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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

EXPLORING COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS' AND FACULTY  
MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Learning Technologies

by

Donna Lesser

May, 2014

Kay Davis, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Donna Lesser

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, in her loving memory, and father who instilled in me the desire to learn and the willingness to work hard to achieve my goals.



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## ABSTRACT

Academic dishonesty is a well-documented problem in higher education. While numerous actions and/or behaviors are attributed to threatening academic integrity, the vernacular term used by both students and faculty is “cheating”. Although there has been a substantial amount of research on academic integrity and dishonesty in general, little is known about the community college environment or whether faculty and students agree as to what behaviors actually constitute cheating. As the behaviors and actions range from those that are individual, collaborate, or involve the use of the Internet; perceptions about severity of the actions associated with defined consequences also needed to be explored.

Targeting California community college students and faculty, a network sampling technique solicited 59 students and 56 faculty members through social media sites, including *LinkedIn*, *Facebook* and *Twitter*, along with the researcher’s personal network of colleagues and students. Two web-based surveys, 1 for each population, were developed based on findings in the literature. The content validation process resulted in 17 behaviors grouped into 3 categories based on the nature of the behavior. Participants were asked whether they believed the behavior to be cheating and if so, to rate the severity of the cheating behavior considering their associated consequences.

Students and faculty were in agreement that 11 of the 17 behaviors were cheating and 5 of the 17 were not while there were differences in opinions regarding the severity and appropriate consequences for some of these behaviors. Behaviors considered to be collaborative had more variation in opinions regarding whether they were cheating, the severity and the deserved consequence than independent related or Internet related behaviors. Internet related behaviors had a high level of agreement between faculty and students and had similar opinions

on the severity and consequences of these behaviors. To increase and enhance the understanding of academic dishonesty at community colleges, it is recommended that this study be replicated to include a larger sample of California community college students and faculty. Lastly, community college administrators are encouraged to assess their policies and procedures on academic dishonesty, specifically behaviors associated with cheating, for clarity and appropriateness of their associated consequences.

## Chapter 1 The Issue

Colleges and universities are post-secondary educational institutions, which are unique in their ability to confer degrees indicating the completion of a course of study or as an honorary recognition of achievement (United States Department of Education, 2010). Community colleges provide the first two years of post-secondary coursework that lead to an associate degree with the exception of a few community colleges that award bachelor degrees (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). Students can transfer the units from courses associated with their associate degrees to 4-year universities and colleges to complete their bachelor's degrees. Four-year colleges or universities confer bachelor, master and doctoral degrees that require a range of four years and more to complete.

Inherent in a degree is the expectation that the recipients have adhered to the code of conduct and academic integrity guidelines of the awarding institution including honesty and responsibility for presenting one's own work, thoughts and ideas or giving credit to others when appropriate. As a result, the principle of academic integrity is the underlying foundation on which education is built on and provides an inherent value to all educational degrees (International Center for Academic Integrity, 1999).

In higher education, each student is responsible for his or her learning, therefore any act of academic dishonesty is a serious concern because its occurrence diminishes the quality of education and undermines the integrity of the institution and the degrees awarded by the institution (Brent & Atkisson, 2011). Complex issues associated with academic dishonesty arise when students graduate without the skills and knowledge that are associated with the awarded degrees. Moreover, academic dishonesty can threaten the development of leaders, good citizens and ethical professionals (Brent & Atkisson, 2011). For these reasons, academic dishonesty also

referred to as cheating or academic misconduct has been discussed and researched for over five decades with a reported prevalence ranging from 23% to 91.7% (Berry, Thorton & Baker, 2006; Drake, 1941). Academic dishonesty can include cheating on a quiz or test, plagiarizing, obtaining advanced information about a quiz or test, fabricating information or submitting the same academic work for multiple courses, helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty, and academic misuse of computer software (Waithaka & Gitimu, 2012). For the purpose of this study, academic dishonesty was defined as “any fraudulent actions or attempts by a student to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work” (Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2003, p. 3).

Researchers who have been studying academic dishonesty in higher education have mostly focused on determining its prevalence, defining who is involved in these acts, and developing mechanisms to stop academic dishonesty (Brent & Atkisson, 2011; Nathanson, Paulhus, & Williams, 2006; Roig & Marks, 2006; Vandehey, Diekhoff, & LaBeff, 2007). An increase in the prevalence of academic dishonesty was reported between 1960 and 1999 with 50% to 70% of college students admitting to cheating (Cizek, 1999). Cizek (1999) argues that the increase is associated with a rise in competition for good grades, perception of an inadequate amount of time to study for exams, perception of an unfair study load, and a lack of interest in the required courses to complete undergraduate degrees. More recently, researchers are claiming that the prevalence of academic dishonesty has increased from 75 to 95% in college students (Berry, et al., 2006).

In addition to studying the prevalence of academic dishonesty, researchers (Davis & Welton, 1991; Lawson, 2004; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2002) have investigated individual variables to attempt to predict who will engage in acts of academic dishonesty. A

debate continues over whether gender is a determinant for the incidence of academic dishonesty with the research suggesting that males are more likely to cheat than females. Lawson (2004) contends that gender is a significant variable because men possess more unethical intentions than women in decision-making. However, little disagreement exists over the connection between the year in college and the incidence of cheating with the year in college being a stronger predictor for participation in acts of academic dishonesty than the age of the student (Lawson, 2004). This conclusion supports the findings of Davis and Welton (1991) who observed that upper classmen were more inclined to make sound ethical decisions than freshman or first year college students with this ethical decision-making behavior spilling over into a reduction in acts of academic dishonesty. Therefore, a decrease in participation in academic dishonesty is noted the longer a student is enrolled in the educational process. Lastly, many researchers have focused on mechanisms, such as honor codes and detection software, to deter students from cheating. Unfortunately, research indicates a limited impact on the incidence of academic dishonesty with the implementation of honor codes, use of technology such as anti-plagiarism software, and development of testing centers where technological surveillance is utilized (McCabe et al., 2002). Despite extensive research done on the topic by Lawson (2004) and McCabe et al. (2002), discord continues around what influences and impacts student engagement in acts of academic dishonesty.

Research outcomes are even less conclusive when examining perceptions about what behaviors are agreed upon as constituting acts of academic dishonesty. The majority of this research has focused on the faculty member's and administrator's perceptions (Coren, 2011; Hard, Conway & Moran, 2006; Hudd, Apgar, Bronson & Lee, 2009; Smith, Nolan & Dai, 1998) and to a much lesser degree on college students' perceptions (Campbell, 2006; Hard et al., 2006,

Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003; Volpe, Davidson, & Bell, 2008). Due to the limitations in the scope of previous research studies, the present study is needed to deepen the understanding of student and faculty perceptions toward academic dishonesty.

There has been an increased interest in academic dishonesty that is directly related to the accessibility of the Internet. The Miniwatts Marketing Group (as cited in Jones, 2011) found a 51% increase in Internet usage since 2000 which supports the perception that the Internet has made cheating much easier to participate through *cutting and pasting* others work without citing it or purchasing topical papers by anonymous authors from online websites (Jones, 2011; Scanlon & Neumann, 2002). This renewed interest in academic dishonesty has spilled over into online education. Research on cheating by students taking online classes is in its infancy when compared to traditional, face-to-face classes, but it has resulted in fairly consistent findings. King, Guyette, and Piotrowski (2009), Watson and Sottile (2010), and Stuber-McEwen, Wisely, and Hoggatt, (2009), found that students self-reported a lower incidence of cheating while taking online classes when compared to students enrolled in traditional classes. This is a stark contrast to how cheating associated with online courses is portrayed in blogs, newspaper articles and other antidotal writings.

While much research and public dialogue has centered on cheating in online education and traditional four-year institutions, less is known about cheating in community colleges. Therefore, this research project focused on current or recent students and faculty who currently or recently taught in traditional face-to-face courses at brick and mortar, community colleges in California. The American Association of Community College (2012) state that almost half of all students enrolled in college attend a community college and this population has not been researched as extensively as students attending four-year institutions. Therefore, through this



study, students, faculty and institutions will obtain a better understanding of academic dishonesty from both the student and faculty perspectives.

