

ARTICLES

Cheating in Academic Institutions: A Decade of Research

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This article reviews 1 decade of research on cheating in academic institutions. This research demonstrates that cheating is prevalent and that some forms of cheating have increased dramatically in the last 30 years. This research also suggests that although both individual and contextual factors influence cheating, contextual factors, such as students' perceptions of peers' behavior, are the most powerful influence. In addition, an institution's academic integrity programs and policies, such as honor codes, can have a significant influence on students' behavior. Finally, we offer suggestions for managing cheating from students' and faculty members' perspectives.

Key words: academic dishonesty, cheating

For the last decade, both collectively and individually, we have studied questions of organizational values and ethics. Although the initial point of departure for each of us was ethics in business organizations, we have expended considerable time trying

to understand the ethical inclinations of tomorrow's business leaders—students majoring in business and those majoring in other subjects who intend to pursue a career in business. To understand how the ethics and ethical development of these future businesspeople are similar to, or differ from, those pursuing other career choices, we have also studied the ethical inclinations of college students in general.

With few exceptions, the thrust of this research has centered on one of the most basic ethical decisions faced by college students—to cheat or not to cheat on their academic work. With increasing competition for the most desired positions in the job market and for the few coveted places available at the nation's leading business, law, and medical schools, today's undergraduates experience considerable pressure to do well. Research shows that all too often these pressures lead to decisions to engage in various forms of academic dishonesty (e.g., Bowers, 1964; McCabe, Treviño, & Butterfield, 1999). Research also shows that these transgressions are often overlooked or treated lightly by faculty who do not want to become involved in what they perceive as the bureaucratic procedures designed to adjudicate allegations of academic dishonesty on their campus (e.g., McCabe, 1993; Nuss, 1984; Singhal, 1982). Students who might otherwise complete their work honestly observe this phenomenon and convince themselves they cannot afford to be disadvantaged by students who cheat and go unreported or unpunished. Although many find it distasteful, they too begin cheating to "level the playing field."

Fortunately, the picture may not be as bleak as this brief summary suggests. One of the most encouraging aspects of the research we have conducted on academic dishonesty is the many students and faculty who are genuinely concerned about the issue and who are willing to devote time and effort to addressing it on their campuses. In fact, the last decade has actually seen a modest increase in the number of college campuses who have adopted academic honor codes. As we discuss presently, such codes place significant responsibility on students to maintain an environment of academic integrity, and evidence suggests they can be quite successful. Although honor codes are not a panacea and are more difficult to implement on larger campuses, many of the principles on which such codes are built can be implemented on any campus.

PREVALENCE OF CHEATING

Understanding student cheating is particularly important given trends that show cheating is widespread and on the rise. In 1964, Bill Bowers published the first large-scale study of cheating in institutions of higher learning. Bowers surveyed more than 5,000 students in a diverse sample of 99 U.S. colleges and universities and found that three fourths of the respondents had engaged in one or more incidents of academic dishonesty. This study was replicated some 30 years later by McCabe and Treviño (1997) at 9 of the schools who had participated in Bowers's

original survey. Although McCabe and Treviño observed only a modest increase in overall cheating, significant increases were found in the most explicit forms of test or exam cheating. Disturbing increases were also found among women and in *collaborative cheating* (unpermitted collaboration among students on written assignments). Although no significant increases were observed in the most explicit forms of cheating on written assignments, this may be due to a changing definition among students of what constitutes plagiarism. In general, student understanding of appropriate citation techniques seems to have changed, and selected behaviors that students may have classified as plagiarism in Bowers's (1964) study do not appear to be considered plagiarism by many students today. For example, although most students understand that quoting someone's work word for word demands a citation, they seem to be less clear on the need to cite the presentation of someone else's ideas when the students present them in their own words.

In spite of Bowers's (1964) conclusions about the powerful influence of institutional context on student decisions to cheat, between the 1960s and 1990 most of the research on student cheating focused on the role of individual factors related to cheating behavior. This stream of research revealed that factors such as gender, grade point average (GPA), work ethic, Type A behavior, competitive achievement striving, and self-esteem can significantly influence the prevalence of cheating (e.g., Baird, 1980; Eisenberger & Shank, 1985; Perry, Kane, Bernesser, & Spicker, 1990; Ward, 1986; Ward & Beck, 1990). Prior to 1990, only a few studies focused on contextual factors that influence cheating behavior. In this research, factors such as faculty responses to cheating, sanction threats, social learning, and honor codes were shown to influence college cheating (e.g., Canning, 1956; Jendrek, 1989; Michaels & Miethel, 1989; Tittle & Rowe, 1973). Although these studies made important contributions, most of them had significant limitations. Perhaps of greatest importance, most of these studies only sampled students at a single institution, obviously limiting our ability to draw meaningful conclusions about contextual influences.

