

## College of Nursing and Health Professions



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## **Rationale for Best Practice**

Colleges and universities historically have committed to creating learning environments that embrace honesty. Each school over the years has developed, reviewed, and revised policies and procedures that address academic dishonesty and have developed in some instances elaborate communication, education, and training initiatives to create a culture of high academic integrity.

As faculty, we have come to learn about, respect, and embrace academic honesty via our experiences as former students and our protracted scholarly formation within the academy. However, we cannot take it for granted that our adult continuing education students are well grounded in the rationale and practices of academic honesty needed to be successful in a healthy teaching/learning environment.

Shortcomings in adult student preparedness for academic honesty stem from a variety of factors, such as their forgotten or vague recollection of academic honesty from their prior and often distant academic experiences. Academic honesty and information literacy awareness and education initiatives may not have diffused to the non-traditional students, especially those students who are learning away from the main campus or at worksites. More problematic is the recognition that adult students are coming from environments, both as part of our general culture and in their places of work, that have seriously blurred the meaning of original work, fair assessment of an individual's performance, and honesty.

For example, in our general culture we see that cheating has expanded beyond a last ditched effort for those who are unprepared or unwilling to do any work, to those high profile walks of life, such as big business, sports, and creative arts, where the payoff of fortune or fame between great and greater is significant (Gammage, 2006). The corporate world today de-emphasizes process and focuses on outcomes; groups and teams are more apt to take credit for work regardless from where the original ideas emanated.

Social commentators have cited the increase in academic dishonesty on American college campuses as a glaring example of how we are losing our moral compass in society and value getting ahead, regardless of the means to achieve “success” (Callahan, 2004; Prashad, 2006). To make matters worse, given the advent of easily stored, transported, and retrieved information via our latest technology gadgets, our culture is beginning to devalue the creative concept of original work. We can now hold on our person data storages that make cheating literally as easy as lifting a finger (Glater, 2006).

The affect on our college campuses of students’ understanding of academic honesty is significant and will necessitate all stakeholders to shore-up their knowledge and skills in protecting the academic integrity of a healthy teaching/learning environment. This best practice article presents a *protocol* for handling academic honesty issues for the adult continuing education student. While academic honesty policies and procedures for the adult learner should be wholly consistent with that of the university’s in general, there are significant differences among the profile and experiences of our adult learners that suggests faculty would do well to consider a best practice in facilitating academic honesty for the adult learner. As is the case with character formation in general, academic

honesty is something that needs to be built and developed over time; for we are not born with this trait, and it is not automatically instilled once students set foot on the campus.

### **Academic Honesty and the Adult Learner**

Those working in and managing academic programs for adults who are returning to complete their first degree pride themselves in understanding and accommodating the adult learner (Brickell, 1995). This understanding and consideration should extend to the communication and implementation of academic honesty policies and procedures.

Faculty and traditional students see academic honesty as an integral part of the higher education experience. Academic honesty instruction, reinforcement, and review are part and parcel to the roles and responsibilities we develop formally or informally in the teaching/learning process. Why is there a need to discuss a best practice protocol for handling academic honesty issues among adult students? Having worked with academic program directors and faculty working with adult learners, we have learned that there are *nuances* in these students' knowledge, attitudes, and experiences that affect how they come to understand, or unfortunately not consider, academic honesty issues. Faculty and academic program directors working with adult learners will do well to consider the following nuances in the adult learners' readiness to inculcate acceptable academic honesty behavior.

### *Academic Honesty as a Throwback for Adult Students*

Adult continuing education students have had varied experiences and are equipped with varying levels of knowledge about higher education before returning to school. One needs to consider that their understanding of academic honesty could be little more than a faint, and often forgotten, memory of high school teachers encouraging them to “keep their eyes on their own papers” and being on the look out for crib sheets. They may recall the vague mantra “do your own work” from teachers, with little context of how intellectual capital, originality, and accurate assessment of individual student performance are valued in higher education.

They may in good faith have made a perfunctory reading of an academic honesty policy when they attended college in the past as a traditional-age student. However, this reading may have been at that time overwhelming; seem irrelevant; or most ineffectively lacked a context from which they could fully understand and apply the principles of ostensible originality of their coursework.