### **Problem Statement**

Academic dishonesty is a problem that continues to plague higher education (Miller, Shoptaugh, & Wooldridge, 2011; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009; Wotring & Bol, 2011). The 2012 nationally televised cheating scandal at Harvard University involving as many as 125 students in a 279-student class could be used as a testament to this claim (Pennington, 2012). The incident involved students collaborating on a take home final exam that resulted in approximately 70 students being forced to withdrawal from the Harvard, while half of the remaining suspected students were placed on probation and the other half received no disciplinary action (Pereza-Pena, 2013). The more recent studies involving cheating have reported a prevalence of academic dishonesty ranging from 75% to 90% in college students (Berry et al., 2006). Engler, Landau and Epstein (2008) went a step farther and claimed that academic dishonesty is a social norm in colleges. This claim was supported through another study that found 45% of students at community colleges perceive academic dishonesty as socially acceptable and a social norm of college life (Smyth & Davis, 2003). Moffatt has a similar but slightly different perspective on academic dishonesty after surveying students at Rutgers University when he argues “The university at the underground levels sounds like a place where cheating comes almost as naturally as breathing, where it’s an academic skill almost as important as reading, writing and math” (as cited in Whitley, 1998, p. 235). Moffatt’s statement is supported by studies that found students engage in acts of academic dishonesty if they believe that the social norm at their university or college supports this behavior (Etter, Cramer, & Finn, 2006). This concept of acceptance as being part of why academic dishonesty is prevalent is supported through research

findings that indicate alienation; embarrassment and peer disapproval can be strong deterrents to academic dishonesty with students at a four-year institution (Diekhoff, et al., 1996; McCabe & Trevino, 1997). Therefore, the previous research supports the concept that academic dishonesty is a social norm in college.

Although significant amount of research exists on different aspects of academic dishonesty, there is notably less information involving students and faculty from community colleges, often referred to as two-year colleges. Research into the academic integrity of students at community colleges is important since an estimated 13 million students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012) were enrolled in community colleges in the United States in 2010. With the majority of research being directed to the approximated 14 million students attending four-year colleges and universities (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012) there is a noticeable gap in information from the under-represented community college students.

The validity of the reports on academic dishonesty has been challenged due to the volunteer nature of the sampling technique (Miller, Shoptaugh, & Parkenson, 2008). Volunteer or self-reporting of facts has been associated with over-estimations and inaccuracies due to recall biases and social pressures (Miller et al., 2008). With this in mind, the majority of research on the incidence and prevalence of cheating has been based on students' self-reports and voluntary participation in research studies (Miller et al., 2008). Miller et al. (2008) argue low response rate magnifies any bias in the selection technique due to those responding having a greater degree of altruism or concern for academic integrity. Therefore, the prevalence of student involvement in acts of academic dishonesty could be higher than is currently reported through research. The rate of students' self-disclosure varies across different colleges and universities, and within

disciplines of study. However, regardless of the discipline of study, the literature supports a distressing pervasiveness of self-reported academic dishonesty by students primarily in four-year colleges and universities.

The existence of academic dishonesty in higher education is alarming. In addition to the concrete evidence of its prevalence through self-reporting, there is discourse surrounding the issues involving the definition and the behaviors or acts that constitute academic dishonesty. Noticeable differences exist in students', faculty members' and administrators' attitudes on which behaviors constitute cheating (Klein, Levenburg, McKendall, & Mothersell, 2006; Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003). An example of this in congruency includes faculty members' feelings that delaying the taking of an exam due to a false excuse was a more serious example of cheating than did the students. Schmelkin, Gilert, Spencer, Pincus, & Silva (2008) argue that understanding student perceptions of academic dishonesty will assist in a deeper understanding of the issue as well as assist in mutually agreeable definitions of behaviors that constitute academic dishonesty. An agreement on a definition of academic dishonesty between students, faculty and administrators that specifies behaviors that are included within the definition, may reduce confusion and allow for advancement to be made in reducing its incidence and prevalence.

Understanding students' and faculty members' attitudes towards the rating of severity of behaviors associated with academic dishonesty are needed to help achieve a more thorough understanding of cheating. Limited research exists on students' attitudes toward academic dishonesty, specifically their attitudes towards the severity of the behavior associated with acts of academic dishonesty (Carpenter, Harding, Finelii, Montgomery, & Passow, 2006; Granitz &

Loewy, 2007; Murdock & Anderman, 2006). Obtaining this insight would assist with building a comprehensive body of knowledge in the literature.

In summation, essential components are missing which are needed to understand the issue of academic dishonesty in college students. First, insufficient information exists on the topic of student and faculty member perceptions on academic dishonesty. With the lack of an agreed upon definition, it is clear that a critical step to understanding academic dishonesty is to agree on which behaviors constitute acts of academic dishonesty. Secondly, there exists a need to explore students and faculty attitudes toward the severity of behaviors associated with academic dishonesty. This need includes examining the basis of their decision making process as they rate the severity of acts of cheating. Thirdly, students attending community colleges have been sorely underrepresented in the literature therefore, more information is needed on their attitudes and perceptions associated with cheating. Having the insight and knowledge obtained by this study may have an impact on how institutions and faculty design policies and procedures in their educational environments.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of behaviors associated with academic dishonesty and the severity of these behaviors from the perspectives of community college students and faculty. The study identified behaviors that both college students and faculty associate with academic dishonesty, specifically *cheating*. It also identified similarities and differences in the severity ascribed to specific behaviors from a student and faculty viewpoint. The information derived from this study may allow institutions to start a new dialogue for policy changes on how institutions and faculty define and address academic dishonesty issues.

## **Research Questions**

Three research questions guide the design of the study.

1. What behaviors do students and faculty perceive as cheating?
2. How do students and faculty rate the severity of those behaviors they consider to be cheating using defined consequences associated with academic dishonesty?
3. What are the similarities and differences between what students and faculty perceive as cheating and the severity of those cheating behaviors?

## **Significance of the Study**

Now is critical time to strengthen the knowledge of academic dishonesty given the technological advances that have produced new approaches to course delivery modes, such as hybrid, online or massive open online classes (MOOC). The new modalities are associated with a reduced direct student-to-faculty contact time, emphasis on student collaboration during the learning process, and the use of the Internet, which might present an increased occurrence in acts of academic dishonesty. Therefore, the need to understand student and faculty perceptions of cheating in a traditional face-to-face learning environment is needed in order to better understand cheating in other learning environments.

This study was undertaken with the goal of understanding how students and faculty at community colleges view cheating in order to adjust policies and practices to ensure academic integrity. The study may fill a gap in the literature by providing insight into the perceptions on academic dishonesty from community college students and faculty. By gaining a better understanding of the differences and similarities in student and faculty perceptions, faculty and institutions may better understand the social norms associated with academic dishonesty. It is hoped that institutions will be challenged to take the information acquired through this study and

start a dialogue on how to instill a sense of academic integrity into each college classroom and diminish the ethical dilemmas confronting students, faculty and administrators.

### **Conceptual Foundation**

This study relied on two key conceptual areas: integrity and academic dishonesty. Academic integrity is the framework that colleges and universities are built upon when they “commit themselves to the pursuit of truth” (McCabe, & Pavela, 2004, p. 12). According to McCabe and Pavela (2004), the process of learning is grounded in certain core values, starting with honesty and integrity in one’s academic work. Academic integrity is often an unspoken concept that centers around an understanding that intellectual growth relies on one’s own development of independent thought and the processing of ideas. Academic integrity incorporates ethical decision-making, which is a “decision that is both legally and morally acceptable to the larger community” (Jones, 1991, p. 387). These same ethical considerations influence how an individual would regard the severity of a particular behavior.