The research agenda we initiated in 1990 attempted to address this shortcoming and led to a course of research that has spanned the past decade. Like Bowers (1964), our distinguishing methodology has been the use of large-scale, multicampus, multivariable studies. The end result has been a series of studies that have advanced our understanding of why college students cheat, provided administrators and faculty with a broader set of tools that can be used to curb cheating on college campuses, and helped foster academic integrity in American colleges and universities (e.g., McCabe, 1992, 1993; McCabe & Treviño, 1993, 1997; McCabe et al., 1996, 1999). Not least among the outcomes of this work was the formation of the Center for Academic Integrity in 1992, a consortium of more than 200 colleges and universities united in a common effort to initiate and maintain a dialogue among students, faculty, and administrators on the issue of academic integrity. As we discuss later, although the Center understands there is no "one size fits all" so-

lution to academic dishonesty, it does indicate that certain fundamental initiatives can yield positive results on almost any campus.

WHY DO COLLEGE STUDENTS CHEAT? THE ROLE OF CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

One of the most important studies in our work is McCabe and Treviño's (1993) survey of more than 6,000 students at 31 academic institutions, which was conducted in the 1990–1991 academic year. This project was the first major, multicampus investigation of institution-level variables that influence cheating behavior since Bowers's (1964) seminal work. Major variables investigated in this study included the existence of an honor code, student understanding and acceptance of a school's academic integrity policy, perceived certainty that cheaters will be reported, perceived severity of penalties, and the degree to which students perceive that their peers engage in cheating behavior. This final variable, peer behavior, was found to show the most significant relation with student cheating in this study. Based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), McCabe and Treviño hypothesized such a relation, although they were somewhat surprised by its strength. Indeed, they concluded that

the strong influence of peers' behavior may suggest that academic dishonesty not only is learned from observing the behavior of peers, but that peers' behavior provides a kind of normative support for cheating. The fact that others are cheating may also suggest that, in such a climate, the non-cheater feels left at a disadvantage. Thus cheating may come to be viewed as an acceptable way of getting and staying ahead. (p. 533)

Perhaps of greatest importance from a practical perspective, their further analysis suggested that

an institution's ability to develop a shared understanding and acceptance of its academic integrity policies has a significant and substantive impact on student perceptions of their peers' behavior. ... Thus, programs aimed at distributing, explaining, and gaining student and faculty acceptance of academic integrity policies may be particularly useful. (pp. 533–534)

McCabe and Treviño's (1997) study of almost 1,800 students at nine medium-to large-size universities in the 1993–1994 academic year examined the relative influence of contextual and individual factors on cheating behavior, and the results pointed to the primacy of the institutional context in influencing cheating behavior. The contextual factors (peer cheating behavior, peer disapproval of cheating behavior, and perceived severity of penalties for cheating) were significantly more influential than the individual factors (age, gender, GPA, and participation in ex-

tracurricular activities). Peer-related factors once again emerged as the most significant correlate of cheating behavior.

McCabe and Treviño (1997) also found in this study that cheating tends to be more prevalent on these larger campuses. This is reflected in Tables 1 and 2, which summarize some of the quantitative data obtained in their 1990–1991 and 1993 studies. The tables also show data obtained in a replication of their 1990–1991 study that was conducted on the same 31 campuses in the 1995–1996 academic year. These data reflect the number of students who admit to the various forms of academic dishonesty. In Table 1, a *serious test cheater* is defined as someone who admits to one or more instances of copying from another student on a test or exam, using unauthorized crib or cheat notes on a test or exam, or helping someone else to cheat on a test or exam. Although other test cheating behaviors were also evaluated (e.g., learning what was on a test from someone who took the test in an earlier class section), the behaviors included in our serious test cheating statistic are behaviors a majority of students agree constitute cheating. The serious cheating on written work statistic was constructed in an identical fashion and includes four behaviors: plagiarism, fabricating or falsifying a bibliography, turning in work done by someone else, and copying a few sentences of material without footnoting them in a paper. As the 1963 versus 1993 comparison suggests, cheating is prevalent and test or exam cheating has increased dramatically over the last 3 decades.