Certainly students should be expected to know not to cheat. However, they may not have been schooled in the scope of academic honesty or instructed on proper citation methods. Yes, they generally understand citation and have had some experience creating a bibliography, but we should not be surprised that they may have had little in the way of understanding the rationale and concepts related to what they may have perceived as laborious and picayune standard documentation strategies for their work. Students may also be frustrated because during the stretch from high school through possibly several colleges they have learned bits and pieces of standard documentation techniques. Consequently, faculty is served up a hodgepodge of documentation techniques that belie consistency.

Do they know that *in text citation* is important because it alerts the reader that the information is not original or is not common knowledge information? Do they know that in-text citation is valuable because it helps the reader of their work know where to find the original information--the primary source? Do they understand, as we may take for granted, that our various disciplines agree on a standard of documentation to facilitate ease of validation and continued research in an area? And do they know that there is a self-serving reason to practice good citation: it helps one easily revisit prior research that may be used for another project?

Yes, most students know, or should know, that a direct quotation needs to have a good citation. However, how many will know that summaries, paraphrases, facts, and novel ideas need to carry a citation from the primary source?

An adult student's readiness to use standard documentation techniques could be inaccurate because in the transfer of credits and courses process, which by design should be liberal, the student on paper "has had the material," usually through a prior research and writing course. How much of this has been retained? When was the course taken? And most important, did the student learn *contextual* standard documentation practices?

Most adult degree completion programs require returning students to take a *research, analysis and writing* course which includes some type of standard documentation techniques. Have all the adult students before you in the course that you are teaching had this course? Many programs have the returning student take a course on adult learning theory or a college success course for the adult learner. Handbooks and other resources may be given to them (Phillips, 2000; Smith & Walter, 1992), but it is

unlikely that a comprehensive and context-based treatment of academic honesty is provided.

While it is not fair, nor is it reasonable, to expect faculty to be the conveyors of the scope of academic honesty or the lead instructors for good documentation techniques; it is important for them to recognize and be prepared for adult continuing education students who sit before them with varying degrees of readiness. Strategies that introduce, reinforce, or provide resources and direction for the adult learner in the area of academic honesty will benefit all.

*Non-traditional Status Does Not Mean Non-traditional Academic Honesty*

Continuing adult education has made great strides in a relatively short amount of time in being recognized as a profession, replete with building theory and best practices, dissemination of research via peer reviewed journals and conferences, increasing number of professional preparation programs, professional associations, and most important gaining recognition as high quality academic units (versus simply the “cash cow”) within the college/university (Merriam, & Brockett, 1997; Bash, 2003). Additionally, continuing adult and professional education units once recognized and established as a true service to a delineated group of students, need to identify which areas of the enterprise are “the same as” other academic units and which areas need to be, by design, different.

Overall the best practice in handling academic honesty for adult continuing education units is that their approach to academic policy and procedures is entirely consistent with that of the university’s. There is no substantive variance, and the adult continuing education programs should guard against any perceived variance.

Adult students are acutely aware of the “non-traditional student” label and program directors, academic advisors, and support personnel in these adult programs are skilled at reacting to or being proactive with these students’ unique support needs. However, non-traditional students should not feel or be given the impression by university officials, even tacitly, that their academic honesty policies and procedures are “non-traditional.” The academic policies and procedures are part and parcel to the adult student’s rights and responsibilities afforded to all students attending the university.

### *Adult Students’ Understanding of the Internet and Intellectual Capital*

Depending on their age, the adult students returning to college on the surface may not be seen as part of the *Internet Generation*. Generally these students recall what life was like prior to the Internet explosion and specifically recall conducting some research in the library and writing a paper. However, faculty members can be sure that the adult students before them may have the same cut and paste habits that plague our traditional-age students. Additionally, while students may be heavy users of the Internet at their place of work and at home, they are unlikely to have been exposed to our new *information literacy* lexicon, philosophy, and practice.