Academic dishonesty was defined as any “fraudulent actions or attempts by a student to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work” (Lambert et al., 2003, p. 3). The term *cheating* is the vernacular board term and includes a variety of academic dishonest behaviors. These include cheating on a test, plagiarism, obtaining advanced information about a test, fabrication of information, and multiple submissions of the same academic work, complicity by knowingly helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty, and academic misuse of computer software.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

#### **Academic Integrity Terms.**

- Academic integrity: Academic integrity was defined as implementing and holding oneself accountable to the set of values which include honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (International Center for Academic Integrity, 1999).
- Integrity: According to Saunders and Butts (2011), integrity relies on ethical principles and virtues and incorporates moral values or simply stated, a person's character.
- One's own values: One's own values are when individuals engage in behaviors that are consistent with their beliefs and attitudes (Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore, 2009).

#### **Academic Dishonesty Terms.**

- Academic dishonesty – The definition of academic dishonesty that was used this study is “any fraudulent actions or attempts by a student to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work” (Lambert et al., 2003, p. 3).
- Cheating: Used interchangeably with academic dishonesty.
- Plagiarism: For purposes of this study, plagiarism was defined as “presenting, as one's own, the ideas or words of another person or persons for academic evaluation without proper acknowledgement” (Hard et al., 2006, p. 1059).

#### **Ethical Decision Making.**

- Competing values: Competing values, as defined by Eisenberg (2004), is when an action can benefit oneself or others, or it can harm oneself or others or can be seen to be carrying a conflicting message.
- Consequences: Consequences was defined actions that will occur if a student was caught cheating (Thakkar & Weisfeld-Spolter, 2012).

- **Moral reasoning:** Moral reasoning is the cognitive process used to determine if something is right or wrong (Abdolmohammadi & Baker, 2008).
- **Severity:** Severity was used to describe the seriousness of an act of academic dishonesty based on the seriousness of the act (Payan, Reardon, & McCorkle, 2010).

### **Target Population Terms**

- **Faculty:** Faculty member or faculty was defined as an educator who is currently teaching or taught a minimum of one face-to-face course at a California community college in the last 12 months.
- **Student:** For the purpose of this study, a student was defined as an individual who is currently enrolled in or has taken a minimum of one face-to-face course at a community college in the last 12 months.
- **Community college:** Community colleges, also called two-year colleges or junior colleges, are institutions where students can take courses to obtain a certificate, associate degree, and in some states a bachelor degree or take courses to transfer to a four-year institution to complete a bachelor or higher degree (Calcagno, Crosta, Bailey, & Jenkins, 2006).

### **Study Delimitations and Assumptions**

The study focused on community college students and faculty throughout California. While this issue is relevant to other academic institutions as well, there was a specific need to delimit a study to this branch of secondary education due to the limited research on this population.

The first assumption of the research was that cheating does occur in California community colleges to the extent described in the literature. The second assumption was that academic dishonesty is harmful to the learning environment, the reputation of the institution and



the success of students. This researcher held the belief that academic dishonesty undermines the foundation of higher education institutions. The third assumption involved the nature of the self-administered surveys that depend on honesty of the participants. While criteria for both student and faculty inclusion were clearly articulated, there was no way to ensure neither the participants did indeed meet the criteria nor that they responded honestly. Additionally, self-administered surveys have a significant limitation in that only those choosing to participate would have provided responses.

### **Summary**

A significant amount of research involving cheating exists, but there are substantial gaps in the body of knowledge surrounding this issue. To help address this void in knowledge, it is essential that the research on cheating go beyond the variable factors of demographics, personality, and situation, and become more focused on student attitudes and perceptions. In addition, students attending and faculty providing the instruction at California community colleges are a vital component of the higher education system in the United States and therefore need to be recognized and represented in the literature. Through this study, student and faculty perceptions about academic dishonesty and insights into how their decisions are made were explored. The significance of this research was to gain insight into how students and faculty at California community colleges view cheating in order to adjust policies and practices to enhance academic integrity.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

Integrity has been the foundation that modern, respectable societies are built upon (Graham, 2001). Socrates stressed that integrity is inherently valuable while Aristotle emphasized the need to value behaviors that were just such as telling the truth, being honest and fairness (Adler, 1952). Furthering the belief that integrity and behaviors are interwoven, Schlenker (2008) found that integrity is associated with a commitment to ethical principles. The relationship between integrity and ethics can be described as a way to “link the self-system to the ethical principles, producing an accompanying sense of obligation to perform consistently with those principles, an increased sense of responsibility for relevant actions, and a reluctance to condone and rationalize ethical transgressions” (Schlenker, 2008, p. 1080). Therefore, having personal integrity would require living a life committed to ethical values (Graham, 2001).

Having personal integrity not only requires a commitment to ethical values but is has been found to predict a person’s commitment to academic integrity (Schlenker, 2008). Schlenker’s (2008) findings indicate that individuals with personal integrity have a greater sense of purpose and meaning in their life’s, a higher self-esteem and internal control, a higher sense of empathy and trust, less Machiavellianism traits and tendencies, and were less likely to rationalize immoral behaviors. Therefore, individuals with a commitment to personal integrity and ethical values are more likely to exhibit behaviors associated with academic integrity, and less likely to become involved in acts of academic dishonesty. Students who have reported valuing academic integrity and promoting academic integrity at their institutions were less likely to cheat according to Miller et al. (2011). The traits that separated students who valued academic integrity from those who did not include valuing the process of learning, having a higher sense of personal character, and having a strong belief that cheating was not the right thing to do (Miller et al., 2011).

With an understanding of the correlation between integrity and ethics to academic integrity, it is unsettling to see that reported incidences and self-reported participation in cheating is on a steady increase (McCabe, 2005). There is an overwhelming body of valid research that has addressed the questions of who cheats, how often students report engaging in behaviors associated with cheating, the measures that can be taken to attempt to stop or prevent cheating, and the effectiveness of these measures. While this information is relevant, it has not had a measureable impact on arresting the reported prevalence of academic dishonesty over the last decade. Therefore, this literature review provides the foundation and justification for the need to expand the knowledge surrounding student and faculty perceptions and attitudes toward academic dishonesty in order to allow institutions to be more effective in addressing the issue of cheating. The literature review discusses the following:

- The importance of academic honesty to institutions and the community and the impact that academic dishonesty has on educational institutions and the public.
- The discourse on agreeing to what behaviors constitutes cheating.
- A review of the reported prevalence of academic dishonesty.
- The research on student and faculty attitudes and perceptions on academic dishonesty occurring around them and at their institutions including rating of the severity of the acts of academic dishonesty.
- The limited research on academic dishonesty by students in community colleges and the need to fill this gap within the literature.

### **The Ethical Reality of Academic Dishonesty**

Most colleges and universities have a mission statement or vision that includes preparing students for citizenship and service in their community, character development, and moral

leadership which may only occur with sound ethical decision making and behavior (King & Mayhew, 2002; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). There is little debate that acts of academic dishonesty undermine this mission. An example of an entity that focuses on this concept is the International Center for Academic Integrity housed at Duke University. The Center is a consortium made up of over 200 colleges and universities that promotes the benefit to society when universities have standards of integrity and prepare students for *responsible citizenship* (International Center for Academic Integrity, 1999). Their core values include honesty in seeking knowledge and personal learning, and responsibility or personal accountability to uphold educational standards. Academic dishonesty undermines institutional integrity and threatens the academic fabric of educational institutions. Purdue University very clearly articulates their stance on academic dishonesty with the statement that “dishonesty is not an acceptable avenue to success. It diminishes the quality of a Purdue education, which is valued because of Purdue's high academic standards” (Akers, 2013, p.1). The lack of acceptability that is stressed in the Purdue statement encompasses the institutions responsibility to curtail academic dishonesty for the reputation of the institution and their accreditation status (Baker & Papp, 2003).