A distinguishing characteristic of the original McCabe and Treviño (1993) study was its investigation of the influence of academic honor codes on student integrity, an investigation that was extended in McCabe et al. (1999). Earlier work (e.g., Bowers, 1964) suggested that honor codes were associated with lower levels of cheating and the data in Tables 1 and 2 suggest this is still the case. However, there is evidence of a slight deterioration in the relation between honor codes and cheating between 1990–1991 and 1995–1996.

TABLE 1
Self-Admitted Cheating—Summary Statistics

Variable	1963 ^a (%)	1993 ^b (%)	1990–1991 (%)		1995–1996 (%)	
			No Code ^c	Code ^d	No Code ^e	Code ^f
Serious test cheating ^g	39	64	47	24	45	30
Serious cheating on written work ^h	65	66	56	32	58	42
All serious cheating	75	82	71	44	71	54

^a*n* = 452. ^b*n* = 1,793. ^c*n* = 3,083. ^d*n* = 3,013. ^e*n* = 1,970. ^f*n* = 2,303. ^gSerious test cheating includes students who have engaged in copying on an exam—with or without another student's knowledge—using crib notes on an exam, or helping someone else to cheat on a test or exam. ^hSerious cheating on written work includes students who have engaged in plagiarism, fabricated or falsified a bibliography, turned in work done by someone else, or copied a few sentences of material without footnoting them in a paper.

TABLE 2
Self-Admitted Cheating—Summary Statistics (%)

Variable	1990–1991			1995–1996		
	1963 ^a	No Code ^c	Code ^d	1993 ^b	No Code ^e	Code ^f
Copied on test or exam	26	30	14	52	32	20
Used unauthorized crib notes	16	21	9	27	17	11
Helped other on test	23	28	9	37	23	11
Plagiarism	30	18	7	26	20	10
Copied one or two sentences without footnoting	49	41	23	54	43	32
Unpermitted collaboration on assignments	11	39	21	49	49	27

^a*n* = 452. ^b*n* = 1,793. ^c*n* = 3,083. ^d*n* = 3,013. ^e*n* = 1,970. ^f*n* = 2,303.

These data suggest that honor codes are an important phenomenon, and we have studied the relation between honor codes and cheating has been studied in greater depth, along three major themes: (a) implementation of honor codes, (b) faculty views of academic integrity policies including honor codes, and (c) honor codes' effect on students.

Honor Codes Must Be More Than Mere "Window Dressing"

McCabe and Treviño (1993) replicated Bowers's (1964) finding that less cheating occurs in honor code environments. However, McCabe and Treviño were intrigued by an additional finding: One of the lowest levels of cheating occurred at a school that lacked an honor code, and one of the higher levels of cheating occurred at a school that had a long-standing honor code. A closer examination of each of these schools provided an interesting explanation for this apparent paradox. McCabe and Treviño found that although this noncode school did not have a formal honor code, it had developed a culture that emphasized many of the elements found at code schools and encouraged academic integrity without instituting a formal code. At this school, administrators and faculty clearly conveyed their beliefs about the seriousness of cheating, communicated expectations regarding high standards of integrity, and encouraged students to know and abide by rules of proper conduct. In contrast, the honor code school, although it had a 100-year-old honor code tradition, failed to adequately communicate the essence of its code to students and to indoctrinate them into the campus culture. This finding led to an important insight: It is not the mere existence of an honor code that is important in deterring college cheating. An effective honor code must be more than mere window dressing; a truly effective code must be well implemented and strongly embedded in the student culture. Fur-

thermore, a formal code is not the only way to achieve the desired result. As suggested earlier, a strong culture of academic integrity can exist at an institution that has no formal code but communicates the importance the community places on integrity in other ways.

McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield's (1996) study of 318 alumni of two private liberal arts colleges suggested honor codes can have long-term effects on behavior. The study focused on alumni who had graduated from their respective colleges between 1962 and 1989, allowing the researchers to test hypotheses about the long-term effects of collegiate honor codes as well as the effect of codes of ethics at their current work organizations. The results supported previous work by showing that dishonest behavior in the workplace can be reduced by an organizational code of ethics. The results also show that dishonest behavior in the workplace varies inversely with the strength of implementation of an organizational code of ethics (i.e., the degree of managerial commitment to the code and the degree to which an organization attempts to communicate its code to employees and to ensure compliance) and the degree to which a code of ethics is deeply embedded in the organization's culture (i.e., the degree to which the code is understood and accepted by employees and guides their day-to-day interactions and activities). The results also indicate that college honor codes can have an enduring effect: Dishonest behavior in the workplace was lowest for participants who had experienced an honor code environment in college and who currently worked in an organization that had a strongly implemented code of ethics. Overall, this work suggests that participation in multiple honor code communities can play a part in reducing dishonest behavior, particularly if the honor codes are well implemented and strongly embedded in the organizational culture.