Adult students deserve the opportunity to be engaged in the school’s information literacy initiatives. We can’t assume that just because they are Internet users in the worksite they have developed the information literacy skills that will serve them well in an academic environment. Worksites allow for, and some even pride themselves in, a liberal intellectual capital use environment. Adult students from the worksite are used to being asked to gather intelligence, “find information that’s out there,” or do a quick



scanning of an issue and report the information back to a supervisor or a team as soon as possible. At times, assessing and critiquing the credibility of the source of the information and/or formally identifying the source of non-original ideas and information are not important. They may have made the conceptual leap that freely available information means freely quoted without mentioning the primary author or source.

The adult students before you may need support in understanding the essential components of information literacy: searching, retrieving, assessing, using, and citing sources of information. Faculty and academic program directors can research what information literacy instruction is available to the adult students and ensure that our adult students can conveniently avail themselves of these services on our campuses.

#### *Adult Students, the Workplace, and the Meaning of Collaboration*

As our workplace shifted from a large number of employees directly involved in manufacturing to more workers needed for service oriented jobs, combined with the need to work with knowledge workers, the competency for *working in teams* at the workplace has been stressed. Since the 1980s, one of the most significant human resource and performance management strategies has been to develop effective teams for the company. Look at the business section of your library or local bookstore and you will see a healthy number of books written about how to develop, manage, and motivate effective teams in the workplace.

Adult students coming from these environments have been schooled in working in teams (Katzenback & Smith, 1993). They are use to working in collaborative groups in company environments that have a liberal guard on intellectual capital. The driving force

for teams is getting the job done. By design, results and any successes are celebrated by the team as a whole. Teams know, if only via company mores, that it is taboo to unbundle contributions to account for the individuals of a team who may have the highest sweat equity or who have produced novel ideas for the project. However, in many cases team members are not happy with free riders (Baron & Kreps, 1999) and students will take great umbrage to the free rider phenomenon in-group projects.

This work team experience held by most of your adult students generally works well with your androgogically grounded teaching style and learning activities. However, faculty should consider how their work team philosophy and experiences fits with their need to make assessments of the teamwork. As you may have already appropriately considered, clearly communicating your assessment strategy for a team project is important, especially if you use a hybrid (team/individual student) assessment strategy. It is important to *communicate clearly* to the students your learner assessment plan in order to lessen the missed expectations when final grades are distributed for a course (Gambescia, 2003).

### *Re-use of Students' Work*

As mentioned earlier, companies and businesses value and emphasize with their employees economy of effort. This is a healthy mindset that many adult students have. Additionally, a research and writing habit that we recommend adult students adopt to help them with their long and arduous road to degree completion is the preservation and reuse of their writings. Students are often impressed when they discover the high volume of writing expected of most managers in organizations. I have often explained that one

practice that helps with high volume writing, in work or school, is to try not to mentally craft the same paragraph twice. The more writing one does in an area, the higher the chances will be that some of the writing material can be used again, and again.

Is re-use of writing or other work a violation of academic honesty? Not all academic honesty policies address the issue of re-use of the student's work. Faculty members working with adult students should communicate guidelines and expectations related to re-use of their work from course to course or from assignment to assignment. In some instances, reuse of written material from another assignment may be developmentally healthy and encouraged, whereas other assignments may call for a new and original work from the student. Adult students could be more likely to practice recapitulation. It is important for us to explain the proper uses of re-using prior work and if there are any doubts among students they should be encouraged to ask the instructor before re-use of material.

### **Protocol in Handling Academic Honesty Issues and Violations**

Faculty should develop and become comfortable with a protocol to follow when handling academic honesty infractions and/or issues. This protocol encompasses more than simply knowing the written academic policies, procedures, and regulations of the institution. The protocol involves the understanding of the philosophy of the institution's academic honesty policy, strategies to assess that an academic honesty issue is before you, mechanisms to decide how best to respond to the academic honesty issue, and remediation if a violation has occurred.

I offer this protocol to consider within the context of the *differences of profiles*, as mentioned above in this article (knowledge, attitudes, and experiences), we see among our adult students attending our non-traditional continuing education programs.