The process of cheating undermines students' learning in numerous ways. Bouville (2010) argues that grades are a mechanism to place a value on how well a student has been able to demonstrate knowledge and/or skill obtainment. If a student has cheated, then the grade given does not represent what a student knows. Equally, cheating interferes with the faculty member's ability to provide concrete and worthwhile feedback to assist the student in his or her growth. Passow, Mayhew, Finelli, Harding, & Carpenter (2006) confirmed this belief with their research finding where acts of academic dishonesty undermine the validity of the assessments of student learning. Assessments of student learning provide invalid outcomes when cheating is involved

because faculty have no tangible way to determine what a student knows or does not know. Furthermore, the ability for faculty to self-assess the course design and teaching strategies are affected by cheating and false assessment outcomes (Bouville, 2010).

Acts of academic dishonesty are seen as having a broader impact on society since they are not considered isolated behaviors. It has been found that students who cheat in college are more likely to cheat in graduate and professional schooling (Baldwin, Daugherty, Rowley, & Schwartz, 1996). Similarly, students who have participated in acts of academic dishonesty while in college have self-reported transferring this behavior into their professional lives (Blankenship & Whitley, 2000; Harding, Carpenter, Finelli, & Passow, 2003, 2004; Roig & Caso, 2005). Additionally, Lovett-Hooper, Komarraju, Weston, & Dollinger (2007) confirmed this finding by reporting students who engage in cheating in college are more likely to participate in an array of unethical behaviors in their professional careers including lying, stealing and violating other societal norms. Although society is impacted through the lowering of student and faculty moral who witness acts of academic dishonesty, there is also an effect on the reputation of the institution, and ultimately the damage that is done to higher education when cheating scandals occur (Passow et al., 2006).

### **Disagreement on the Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013) defines cheating as an act “to deprive something valuable by the use of deceit or fraud.” Other definitions include the “submission of work that is not one’s own” (Burrus, McGoldrick, & Schuhmann, 2007, p. 4) or Hard, Conway, and Moran’s (2006) definition of “providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation” (p. 1059). There is an inconsistency in the definition and agreement of what behaviors constitute cheating by

researchers, institutions, faculty, and students that has impacted research on academic dishonesty (Thoekildsen, Golant, & Richesin, 2007). Finn and Frone (2004) argue there are ranges of behaviors, from unauthorized collaboration on an assignment to the use of crib notes or copying from another student's work during a test, that one can consider cheating. Brown and Emmett (2001) support an array of behaviors that make up what can be considered cheating but their research indicates there has been a shift in acts that were considered cheating over a 33-year period of time. This shift includes acts such as purchasing term papers through the Internet and sharing of information with the assistance of technology (Brown & Emmett, 2001).

The theme of a lack of consensus on what behaviors are considered cheating continued in Devlin and Gray's study (2007) when students stated plagiarism occurred because they did not completely understand what acts were considered to be plagiarism. Because of this lack of clarity, students in the study stated they accidentally plagiarized on assignments. Conversely, Kidwell, Wozniak and Laurel (2003) found that students do know what plagiarism is, and even with this knowledge they continue to copy sentences from published works without referencing the information. Voelker, Love and Pentina (2011) found that not only do students understand what acts constitute plagiarism, but they readily understand there are consequences to plagiarizing on assignments. Additionally, the study revealed the confusion lies in how much of others' work they can report without referencing. This supports the theme that students don't understand all behaviors that faculty consider to be acts of academic dishonesty and therefore many may participate in acts of academic integrity unintentionally.

Collaborative learning is another area that faculty and students are in disagreement about in relation to cheating. Collaborative cheating is one of the specific types of behaviors associated with cheating that is increasing according to McCabe, Trevino and Butterfield (2001).

Inversely, examples of collaboration that students and faculty understand to be considered cheating is students working with peers on an assignment that faculty stated was an individual project or soliciting answers from a peer who has already taken a quiz or exam in the same course (Kidwell et al., 2003). An example of this was the highly publicized Duke University's incident of cheating with first year students in the master of business administration program (Young, 2007). Thirty-four students were found guilty of unauthorized collaboration on a take home final exam, which is in violation of the university's honor code.

Maramark and Maline (1993) complicate the picture more by asserting that there are gray areas associated with cheating such as reusing parts of one's own paper in another course and use of a tutor to assist in addressing questions on a class assignment. Submitting one's original work in two different classes may lack integrity but isn't cheating according to Ghaffari (2008).

In isolated situations, faculty and students have agreed on specific behaviors as being defined as cheating but they will be inconsistent with the severity of the acts (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003). This discrepancy can lead to animosity between students and faculty if students feel the penalty associated with a behavior is more severe than they feel is justified. Baker, Berry and Thornton (2008) researched attitudes toward cheating and defined minor cheating as "an academic integrity violation sufficiently serious to merit a point reduction on an assignment or examination but no additional punitive action" and concluded that serious cheating is "an academic integrity violation sufficiently serious to merit the student failing the course and being reported to the university's academic counsel for disciplinary action" (p. 8). The students in Baker et al. study did not demonstrate an understanding of what behaviors fell into the three categories of cheating. Whereas, when Vandehey et al. (2007) defined acts of cheating to

include cheating on an exam, quiz, and course assignments, they found that there has been an increase in cheating that was contributed to the well-defined definition of cheating.

Having a definition of cheating in a dictionary is one thing but not having students and faculty agree on what behaviors and acts are considered cheating is an important issue that has yet to be resolved. Associated with the definition includes an agreement of the perceived seriousness of acts of academic dishonesty. More research needs to be conducted to help bridge the ambiguity with the definition and the severity of cheating (Schmelkin et al., 2008).

### **Prevalence of Academic Dishonesty**

Over the past 70 years, more than a dozen studies have attempted to quantify the prevalence of academic dishonesty. Estimates range from a low 23% in 1941 to a high of 91.7% in 1997 (Table 1).

Table 1

#### *Prevalence of Academic Cheating*

Year	Prevalence	Researchers
1941	23%	Drake
1960	49%	Goldsen, Rosenberg, William and Suchman
1964	64%	Hetherington and Feldman
1980	76%	Baird
1980	88%	Sierles, Hendrickx and Circle
1984	54%	Vandehey, Diekhoff and LaBeff
1993	84%	McCabe
1997	91.7%	Roberts, Anderson and Yanish
2001	54%	Jordan
2002	70%	McCabe
2005	70%	McCabe
2006	90.1%	Hard, Conway and Moran
2010	75%	Owunwanne, Rustagi, and Dada
2012	67%	Williams, Tanner, Beard and Hale

The wide range in findings is contributed to how cheating is defined, the sample populations being so varied and variation in the methods of gathering data in each study



(McCabe & Trevino, 1996). In a landmark study, McCabe and Trevino (1993) did a meta-analysis of academic dishonesty between 1963 and 1991 and concluded that there was only a 7% increase in all behaviors that are associated with cheating but a significant increase in cheating on tests. Contrary to the findings by McCabe and Trevino (1993), Davis, Grover, Becker, and McGregor (1992) concluded that there has been a marked increase in the prevalence of cheating between 1940 and 1992.

If students are more likely to cheat when they believe others are going to cheat, then the perception of cheating has a dramatic impact on student behavior as students in competitive programs may feel the need to cheat to compete with those that are cheating (McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Mixon 1996). This finding is supported by Sheard, Markham, and Dick (2003) who argue that students in business school perceive that if their peers are cheating then they will be disadvantaged if they don't cheat. Prenshaw, Straughan, and Albers-Miller (2001) found that students who are strong academically are more likely to perceive cheating is occurring by other students. This could have an impact on educational institutions as they seek to attract academically strong students. If an institution has a reputation for high academic standards, it should have the perception of cheating not being commonplace at the institution (Prenshaw et al., 2001).