Faculty Views of Academic Integrity Policies

Faculty members' views of academic integrity policies, and how these views differ across code and noncode schools, was the subject of McCabe's (1993) study of 800 faculty at a geographically diverse sample of 16 U.S. colleges and universities. This study showed that faculty at code schools were more likely to rate their school higher than noncode schools on factors such as students' understanding of academic integrity policies, faculty support of these policies, and the overall effectiveness of the policy. Faculty at code schools were also more likely to believe that students should play a significant part in the judicial process associated with academic cheating. This study also revealed that faculty at both code and noncode schools are reluctant to report cheating and prefer to handle suspected cases of cheating on their own rather than appeal to institutional policies and procedures. Furthermore, this study confirmed student perceptions that many faculty do not treat cases of academic dishonesty very harshly. For example, more than half of the noncode faculty reported that their most likely reaction to an incident of cheating would be failure

on the test or assignment involved (39%), a simple warning (9%), various penalties less than test or assignment failure (7%), or nothing (1%). Word seems to travel quickly among students as to who these faculty are, and student comments suggest their courses become particular targets for cheating. As noted earlier, students report that many faculty simply look the other way when they see cheating occur in their courses. When more than a few faculty behave this way, it is hard to convince students that an ethic of integrity exists on campus and cheating can easily become the campus norm.

Effect of Honor Codes on Students

As suggested earlier, some campuses use academic honor codes to combat academic dishonesty. Although Bowers (1964), McCabe and Treviño (1993), and others have documented the powerful effect of such codes, how and why they work when students on code campuses face the same grade pressures as their peers elsewhere is not well understood. Gaining additional insight into this question was the subject of a qualitative study of college cheating reported by McCabe et al. (1999). McCabe et al. analyzed data from more than 1,700 students at 31 U.S. colleges and universities, approximately half of which employed an honor code. Data for this study were collected in the form of open-ended comments made by students at the end of a larger survey on college cheating. At the end of the survey, students were asked to offer “any comments that you care to make or if there is anything else you would like to tell us about the topic of cheating in college.” Although this question was added to the survey in a somewhat perfunctory manner, more than 40% of the almost 4,300 respondents offered comments, many of which were quite detailed in nature. We believe this kind of response underscores the importance of the topic of academic cheating to students.

Many of these comments corroborated the importance of the institutional–contextual factors found to be related to academic integrity by McCabe and Treviño (1993, 1997). Contextual influences on cheating that were emphasized by students included the degree to which the code is deeply embedded in a culture of integrity; the degree to which a school has a supportive, trusting atmosphere; competitive pressures; the severity of punishments; the existence of clear rules regarding unacceptable behavior; faculty monitoring; peer pressure to cheat or not to cheat; the likelihood of being caught or reported; and class size.

As expected, the results also revealed important differences between code and noncode campus environments. In particular, the results suggest that students at honor code schools view academic integrity in a very different way from their noncode counterparts. The code students were less likely to cheat, were less likely to rationalize or justify any cheating behavior that they did admit to, and were more likely to talk about the importance of integrity and about how a moral community can minimize cheating. Although students at both types of schools report

that they cheat and feel many different sources of pressure to cheat, honor code students apparently do not succumb to these pressures as easily or as often as noncode students. As reported in McCabe et al. (1999), “clearly, code students sense that they are part of a special community that demands compliance with certain standards in exchange for the many privileges associated with honor codes” (p. 230). Such privileges (e.g., unproctored exams, self-scheduled exams, the strong judicial role played by students, etc.) help create a true environment of trust among students and between students and faculty. Students seem to place great value on being part of such an environment in contrast to the environment found on many campuses where compliance with standards of academic integrity is only pursued through the threat of punishment.

WHY DO COLLEGE STUDENTS CHEAT? THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Although McCabe and Treviño’s primary focus has been on the role of context in influencing academic dishonesty, some of their work also has expanded understanding of the relation between individual influences and academic dishonesty. For example, McCabe (1992) showed that college students use a variety of neutralization techniques (e.g., rationalization, denial, deflecting blame to others, condemning the accusers) to explain away their dishonest behavior.