*Institution's academic honesty policies, procedures, and regulations*

Faculty should access the written and official academic honesty policies, procedures, and regulations where they teach. They should read over these policies and procedures and make sure that they are completely understood. If there are any questions, faculty can seek counsel. An institution usually has a faculty member assigned as the lead coordinator or counsel on academic honesty procedures, or one could seek counsel from the chair of the Academic Honesty Board. Adjunct faculty need to become familiar with each institution's policies and procedures where they are teaching, as these could vary and each variation and nuance is important in such a serious academic matter.

Policies have several general sections, starting with an overall philosophy and statement of purpose. This section states the importance of academic honesty and integrity in a learning community; reinforces the responsibility that we all have in preserving the integrity of an academic institution; and notes that those suspected of infractions will have fair and due process, but violations are severe and will be seriously addressed.

One section will attempt to define academic honesty violations. This could be quite lengthy, and there is some debate as to whether the policy should be so detailed on the sundry of ways to cheat, plagiarize, fabricate, falsify, steal, or act as an accomplice to

dishonest academic behavior. Policies should note that their lists are not exhaustive and should seek council of faculty if there is a question.

A section or sections will cover the academic honesty charges, hearings and appeals procedures. There is an academic honesty board. The policy will explain the makeup and the board procedures in adjudicating infractions and deciding penalties. A most important section is the procedures that faculty members follow, if an official academic honesty violation is to be documented. Academic honesty charges and penalties will follow detailed steps and timelines. These steps carefully need to be adhered.

Academic honesty boards have at least one student representative. Those working with adult continuing education students have an opportunity to influence the makeup of an academic honesty board. A strong argument can be made that when an adult continuing education student is brought before the academic honesty board, there is a student representative who understands and is better equipped to represent this group of students, versus having only a traditional-age student representative. While the principles and practices of this important group will not change, in the interest of representing fairly all constituents on campus, even if by perception, a prudent approach is to have adult student (and graduate student when appropriate) representation on an academic honesty adjudication board. Faculty can look into the makeup of their boards and discuss this new component with the lead faculty counsel for academic honesty or the dean who oversees adult continuing education programs.

Faculty should include an academic honesty statement on every syllabus. Ideally, this statement is the official statement required on all syllabi that aims to have consistency in communicating this important issue to students. Unfortunately, many

schools do not have an official and or strongly suggested statement for the syllabus, leaving faculty to create and recreate a hodgepodge of ways to communicate these important requirements, which places the diagnostic and adjudicating procedures at risk from the beginning (Gambescia, 2006). If your school does not have a suggested academic honesty statement for syllabi, I recommend a *brief statement* that alerts students to the importance of the issue, establishes the rationale, and directs students to read, understand, and ask for support if the official school policy is not clear. Here is a sample of what could be placed on the syllabus:

*(Name of college) is committed to a learning environment that embraces honesty. Faculty, students, and administrators share responsibility for maintaining this environment of academic honesty and integrity, accepting responsibility for all actions, personal and academic. Each member of our community is expected to read, understand, and uphold the values identified and described in our "Academic Policies, Procedures and Regulations." These can be found on (give source). Students who have questions related to academic honesty should ask me or (give source for alternative counsel, e.g. chair of academic honesty board).*

#### *School's philosophy of an academic honesty policy*

A college's philosophy of academic honesty affects the procedures, if only the informal ones, that faculty will use to act upon and eventually adjudicate an infraction. At first this may seem unnecessary, because are not all colleges and universities equally concerned about and consistently clear on what is academic dishonesty? At the most

general level and in the spirit of academic integrity, yes there is parity of academic honesty among institutions of higher education. However, schools do develop a philosophy on how their learning community thinks about and handles academic honesty.

For example, in the military schools the academic honesty policies and procedures are imbedded in a larger code of conduct that may not be as strong or evident within other colleges. Academic honesty is part and parcel to the very character, persona, and disposition of their students and is indoctrinated via consistent and regimented training and education. At these institutions, there is a high level of trust and expectation that each individual and the community-at-large will adhere to and police the academic honesty policy. When a student begins his/her studies, every part of the academic honesty policy is invoked *de facto*. There is strict and unequivocal interpretation of what academic dishonesty means and a long history of adjudicating any infractions.