The majority of all research involves self-reporting by students to disclose direct knowledge, perceptions and disclosure of personal behaviors. One issue with self-reported incidences of acts of academic dishonesty is a possible bias in reporting their attitudes, beliefs and opinions on the subject (Spaulding, 2009). There can be a social desirability bias where students respond as they feel others want them to in order to heighten one's social approval. This bias can lead to an over reporting of cheating if the bias is to support peers who are cheating

or the opposite, under reporting, to support the institution's mission on academic integrity or having a different definition of what behaviors are considered cheating (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; David & Kovach, 1979; Houston, 1986; Karlins, Michaels, & Podlogar, 1988; Paulhus, 1991). Allen, Fuller, and Lockett's findings indicate the self-reporting process results in students under reporting dishonest behavior (1998). In order to better understand the possible constraints with self-reporting, Chapman, Davis, Troy, and Wright (2004) held two discussion group meetings with a total of 40 students. Students responded that they would self-report honestly and accurately "if they did not think the questionnaire would be used as a basis for 'tightening up' the cheating policies at the university" (Chapman et al., 2004, p. 239).

With the shift in education to have hybrid, blended and online course, researchers have tried to determine if there is a difference in the perception of cheating between the different delivery mechanisms. Although there are blogs and commentaries throughout the Internet indicating a higher incidence of cheating in online courses, research findings don't support this perception. Grijalva, Nowell, and Kerkvliet (2006) and Spaulding (2009) found no difference between the self-reported incidences of cheating between online and face-to-face courses. On the other side of this discussion, is the belief that web-based exams are almost like asking students to cheat (Chapman et al., 2004).

The prevalence of acts of academic dishonesty is not an agreed upon statistic and can range from 23% to 91.7%. There are many factors that have a direct impact on the different outcomes of the studies which include a variation in the design of the different studies; the sampling technique, sample population and sampling size; the variation in the data collection tools; and the variation in the definition in what acts constitute cheating. The one agreed upon aspect of prevalence is that the incidences of cheating are too high.

## **Attitudes Surrounding Academic Dishonesty**

**Students.** There continues to be inconsistent findings surrounding the concept of academic dishonesty, which extends into the research on attitudes students hold about cheating. Due to the complexity of the topic, researchers have looked at specific variables such as what motivates a student to cheat, how students justify their actions, and personal ethics of students.

The most common way that motivation to cheat has been researched is to look at intrinsic, extrinsic and performance goals. This body of knowledge supports the finding that students who are internally motivated to learn or master a specific skill or knowledge are less likely to cheat than their peers that are externally motivated to achieve a specific grade or obtain a specific academic standing (Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes & Armstead, 1996). Newstead et al. (1996) found students who associated personal development as the focus of taking a course self-disclosed significantly lower incidences of cheating than those who were driven to get grades for the outcome of getting a better job and financial gain. This finding was supported when a study of 175 students at a small, private liberal arts college found students who disclosed cheating behaviors had higher extrinsic motivation scores than non-cheaters (Jordon, 2001).

Students who had a negative attitude towards the professional and institutional standards of academic integrity were found to have a higher incidence of cheating (Love & Simmons, 1998). Jordon (2001) went one step farther to claim students with a negative attitude toward cheating was one of the three best predictors for cheating.

Poor scholastic competence is a variable that is associated with a higher incidence in cheating. Nathanson et al. (2006) found that students who had a lesser understanding of the subject of psychology felt that they were put into a situation where they had to cheat to pass the class.

The concept of neutralizing attitudes was first presented by Sykes and Matza (1957) in relationship to criminal behavior and was defined as “justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large” (p. 667). According to Sykes and Matza (1957), there are five types of neutralization processes or attitudes a person can utilize including denial of accountability for one’s actions; denial that there is a victim to the outcome of the behavior; denial that there will be any injury to anyone due to the behavior; condemning those who view the acts as wrong; and appealing to loyalties to others such as doing it to help a friend out. The neutralization attitudes help explain how individuals justify and neutralize internal conflicts associated with their actions and their own personal ethical codes which in turn mitigates the feeling of guilt or shame associated with their behavior (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009).

Neutralizing attitudes have been researched to develop the connection between neutralizing attitudes and cheating. LaBeff, Clark, Haines, and Diekhoff (1990) reported students who self-reported cheating at some point during their college career had stronger neutralizing attitudes than students who didn’t report cheating. Murdock and Stephens (2007) supported this concept when they found that students who cheat find the behavior acceptable when they utilize neutralizing strategies such as blaming the faculty member or that cheating is part of the culture of the class or college. Additionally, Rettinger and Kramer (2009) stressed the culture has a dramatic impact by facilitating neutralization attitudes. Their argument is when students who witness cheating, perceive others are cheating, or have the perception that faculty are not stopping or curtailing cheating then their own personal acts of academic dishonesty are justified (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). Neutralizing attitudes are associated more with certain behaviors than other. For instance, in order to engage in cheating on an exam, neutralizing

attitudes are employed to counteract the conflict for not adhering to the expectations of education (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009).

Murdock, Miller and Goetzinger (2007) researched undergraduate and graduate students to find that self-reported cheaters held more neutralizing attitudes “One’s prior cheating did not moderate the effects of the classroom context variables, suggesting that the development of these beliefs is not entirely a function of one’s own prior dishonesty” (p. 165). Self-proclaimed cheaters had a significantly higher level of neutralization attitudes than non-cheaters according to Vandehey et al. (2007). This is contradictory to the argument that Whitley (1998) made where neutralizing attitudes toward cheating are motivating factors for students to cheat and not used to rationalize the behavior.

In 2006, Carpenter et al. reported 30% of students survey strongly agreed “it is wrong to cheat no matter what the circumstance” but only 23% of these same students felt that cheating was wrong “even if the instructor assigned too much material” (p. 187). These responses are inconsistent and lead to more questions as to what situations do students feel that cheating could be neutralized and acceptable.

One of the plausible reasons that have been presented for the ambiguity of the definition of cheating is the variation of personal values and the perceptions on ethics (Owunwanne, Rustagi & Dada, 2010). Some define ethical behavior as “behavior that conforms to generally-accepted social norms” (Owunwanne et al., 2010, p. 61). There is an unquestionable variation in personal values and perceptions of ethics that are developed throughout each individual’s life, which only complicates the impact of ethics on what students view as ethical and unethical behaviors. LaBeff et al. (1990) used the term situational ethics to describe a situation when students justify their behavior based on the situation in which it occurs. Cheating has been found

to have an association with students' judgment of the pedagogical skills of the course faculty (Jensen, Arnett, Feldman & Cauffman, 2002; Murdock, Hale & Weber, 2001). Murdock et al. (2007) examined the concept of situational ethics, specifically with respect to the classroom environment and the quality of the faculty member's pedagogical skills to find that both undergraduate and graduate students felt that when there was poor pedagogy being used or the classroom was structured to focus on performance outcome, there was a more likelihood of that students would cheat. This finding supports previous research that the incidence of cheating and attitudes justifying the behavior increase in environments where emphasis was on performance and decreased when it was on mastery of a skill or knowledge (Anderman, 2007; Murdock & Anderman, 2006).

**Faculty.** There appears to be a disconnection with enforcing institution policies on cheating by faculty and administrators. Faculty disclosed they are reluctant to follow the protocols for reporting cheating incidences (Graham, Monday, O'Brien, & Steffan, 1994; McCabe, 1993). The reasons given by faculty for this occurrence were:

- Consequences of dealing with the student and administration regarding cheating. (Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998).
- Time and energy to associated with gathering the evidence (Groark, Oblinger & Choa, 2001).
- Denial that cheating is occurring in his or her classroom (Keith-Spiegel et al., 1998).
- Perceived lack of support by the administration (Lester & Diekhoff, 2002).
- Fear of litigation that could occur from the acquisition (Lester & Diekhoff, 2002).

In general, research shows the faculty don't feel that enforcing academic integrity standards to be their responsibility (McCabe, 2005; Schneider 1999) and characterize it as one of the least enjoyable aspects of academia (Keith-Spiegel et al., 1998).