McCabe and Treviño (1997) also studied some of the more common individual difference factors that have been studied in the literature. Although they found these factors to be less important than contextual factors in their work, they are nonetheless significant correlates of cheating among college students. For example, prior studies (e.g., Anton & Michael, 1983; Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, & Clark, 1986) have shown that younger students tend to cheat more than older students and our data supported this result. However, it is not clear how much of this relation is accounted for by age versus class rank. These two variables are strongly correlated, and McCabe and Treviño suggested that many 1st- and 2nd-year students who find themselves in large lecture courses, perhaps enrolled in an elective they really do not want to take in the first place, find it very easy to rationalize cheating. They often see a lot of cheating among others in these courses, faculty cannot possibly monitor all of the students in such large classes, and the students often are bored with the material. In contrast, 3rd- and 4th-year students seem to be more enthusiastic about their courses and faculty. At smaller schools, these students talk about the personal relationships they have developed with faculty in their major, often making it harder to consider cheating in those courses.

Another individual factor that has received much attention in the literature is gender. The majority of prior studies have reported that men cheat more than women (e.g., Aiken, 1991; Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992; Ward, 1986), but several studies have found no difference between men and women (e.g.,

Baird, 1980; Haines et al., 1986). Although McCabe and Treviño (1997) found the more traditional result (i.e., men self-reported more cheating than women), the data suggest that within similar majors, gender differences are often very small. For example, women majoring in engineering, a major one might have considered male-dominated a few decades ago, talk about the need to compete by the “men’s rules” to be successful in this major. Thus, generally higher levels of cheating were found among women in engineering compared to women in other majors, and women majoring in engineering reported cheating at rates comparable to men majoring in engineering.

McCabe and Treviño (1997) also examined several other individual-level variables. For example, they found support for the well-documented conclusion that students with lower GPAs report more cheating than students with higher GPAs. They also reported that students engaged in intercollegiate athletics and other extracurricular activities self-reported more cheating, perhaps reflecting the time demands that these activities place on students and their decision to take various “short cuts” to stay up to date and remain competitive in their coursework.

McCabe et al.’s (1999) qualitative study supported these findings and identified other factors that can influence cheating, including pressure to get high grades, parental pressures, a desire to excel, pressure to get a job, laziness, a lack of responsibility, a lack of character, poor self-image, a lack of pride in a job well done, and a lack of personal integrity.

PREVENTING CHEATING IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

The research discussed here represents 1 decade of work studying factors that influence cheating among college students. Numerous insights have emerged from this work that faculty, administrators, academics, and students can use to help reduce cheating on their campuses.

The primary implication of this work is that cheating can be most effectively addressed at the institutional level. On many campuses, the fundamental elements of an academic honor code may be a particularly useful tool for colleges and universities who seek to reduce student cheating. However, at an even broader level, academic institutions are advised to consider ways of creating an “ethical community” on their campuses—one that includes clear communication of rules and standards, moral socialization of community members, and mutual respect between students and faculty, and one that extends certain privileges to its students (e.g., unproctored exams, self-scheduled exams, etc.). However, building an ethical community also might involve techniques such as creating a “hidden curriculum” in which students not only receive formal ethics instruction but also learn by actively discussing ethical issues and acting on them. The hidden curriculum might include allowing students to participate in the many opportunities for teaching and

learning about ethical issues that arise in the day-to-day operations of an educational institution. In such an environment, messages about ethics and values are implicitly sent to and received by students throughout their college experience, both in and out of the classroom (Treviño & McCabe, 1994).

The research of McCabe et al. (1999) also suggests that cheating behavior can be effectively managed in the classroom. Insights from this qualitative study suggest that faculty members can pursue numerous strategies, including clearly communicating expectations regarding cheating behavior, establishing policies regarding appropriate conduct, and encouraging students to abide by those policies. The more important factors identified in this study are summarized in Table 3.