Another philosophical approach could be smaller occupational oriented schools or smaller community-based schools where faculty takes a more *educational approach* to academic honesty. There is latitude given to the students because there is recognition, if only tacit, that the students may not be as familiar with all aspects of academic honesty, and consequently the faculty will take time and great care in explaining these expectations in their mutual teaching/learning environment. This instructional approach may occur even when an infraction has taken place, thus taking advantage of the teachable moment. The case I am making in this article is that this approach works well with the adult continuing education students who likely have various levels of knowledge and experience with academic honesty and may not have been instructed on academic honesty within a context of a healthy teaching/learning environment.

A large university setting may create another environment where the academic honesty policy sits at a distance among the morass of bureaucratic and impersonal policies and procedures, leaving students to discover the institution's philosophy and practice, when it could be too late.

An institution's philosophy on academic honesty is discoverable, and it is the responsibility of faculty to learn this, as they are the greatest stakeholders and in the best position, certainly more than administrators, to promulgate and protect academic integrity within their teaching/learning communities. Adjunct faculty should not make the mistake that this philosophy will be invariably absorbed, as one accumulates time in the halls of the academy. Make a conscious effort to meet with colleagues to discuss and discover the philosophy of academic honesty where you teach.

#### *Discovering an Infraction to the Academic Honesty Policy*

Once you have read the university's academic honesty policies and procedures and have a good sense of the school's philosophy, will you know an infraction when you see one and what will you do next? Using a "clinical approach," I suggest here a protocol that should be helpful, especially with the adult continuing education students.

The first step in the protocol is making an initial diagnosis that there is, *in fact*, an infraction of academic honesty. Again, this may seem as if it is begging the question because all faculty members know academic dishonesty when they see it, right? Not necessarily. And more important is the discussion above for which we stress that the philosophy of the school can determine how best to act when one suspects academic dishonesty.



What first appears to be an academic honesty infraction may not always be an infraction. While we should on the surface trust our good sense and observation, one will be surprised to learn, as many faculty members have, that what appears to be an infraction, after a careful and open minded assessment there could be absence of malice on the student's part. Given that implications of academic dishonesty are so severe, it is incumbent upon faculty, as in any medical model, to *get the diagnosis right*.

For example, a group of students in a journalism workshop were given a news writing assignment to give practice in covering a breaking news story. Given that some events were expansive, the instructor told the students that they could work together on the news stories, if desired. The instructor was surprised when he received various approaches to how those students who worked in teams submitted bylines, thus indicating that the students did not know how to submit journalistic work when covered by teams of reporters. Two students working together covered a single story and handed in separate, but identical, news reports, each with his/her byline. Is this an example of academic dishonesty? The instructor used this as a teaching opportunity to show the various ways that teams of journalists working together give attribution to their work.

An adult continuing education class was asked to read a journal article from a peer reviewed journal in the respective discipline under study and "provide a summary." A student dutifully read an article from an online search and turned in the published abstract as the summary. Is this academic dishonesty? The instructor following this protocol used the validation step (see below) and learned that the student did understand what "writing a summary" of a journal article entailed but misread the "provide a summary" as more of a *search and access* learning activity, rather than a learning activity

to write an original summary of an article. The student clearly handed in non-original work, but if the instructor was too quick to implicate the student for academic dishonesty, what would be served? This also gave the instructor the opportunity to explain how abstracts are used in scientific and professional literature and cited similarly to full journal articles.

### *Validating Academic Dishonesty*

When a faculty member suspects academic dishonesty, an important step is to *validate the symptoms*, so to speak, through an initial discussion with the student or students in question. The faculty member should be fully prepared with all of his/her wisdom, expertise, experience and professionalism to explain to the student(s) that an activity or work is *suspect*. The faculty member should carefully and clearly explain to the student what “appears to be dishonest,” reserving the implication of dishonesty to another step. For example, the instructor could begin by saying “This summary appears to be a recapitulation of an abstract of the journal article and not your original summary; how would you explain the gestation of your work?”