Faculty members' attitudes toward cheating include 15% to 40% admitting to looking the other way when they suspect or observe acts of academic integrity (Barrett & Cox, 2005; McCabe, 2005). Kidwell et al. (2003) support this finding by claiming that 20% of faculty who find a student cheating make them retake the exam or quiz as opposed to reporting the incident per the institutions academic integrity guidelines and policies. This lack of commitment to academic standards by faculty member may contribute to the difficulty in convincing students the importance of ethics and academic integrity.

There is a discrepancy in faculty stated discouragement of cheating and the acts they take to depress it (Volpe et al., 2008). Research has been done to determine if there is a correlation between faculty attitudes and the number of statements about academic integrity on their course syllabi (Volpe et al., 2008) but it has been inconclusive. Survey results of faculty at a private Catholic College indicated that 20% didn't even watch students during exams and quizzes. Seventy-nine percent of the same faculty population disclosed that they had caught a student cheating at one time but only 9% reported it as per the college's student handbook (Volpe et al., 2008). Mixed messages can be interpreted through these actions and could be encouraging students to cheat.

### **Perceptions on Academic Dishonesty**

**Students.** There appears to be little disagreement that cheating is against the rules, but students adjust their personal acceptance of acts of academic dishonesty based on the behaviors and attitudes of their peers (Graham et al., 1994; Kibler & Kibler, 1993; McCabe, et al., 1999).

Witnessing others cheat allows students to believe it's an acceptable behavior within the social norms of their institution (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009).

Psychologists and educators have researched peers influence on one another over the last seventy years (Graham et al., 1994; Kibler & Kibler, 1993; Stevens & Stevens, 1987; McCabe et al., 1999). The impact of peer influence has been narrowed down to peer attitudes and behaviors (Graham et al., 1994; Kibler & Kibler, 1993; Stevens & Stevens, 1987). Additionally, there is research to support that knowing someone who cheats or has cheated can be a risk factor to a person to participate in academic dishonesty (Carrell, West & Malmstrom, 2005). Rettinger and Kramer (2009) argue that merely knowing someone who cheats or even observing cheating is not significant motivation for another student to start cheating but that a change in behavior must occur within a social context. Even with this basic knowledge, Rettinger and Kramer (2009) did find a strong association between have direct knowledge of others cheating and one's own participation in these behaviors. Peer disapproval of academic dishonesty reduced the incidence of cheating in one study that supports the concept that behavior must occur within a social context (McCabe & Trevino, 1993).

To support the concept of peer influence on cheating, Jordon (2001) found that 31% of cheaters perceived others as participating in cheating behaviors when compared to non-cheaters (20.6%). Additionally, Jordon (2001) found that the more students undertook in acts of academic dishonesty, the higher their belief that others were doing the same behaviors. These findings support the beliefs that the more peers were cheating around a student who cheats, the more the cheater will cheat. A surprising finding in Jordon's (2001) study was that only 10.8% of students surveyed felt that cheating behaviors are sometimes justified while the majority felt that cheating is not an acceptable behavior even if it meant that they would not pass the class or



that a friend would do poorly on an assignment or exam. This finding does not support the impact of peer pressure on the incidence of cheating.

There is a distinct difference between students and faculty in the perception of the severity of acts of academic dishonesty. Bisping, Patron and Roskelley (2008) surveyed 262 students on their participation in a range of activities from reading a condensed version of a book to deliberately marking two answers on a hand graded test, making their choice unclear. Fifty-four percent of students claimed to having read condensed version of an assigned book where only 10% have deliberately marked an exam wrong. The difference in severity was identified when 93% of nursing students agreed that looking at notes during an exam and writing answers on the body were considered cheating, while only 90% agreed that writing mnemonics and abbreviations on a hand to assist in remembering information was cheating (Arhin, 2009). Only 59% of the same nursing students felt that using parts of a peers work to complete an assignment would be considered cheating and 59% felt cutting and pasting information from the Internet was cheating while 27% were undecided as to whether this behavior would be considered cheating (Arhin, 2009).

Interestingly, students have self-disclosed a higher direct knowledge of other cheating than they disclosed having participated in cheating themselves (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). The exception involved acts of academic dishonesty associated with cheating on a take home exam, padding a bibliography and not citing sources in a paper (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009) because these behaviors would not be acts that others would observe. Owunwanne et al. (2010) found that students at Howard University did not consider plagiarism as a form of cheating yet they did identify sharing answers during an exam as acts of academic dishonesty. This study emphasizes a need to determine what behaviors students consider to be cheating and to rank them by the

seriousness of the acts (Owunwanne et al., 2010). There is consistency in the research finding that students believe peers are cheating more than they are (Engler et al., 2008). As previously research has shown, this can have an impact on the decision to participate in acts of academic dishonesty.

**Faculty.** Faculty at a small, private liberal arts institution were surveyed to determine their perception of how common certain acts of academic dishonesty were at their institution (Kidwell et al., 2003) and results were compared to the student self-reporting on the same behaviors. There was a pronounced difference with faculty thinking that copying of others was seldom done and over 23% of students reported participating in this behavior multiple times (Kidwell et al., 2003). Additionally, Kidwell et al. found faculty perceived planned cheating, such as cheating on an examination, as more serious than plagiarism yet the consequence is insignificant in many instances.

Faculty perceptions are inconsistent in regards to the prevalence cheating. In one study, 60% of faculty at a private college in Northern California surveyed felt that there is the same amount of cheating at their institution compared to other institutions (Volpe et al., 2008). While Koljatic and Silva (2002), Wajda-Johnston, Handal, Brawer and Fabricators (2001), and Hard, Conway and Moran (2006) found that faculty member perceptions were less than students' perceptions at the same institutions. This finding is crucial and could have an impact on the actions faculty take to prevent cheating. If there is a belief that few students participate in cheating, this may cause a faculty member to de-emphasize the need for implementing prevention strategies.

## **Academic Dishonesty in Community Colleges**

The American Association of Community Colleges reports 1,131 two-year community colleges in the United States, which consist of 986 public, 115 independent, and 31 tribal institutions that support the education of approximately 13 million students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). However, very few studies have focused on cheating at community colleges (Moeck, 2002). Smyth and Davis (2003) found that at a community college 45.6 % of students surveyed had cheated at least once over the course of their academic careers. This is dramatically lower than what has been reported from four-year institutions. According to Wotring (2007), this study had a unique student population in that 20% of the students had on-campus housing, 83 % were full-time students and 30% claimed not to be employed at the time of the study.

The majority of the research that has been done on students at community colleges encompasses which gender has a higher self-reported prevalence of cheating, the characteristics of students who cheat, and influence that classroom environments have on cheating (Smyth & Davis, 2003).

Wotring and Bol (2011) studied the difference in student perception of behaviors that are considered to be cheating based on generational differences. The results indicate there are generational differences in student's attitudes toward cheating with some behaviors but not all. Any type of cheating associated with taking an exam has a high consistent acknowledgement with all generations. Millennial student were less likely to rate fabrication as an act of academic dishonesty than Gen Xers and Baby Boomers (Wotring & Bol, 2011), whereas Gen Xers were less likely to rate shortcuts and excuses as acts of cheating such as watching a movie instead of reading the book.

## **Summary of Literature Review**

The literature review has provided an in-depth look at academic dishonesty as it relates to student and faculty perceptions and attitudes. It is clear that there are consistent discrepancies in research findings between students and faculty on the definition, attitudes and perceptions of cheating. Therefore the goal of this study was to examine student and faculty perceptions of cheating and opinions on the severity and consequences of behaviors associated with cheating to assist institutions in designing new protocols and policies to effectively address the incidences of cheating on their campuses.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

This chapter presents information about how this study was carried out including the study's research design, research questions, data collection instruments, selection criteria and recruitment methods for study participants, human subject considerations, collection strategies and data analysis.