In addition, McCabe and Pavela (1997) suggested 10 principles of academic integrity for faculty. These principles, shown in Table 4, represent strategies that faculty can employ to minimize cheating in their classrooms. Several of these factors point to the importance of student involvement in reducing cheating behavior. It should not be surprising that many of the factors shown in Table 4 mirror the suggestions offered by students (Table 3). This suggests that faculty and students may not be very far apart in their views on curbing college cheating and further indicates that these groups can work together toward the goal of establishing an ethical community. Indeed, involving both faculty and students in an ongoing dialogue about aca-

TABLE 3
Managing Cheating in the Classroom: The Student's Perspective

<i>Number</i>	<i>Factor</i>
1	Clearly communicate expectations (e.g., regarding behavior that constitutes appropriate conduct and behavior that constitutes cheating)
2	Establish and communicate cheating policies and encourage students to abide by those policies
3	Consider establishing a classroom honor code—one that places appropriate responsibilities and obligations on the student, not just the faculty member, to prevent cheating
4	Be supportive when dealing with students; this promotes respect, which students will reciprocate by not cheating
5	Be fair—develop fair and consistent grading policies and procedures; punish transgressions in a strict but fair and timely manner
6	When possible, reduce pressure by not grading students on a strict curve
7	Focus on learning, not on grades
8	Encourage the development of good character
9	Provide deterrents to cheating (e.g., harsh penalties)
10	Remove opportunities to cheat (e.g., monitor tests, be sure there is ample space between test takers)
11	Assign interesting and nontrivial assignments
12	Replace incompetent or apathetic teaching assistants

Note. Adapted from student comments in McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield (1999).

TABLE 4
 Managing Cheating in the Classroom: 10 Principles of Academic Integrity for Faculty

<i>Number</i>	<i>Principle</i>
1	Affirm the importance of academic integrity
2	Foster a love of learning
3	Treat students as an end in themselves
4	Foster and 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

Note. From McCabe and Pavela (1997).

demic integrity may be one of the most important components of an honor code tradition. Some schools do little more than tell their students where in the student handbook they can find the school's policy on academic integrity. Many honor code schools, in contrast, use orientation sessions, initiation ceremonies, or both to convey to their students the tradition of honor on campus and what will be expected of them as the newest members of the community.

Surveys of high school students suggest that most students entering college arrive with some experience with cheating in high school, or at least knowledge of cheating by their peers. Yet, most students come to college expecting it will be different than high school. Many seem to view the primary goal of high school as gaining admission to the college of their choice, and they find their academic work somewhat irrelevant, more of an obstacle to college admission than a true learning experience. Although their view may eventually change, they arrive at college thinking this is where true learning occurs. When they hear the president, a dean, or an orientation leader talk about the scholarly enterprise and the importance of never representing the work of someone else as their own, this is generally what they expected. After all, this is not high school any more. We believe that most new college students, although perhaps a decreasing number, internalize this message to some degree and begin their college experience with a positive attitude about the need for academic integrity, in spite of their experience with cheating in high school. However, if they observe cheating by 2nd-, 3rd-, and 4th-year students and see faculty who seem to ignore what appears to be obvious cheating, their idealistic view is likely to degenerate rather quickly. The reality of the cheating they observe convinces them that college is not that different from high school after all, at least with regard to academic integrity. If they are to survive and be competitive in this new environment, they must play by the same rules as everyone

else. On code campuses, however, new students generally will see significantly less cheating than on noncode campuses and most begin to internalize this new community ethic. Although some will eventually engage in academic dishonesty, for most it will only be after they have had an opportunity to think about their new community's ethic and how cheating would be a significant violation of the trust that new community has placed in them. To violate that trust might jeopardize the many privileges they receive as a member of the community. The real power of honor codes may be in the desire of students to belong to such a community, and thus their general willingness to abide by its rules. In our view, schools that do not, at the very least, engage their students in a meaningful dialogue about academic integrity are likely to experience the persistent levels of academic dishonesty identified in virtually all research on cheating in college.

As suggested earlier, however, honor codes are not a panacea and will not work on every campus. Thus, it is important to think about strategies that can, and should, be employed on any campus and foremost among these, in our minds, is dialogue. No campus can assume that its students, incoming or returning, will take the time to familiarize themselves with campus rules about academic integrity on their own. Even if they did, an institution's failure to emphasize for its students the high value it places on academic integrity sends the message that it is not a high priority. Such institutions should not be surprised if they experience above-average levels of academic dishonesty. In the absence of a long-standing tradition of student honor, however, dialogue alone is not likely to be enough. Each campus must send a consistent message to its students that academic integrity is expected and that cheating will result in negative consequences, and more than just a slap on the wrist. To do this, campuses must support faculty who raise allegations of student dishonesty and must be willing to employ sanctions that have both significant educational and deterrence value. In short, the institution must convince students that cheating will be met with strong disapproval and that cheating is the exception on campus, not the rule. To do this, the institution must be prepared to hold students accountable for any cheating in which they engage.

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