I do not suggest that the faculty member simply begin with an implication of academic dishonesty and leave an open-ended question for explanation. Nor should he/she attempt to have the student infer that you suspect academic dishonesty and expect the student to self-incriminate during the discussion. It is certainly within the instructor’s right and responsibility to present what are suspect, and the seriousness of preserving academic integrity on campus. The question on the table is really one for the student to refute in his/her words what is suspect. With a sincere, calm, and strategic dialog, the

faculty member can gain all facts and validate what appears to be suspect and is in a better position to make the final diagnosis of any infraction or potential infraction and take the next step in this protocol.

### *Stating the Nature and Extent of the Academic Honesty Violation*

After the strategic dialog, it is important for the instructor to define explicitly for all parties the nature and extent of the academic dishonesty. If there was absence of malice with the activity or work in question, the instructor can use this step as an opportunity to educate the student as to why this was suspect and the seriousness if an infraction occurred, and the importance of maintaining high academic integrity at the college.

### *Remediation*

The next step in this suggested protocol is for the instructor to determine what remediation should take place given an academic honesty infraction or near infraction. At this stage, the action by the instructor need not move directly to a punitive measure. The action could be *educational* in nature, if the student has plausible deniability of the infraction. We can provide an important service by educating our adult continuing education students about academic honesty issues. We can bring to life the definitions and interpretations of terms that we think all students easily understand such as plagiarism, original works, intellectual property, primary sources, paraphrasing, and re-use of prior work. We can impress upon them the seriousness of an academic honesty infraction in the academic environment.

We must keep in mind that our adult students may be working in an industry or submerged in an organizational environment where cheating, however defined or rationalized, is commonplace and, more disturbing, they see that it has payoffs (Gammage, 2006). This does not suggest that we condone or give tacit approval to such improper behavior. It does suggest that there is a lot that we need to do as faculty to educate the adult students on what is expected in the teaching/learning environment, and that our assessment strategies of their various learning activities need to be realistic measures of student learning and progress.

Also, we need to consider that the returning student may have forgotten what was taught in high school about proper documentation and may not have received clear and detailed instruction on college level use and documentation of sources. Fortunately, many of the adult degree completion programs include a course on research methods and documentation. Even still, they may be genuinely perplexed.

Surprisingly, few students comprehend the rationale for proper documentation and citation of sources. They need to first understand that these practices are set up to help the stakeholders: reader, learning/research communities and themselves as authors. They need to hear that in-text citation alerts the reader that the information they have read is not original from the author or not common knowledge. They need to know in more detail what qualifies as a primary source, and that in text citation and list of references, while time consuming on the writer's part, is an efficient mechanism to help the reader go to the primary source to read or investigate further. When bibliometric techniques are discussed in the context of how scientific communities think, work, and behave, students then appreciate the fact that a detailed system is set up by disciplines so this community

can validate and continue research in a select area. They really appreciate being reminded that good practice of documentation of sources used in their works will be useful to them down the road when they can turn back to reuse or expand upon their work at another day. Economy of effort can have a payoff for them in the academic world.

As an academic administrator who has become intimately involved in academic dishonesty procedures, I can say that faculty take academic dishonesty issues *personally*, because the infraction is an affront to their caring, good nature as teachers and view the act not simply as being dishonest, but lacking respect for the instructor and other students in the course. It is not seen as simply bad behavior or poor judgment on the student's part but destroys the trust given willingly and faithfully by the instructor and violates the integrity of the learning community. It flies in the face of an egalitarian ideology that most faculty hold dear.

If the remediation is punitive, the instructor needs to define clearly the nature and extent of the consequences for the infraction. The instructor, again, should consult policies and procedures related to academic honesty violations from the college's academic affairs policies documents. At a minimum, the instructor needs to send a clear message why the infraction is unacceptable, the potential fall out, and the punitive actions that can be taken. This can actually be a separate step from the final punitive action taken. While faculty should not take giving a student a second chance lightly, much can be gained to ensure that the student understands completely the nature of the infraction. Naturally, students will have ways of rationalizing poor judgment, given the cultural shift away from "honesty the best policy" that we are seeing and that I mentioned early in this article. They need to know unequivocally that the action or activity is unacceptable.