### **Overview of Study Design**

To understand student and faculty attitudes and perceptions on academic dishonesty and the severity of these behaviors, a quantitative research inquiry approach was used. Creswell (2008) indicates that quantitative research designs reflect postpositivist philosophical assumptions that allow the examination between variables to answer the research questions presented in the study. The research design used was a survey design to provide the ability to get a cross sectional, representative sample of two abstract populations of student and faculty across California and from a range of community colleges. Additionally, the design provided the ability to compare and contrast the responses of the samples from two target populations for meaningful findings to draw conclusions (Andres, 2012, p. 11).

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The existing wealth of research addressing academic dishonesty provides inconclusive and conflicting findings that contribute in part to the lack of an agreement of what behaviors are considered cheating and the severity of these acts. Even without a universal or institutionally agreed upon definition of what acts are considered to be cheating, there is a solid base of research supporting a lower prevalence of cheating as students progress through the education system and get into graduate programs (Lawson, 2004), or reversely, a higher incidence of cheating in the first two years of the educational process. Given that almost half of all students

completing their first two years of college are enrolled in community colleges, there is limited research on this group of students and their faculty. Therefore, this study investigated the following research questions for the abstract populations of students and faculty from community colleges in California:

1. What behaviors do students and faculty perceive as cheating?
2. How do students and faculty rate the severity of those behaviors they consider to be cheating using defined consequences associated with academic dishonesty?
3. What are the similarities and differences between what students and faculty perceive as cheating and the severity of those cheating behaviors?

### **Sources of Data**

There were two separate targeted populations for this study. The first population was California community college students and the second population was California community college faculty.

**Students.** The abstract population of students consisted of students who were currently enrolled in a face-to-face course(s) at a California community college or who have taken a face-to-face course at a California community college in the last 12 months. Due to having an abstract population, there was no way of knowing the total, qualified students in the population but is an estimated 2.4 million students attending one of the 112 community colleges in California (<http://www.cccco.edu>). Therefore, a non-probability sampling process is necessary. A network sampling method was used to solicit a cross-sectional representation of students from the 112 community colleges throughout California. Student were solicited to participate through *LinkedIn*, a professional web-based networking site; *Facebook*, an online social networking site that connects friends, families and individuals with shared interests, *Twitter*, an online social

networking and microblogging service and the researcher's own personal emails of current and recent graduates from community colleges. It was anticipated that a snowballing sampling method would occur, since participants who took the web-based survey would be asked to alert other similar students to participate in the research by forwarding the survey link. The snowballing sampling method provided an effective secondary non-probability sampling strategy that assisted in soliciting members of this abstract population and getting a solid number of responses from the student target population.

**Faculty.** The second abstract population in this study was faculty who currently teaches at least one face-to-face course in a California community college or had taught at least one face-to-face course at a California community college in the last 12 months. As with all abstract populations, there wasn't any way to estimate the membership of this population but the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office reported approximately 55,400 full-time and part-time faculty teaching at the 112 colleges in 2012 (<http://www.cccco.edu>). A non-probability sampling strategy, network sampling, was used in order to solicit a cross-sectional representation of faculty who taught at different community colleges throughout California. Faculty were solicited through the researcher's professional network, and on *LinkedIn*, *Facebook*, and *Twitter* sites that focus on education. Participants who took the web-based survey were asked to alert their colleagues of the opportunity to participate in the study providing a snowballing sampling method.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

The same data collection strategy of a web-based, online survey was used for both populations through two different versions of the survey tool. The web-based tool was an electronic survey administered through a third party, *SurveyMonkey*®. *SurveyMonkey*® was

chosen due to its ease of use and its security measures. It utilized an enhanced security option, called secure sockets layer (SSL), which encrypted information between the client and server and allowed for information to remain private (SurveyMonkey, 2013). Uniform resource locators, URLs, were also encrypted through their Verisign certificate Version 3, 28 bit encryption (SurveyMonkey, 2013). Both of these security measures allowed for protection of the participants' information and personal identifiers including the ability for the researcher to set up the surveys so all IP addresses were stripped from the data sets. Additionally, each user had a unique log in that prevented others users from accessing their survey results. With the professional license, *SurveyMonkey*® collected the information from the surveys, and placed both physical and environmental controls on the data and personal information (SurveyMonkey, 2013). The website did warn that even with all its security measures, it was impossible on the Internet to provide 100% assurance that all information would remain protected (SurveyMonkey, 2013).

Participants needed access to the Internet to be a part of this study. The time period for gathering data for this study was 24 days. On the first day, an initial announcement and invitation to participate in the study was submitted for placement on selected *LinkedIn* sites, *Facebook* sites, and sent through the researcher's professional network of emails (Appendix A). This announcement alerted the recipients of the desired criteria for participation and also provided contact information if they want additional information about the study. The invitation also included information about the ability to participate in a drawing for one of two \$50.00 gift cards for all those who completed the survey and the date for when the survey would be closed. Additionally, the invitation to participate included a request to share the link with others who might be interested in participating. On day 7 and 14 of the survey cycle, a friendly reminder



about the study including a link to the survey was again posted on *LinkedIn* and *Facebook* educational sites and sent to colleagues through the researcher's professional network (Appendix B). On day 14, the same reminder announcement was tweeted to all personal contacts of the researcher through her Twitter account. On day 24 of the cycle, the link was inactivated and no further access was allowed.

### **Survey Instruments**

The two separate online surveys (Appendices C & D) were constructed using *SurveyMonkey*® templates. The template selected had an informed consent option on the first page of the survey. The template allowed for an agreement with the informed consent, which then sent the potential participant to the survey, or disagreement with the informed consent that took the potential participant out of the survey to a page that thanked them for their interest in the research study. All potential participants that did not agree to the informed consent were not allowed to take the survey. Additionally, the last page of the template allowed participants the option to withdraw from the survey by not submitting the survey.

Each survey consisted of three different components with closed-end questions. The first component asked the participants if they were students or faculty at a California community college. If the participants answered *yes*, they were sent to the survey. A *no* response sent them to a disqualification page that thanked them for their interests in the survey and explained that they did not meet the criteria necessary to participate in the survey.

The second component of the survey consisted of two parts. The first part asked participants to determine if the behavior presented was cheating by choosing one of the following responses: *Strongly Agree*, *Agree* or *Somewhat Agree*, *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Somewhat Disagree* or *Not Sure*. If the participant selected *Strongly Agree*, *Agree* or *Somewhat*

*Agree* the response would be in agreement that the behavior was cheating and the participant was forwarded to the second part of the question that asked them to rate the severity considering the consequence. The severity rating options ranged from *Very Low Severity*, *Low Severity*, *Moderate Severity*, *High Severity*, to *Very High Severity* (Table 2). The severity rating was linked to a definition to assist with interpretation by participants and support the reliability of the responses. If the participants answered *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Somewhat Disagree* or *Not Sure* to the behavior question, it was viewed as disagreeing that the behavior was cheating and they were sent to the next question without the option to rate the behavior's severity.

Table 2

*Severity Rating and Their Associated Consequence*

Severity Rating	Consequence
Very Low Severity	No consequence
Low Severity	Option to retake the assignment, quiz or exam and/or receive a lower grade on the activity
Moderate Severity	Activity awarded zero points without the option of retaking the assignment, quiz or exam
High Severity	A failing grade is given for the course without options for redoing or completing activities and may be placed on academic probation
Very High Severity	Suspension and/or expulsion from the institution

The third component of the survey included demographic questions specific for each target population. Faculty members were asked about their gender, age and teaching experience while students were asked about gender, age and educational experience. The total survey had 42 questions for faculty and 45 for the students. It was expected that all participants could complete the survey within 20 minutes.

**Survey content validation process.** To establish content validity for the surveys, a group of 3 individuals with experience in working with academic integrity and dishonesty issues at community colleges were asked to review the instrument items for content and clarity of the questions. These individuals have worked in the Center for Excellence, Centers for Academic Integrity or similar Centers at their institutions. Each was provided a copy of the surveys to review. They were asked to evaluate each question and classify it as a relevant question, a relevant question that needed to be reworded, or not a relevant question and it should be deleted from the survey. When this process is completed, they were asked to participate in a discussion of the survey items including the wording of the questions, and offer suggestions to improve the instruments. A consensus was reached on what changes need to be made on each survey and the researcher addressed all the agreed upon changes prior to launching the surveys.

