That figure increased to 703 in 2019–2020 when the campus shifted to remote instruction in spring 2020 and then 1,318 in 2020–21 when the campus was fully remote, with a significant proportion of that increase attributed to the use of these commercial sites that facilitated academic misconduct.

UC Santa Barbara’s student paper *The Bottom Line* published an article entitled “UCSB’s Cheating Epidemic.”¹³ It referenced a campus-wide email sent by the Office of Student Conduct reporting a concerning increase in academic integrity violations since the transition from in-person to online courses. The email acknowledged “when stressed, in crisis, or feeling desperate, our ability to make informed decisions is also compromised. However, it is important that we maintain the value of a degree that you are working so hard to attain and that requires that everyone be held to our standards of academic conduct.” The article further explained that increase in academic dishonesty in part resulted from “many UCSB students having turned to outside resources due to the stress of learning at home during the pandemic, and the inability to access campus resources or interact with professors in-person.”

UC San Diego’s Academic Integrity Handbook¹⁴ includes the following graphic on the various factors that may cause students to cheat.



Some of these factors became more of an issue during the pandemic. For example, students experienced greater stress during this period and some worried more about the financial impact of failure, including the loss of student financial aid which may have been used to provide additional support to families. Perceptions of peer behavior can be a strong predictor of student cheating. If students believe (or know) that peers are cheating, those students may be more likely

¹³ Alexandra Wishowski, *UCSB's Cheating Epidemic* (The Bottom Line, University of California, February 3, 2021)

¹⁴ UC San Diego Academic Integrity Office, *Academic Integrity – A Handbook for UC San Diego Staff*. (Revised August 30, 2021)

to cheat and UCUES data shown earlier showed almost half of respondents thought incidents of academic dishonesty increased over this period. Furthermore, many students had additional responsibilities, including caring for sick family members or siblings who were learning at home. Prior strategies to provide multiple, lower-stakes assessments as a way to reduce academic misconduct may have been less effective during the pandemic when frequent testing created work overload or burnout. In addition, there was a greater disconnect or social distance between faculty and students and the use of multiple, unproctored assessments might have created more opportunities for cheating.

Campuses reported the increase in academic misconduct cases was associated with the influence and impact of commercial sites that facilitated academic misconduct. These services advertised homework help, exam prep, and writing support that could make a student's life easier. Instead of producing independent work, some students turned to these services to complete assignments and sometimes exams. Furthermore, these providers not only impact a student's ability to learn, it can exacerbate disparities and existing equity gaps for wealthy students who can pay for these services that help complete academic work.

What should the University do post-pandemic?

Underscore the importance of academic integrity: Student perceptions about what is acceptable or unacceptable academic behavior may have changed during the pandemic. Campuses could reemphasize the importance of academic integrity through student orientations, course syllabi and discussions, and campus-wide communications, training and related activities. Campuses can specifically articulate the significant consequences of using commercial contract providers to cheat and how that violates the honor code or academic integrity statements. Furthermore, campuses could dedicate resources and establish formal structures that support academic integrity, including forming a campus academic integrity committee, creating an academic integrity office, or conducting a survey, like the McCabe-International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) Academic Integrity Survey, to establish a baseline measure and track progress to maintaining a culture of academic integrity.

Prioritize course design activities and teaching and learning center support: The emergency remote instruction period brought together a mix of circumstances that shaped cheating during the pandemic. However, remote instruction is not the same as online, and the increase in reports of academic dishonesty should not justify hindering online course or program development. With proper investment and support, faculty can work with instructional designers to create high-quality online courses with appropriate assessments that reduce opportunities for academic dishonesty. In-person courses may also benefit from similar redesign efforts that promote academic integrity, reconsider existing assessment efforts, and prioritize mastery over performance. Other strategies that may help include engaging students in discussions about the importance of academic integrity at the start of a course and instructors highlighting available services and support during stressful times, like exam periods.

Directly address contract cheating: Systemic or normalized cheating, such as that encouraged and facilitated by commercial tutoring providers, is a threat to academic integrity, online course

and program opportunities, and the value of a UC degree. In addition to an educational campaign that focuses on how using these providers violates the University’s honor code and academic integrity, there may be technological solutions or ways to work with these providers or other higher education institutions to limit impact from the commercial providers. For example, campuses could ban these sites from emailing students, prevent access to these sites on University networks or computers, or purchase cheating detection tools. Instructors can also include a notice in the syllabus that specifically references course materials are for a student’s use and that sharing course materials on a commercial website may violate the campus student conduct code.

Each of these solutions and other systemwide or campus efforts to strengthen academic integrity require additional investment of time, resources, and effort. However, as the University takes the lead in reassessing standardized tests and promoting educational equity, it may also be important for the University of California to take a leadership role in higher education that advances a concerted, strategic focus to strengthen the University’s academic integrity culture.

CONCLUSION

Academic integrity is important for the University, its faculty and students, and society. While campuses take numerous steps to promote academic integrity, the shift to emergency remote instruction, challenges from the pandemic, and opportunistic commercial providers resulted in an increase of academic misconduct reports. As campuses return from the pandemic, there may be a need to reinforce acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, increase efforts to redesign courses and assessments, and protect students from commercial sites that facilitate academic misconduct.

Key to Acronyms

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| UCUES | UC Undergraduate Experience Survey |
|-------|------------------------------------|