Such a remedial step is also an opportunity to take action to help prevent future infractions. One strategy to make sure you have reached the student is to have the student verbalize (out loud) the nature of the problem. Students should feed back to you in their own words the diagnosis-- what actually happened, the remediation or penalty that now occurs, and how to avoid this action in the future. This “thought transmission” (Fournies, 2000) goes a long way in ensuring that you know that the student now knows about the academic honesty expectations of the college. This also keeps the students from meandering from course to course without anyone seeing the multiple offenses or near offenses related to academic dishonesty. Tracking this questionable activity, unfortunately, can be an even more challenging activity for students in non-traditional programs.

Penalties for academic dishonesty are understandably severe. However, there is still some latitude and judgment that faculty need to take into consideration. For example, if one suspects that academic dishonesty has taken place, you could carefully explain to the student that there are symptoms that the work is problematic, but before you conduct a full assessment you will give the student the opportunity to *redo* the work. Having students spend time redoing an assignment that they believed was crafted expeditiously can, at times, do wonders for a student’s development, especially the adult continuing education student.

Looking at your college policies on penalties for academic dishonesty you will find a range of options from the student failing or reduction of a grade in the course to expulsion from a program or the college. Students will have various opportunities to state

their case during each phase of the process from deposition, to charge, to penalty assigned.

Adult students should not receive special treatment if they, in fact, violate the college's academic honesty policy. We should hope that the majority of adult students do know proper documentation techniques and know not to cheat or plagiarize. If adult students are caught cheating or plagiarizing and are found culpable, we should strictly enforce penalties as to protect for all the academic integrity culture that we work so hard to develop. As with traditional age students (usually their parents), adult students will invoke legal challenges to sever academic honesty sanctions. Those working with adult students (e.g., academic advisors, adjunct, or auxiliary faculty) need the same level of orientation and training to the college's academic honesty policies and procedures.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Instituting a best practices approach to handling academic honesty in adult continuing education colleges or units will take much effort, time, and a lot of cooperation among stakeholders. There may be some well-entrenched conventions (not all useful) influencing the handling of academic honesty with the adult learners. At first, it could be challenging to get the attention of faculty and academic program directors that feel that this is a non-issue and is something already addressed via the university's academic honesty policies and procedures. Second, as reinforced in this article, keep others aware that you are not advocating for substantive change in academic honesty policies and procedures but rather how best to articulate, educate, and implement the purpose, spirit, and meaning of these policies within your delineated student groups.

Making this type of behavior change can evolve over time. Here are some high level steps to review how your adult continuing education units can improve the handling of academic honesty issues.

- I. Review your school's policies and procedures and determine if anything needs to be added to better serve the adult continuing education students.
- II. Advocate for an adult continuing education student and faculty teaching in your programs to sit on the Academic Honesty Review Boards.
- III. Identify a faculty member to serve as the lead for academic honesty issues.
- IV. Ensure that academic honesty awareness and information literacy initiatives are reaching your adult learners; pay special attention to those students in off-campus programs and distance learning programs.
- V. Agree on a standard academic honesty statement to be included in all syllabi.
- VI. Include academic honesty in faculty development; focus on the importance of awareness and education in building a healthy teaching/learning environment that includes high level of academic integrity and try to avoid the sessions monopolized by "how to catch students who are cheating."
- VII. Expanding the clinical model, have grand rounds, so to speak, with faculty to discuss academic honesty issues in practice while holding to strict confidentiality rules on student names.



## **Summary**

Academic honesty is an essential trait for the acculturation of students to a healthy teaching/learning environment. Academic honesty is a shared governance issue and needs support from all stakeholders to protect the reputation of an institution of higher learning. Universities and colleges need to ensure that the indoctrination of academic honesty and the teaching of information literacy reach all students. There is some evidence that adult continuing education students are a delineated group that may need some remedial support in understanding academic honesty policies, especially as they relate to original works and citations. This article outlined a best practice protocol for faculty to use when handling academic honesty with adult continuing education students. While non-traditional students should not expect a “non-traditional academic honesty policy,” faculty would do well to understand the diversity of background and experiences that adult continuing education students have concerning academic honesty. Steps were given to review how adult continuing education units or colleges can improve the handling of academic honesty issues.

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Stephen F. Gambescia  
Associate Professor, Health Services Administration  
Drexel University  
1505 Race Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102