**Pilot testing of the survey instruments.** Each survey was piloted tested through *SurveyMonkey*® to ensure reliability and determine the length of time to complete the survey. Three participants from each target population were selected to pilot test the entire survey. One goal of the pilot testing was to confirm the online formatting of the surveys was functional including the links to start and submit the surveys. The researcher met with the pilot test participants to discuss the surveys including the formatting, readability, and ease of use together with the ability to maneuver between the links associated with each survey. The researcher addressed all issues presented prior launching the surveys.

### **Human Subjects Considerations**

This study incorporated precautions to minimize any risk to study participants. Having a third party tool and administrator protected the anonymity of participants in both target populations.

**Students.** The perceived risks to students would involve concerns that their responses be associated with them and somehow impact their grade or standing in a course. Participation was voluntary and solicitation of potential participants occurred through social networking sites and the researchers professional network. With the survey being administrated through a third party, the researcher did not have access to any personal identification markers. Therefore, choosing to participate or not participate would not have any impact on a course grade or standing in a course since the participants did not disclose any information that could identify them or connect them to the colleges they attend.

Students were not asked to disclose if they have or currently participate in acts of academic dishonesty therefore none of the information being requested from the students posed any emotional or social stress. Additionally, the estimated completion time of the survey was less than 20 minutes for students.

An announcement about the research with an invitation to students to participate was submitted for placement on California community college focused *LinkedIn* and *Facebook* sites, and sent through the researchers professional network that included personal emails of current students and recent graduates from California community colleges. The announcement included the opportunity to win one of two \$50.00 gift certificate for all qualified students who complete the survey. The researcher provided the following explanations about the study:

- The purpose of the study is to explore your perceptions of behaviors associated with academic dishonesty (cheating) and how you rate the severity of these behaviors.
- The duration of the survey should not be more than 20 minutes.
- There is minimal risk to you with participating in this study. Your participation is voluntary and your choice of participating will not be known to any of our current or

previous faculty. Also, all personal identifiers will be stripped from the survey prior to the responses being given to the researcher. The survey questions are designed to be straightforward and focused on your perceptions of cheating with no anticipated social or emotional discomfort.

- Your participation in the study is not intended to directly impact you, the research is meant to expand the knowledge about academic dishonesty and lessen the gap between of perceptions and understanding between students and faculty.
- The university and the researcher will strictly maintain your anonymity. No one will have access to any personal identifier information, specifically the IP address to your computer or personal email addresses, since all survey responses are stripped of this information prior to being sent to the researcher.
- You will be provided information on how to contact the researcher and dissertation chair for additional information or to address questions or concerns.

If potential participants chose to take part in the study, they were provided a link to the survey. There was an informed consent that included the above bulleted information. They could agree or disagree to the informed consent. If they did agree to it, they were provided instructions on how to activate the link to the survey questions. If potential participants disagreed with the information consent, they were sent to a page thanking them for inquiring about the study and they were not allowed to take the survey.

At the completion of the survey, participants were offered the ability to enter a drawing for one of two \$50.00 gift cards. If they chose to participate, they were redirected to another survey on *SurveyMonkey*® that was not connected to the survey. This survey collected their email addresses, which were added to a database that was used for the random drawing.

**Faculty.** There was little perceived risk for a faculty member to participate in this study. Concerns may have centered on whether their identity and associated responses would be disclosed to administrators, peers or students and result in termination of employment. With the stripping of the IP addresses, there was no connection between the responses received and the institution the faculty member were employed at. Participation was voluntary with no associated recourse for not participating. Potential participants were solicited through social networking sites and the researcher's personal professional network. The administration of the survey was through a third party, therefore the researcher did not have access to any personal identification markers with eliminates any connection between the participants and the college where he or she works. Choosing to participate or not participate would not have any impact on the faculty participants' employment status at any institution, private entity or impact their professional credibility.

Faculty were not asked to disclose if they have ever accused or disciplined students for acts of academic dishonesty therefore reducing any emotional or social stress that could be associated with this topic. The estimated completion time was approximately 20 minutes for faculty.

Faculty member participants were solicited through announcements about the research on California community college focused *LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter* sites, or through an email at their personal email addresses from the researcher. The researcher provided the following explanations about the study:

- The purpose of the study is to explore your perceptions of behaviors associated with academic dishonesty and how you rate the severity of these behaviors.
- The duration of the survey should not be more than 20 minutes.

- There is minimal risk to you with participating in this study. Your participation is voluntary and your choice of participating will not be known to any of your peers or administrators at your institutions. Also, all personal identifiers will be stripped from the survey when the responses are given to the researcher. The survey questions are designed to be straightforward and focused on your perceptions of cheating with no anticipated social or emotional discomfort.
- Participation in the study may only indirectly impact you and your college. The research is meant to expand the knowledge about academic dishonesty and lessen the gap between of perceptions and understanding between students and faculty. Secondly, the information gathered through this research may start a dialogue to change the current policies surrounding academic dishonesty at your institution.
- The university and the researcher will strictly maintain your anonymity. No one will have access to any your identifier information, specifically the IP address to your computer or personal email addresses, since all survey responses are stripped of this information prior to being sent to the researcher.
- You will be advised on how to contact the researcher and the dissertation chair for additional information or to address questions or concerns.

If potential participants chose to take part in the study, they were provided a link to the survey. There was an informed consent that included the above bulleted information. They could agree or disagree to the informed consent. If they agree to it, they were provided instructions on how to activate the link to the survey questions. If participants disagree with the information consent, they were sent to a page thanking them for inquiring about the study and they were not allowed to take the survey.

At the completion of the survey, participants were offered the ability to enter a drawing for one of two \$50.00 gift cards. If they chose to participate, they were redirected to another *SurveyMonkey*® survey that was not connected to the survey. This survey collected their email address and added it to the database that was used for the random drawing.

**Exempt status.** This study qualified as being Exempt research as specified in 45cf4.46.101 (b)(2), due to the minimal risks to the subjects, which included responses being completely anonymous with the researcher not being able to identify respondents in any way. Even if the virtual responses' identities were released accidentally, participants would not be subject to potential civil or criminal liability due to the survey content. Additionally, the questions did not address participant's mental well-being, attitudes and perceptions of a sexual nature or other sensitive subjects. An application for Exempt status was submitted to the University GPS-IRB following the preliminary oral exam and the IRB Exemption Notice (#E1213D02) was received on January 23, 2014 (Appendix E).

### **Data Analysis**

The descriptive statistical analysis methods used to analyze the data collected through the surveys included an item analysis of each survey item to present frequency distributions, chi-square analysis and cross-tabulations of the different behaviors and ANOVA on the severity rating scores.

### **Methods to Ensure Internal Validity**

Several measures were taken during the course of the design, implementation and analysis of this study to address threats to the internal validity of the study. The first measure taken was the selection of a quantitative inquiry approach for the research. This approach allowed the researcher to evaluate specific measurable variables, or behaviors associated with



cheating, and how the populations perceive these variables. The use of cross-sectional sample to assess these variables was also appropriate for the study purpose. The third measure employed to ensure internal validity was the use of a valid and reliable survey instrument. This was confirmed through a content validation process with experts and pilot testing of the instruments. Lastly, the appropriate statistical measures were utilized to analyze and interpret the data that is collected through the web-based surveys.

## Chapter 4 Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of behaviors associated with academic dishonesty (cheating) and the severity of these behaviors from the perspectives of community college students and faculty. The following research questions guided this process:

1. What behaviors do students and faculty perceive as cheating?
2. How do students and faculty rate the severity of those behaviors they consider to be cheating using defined consequences associated with academic dishonesty?
3. What are the similarities and differences between what students and faculty perceive as cheating and the severity of those cheating behaviors?

Two separate online surveys were developed and implemented to collect data from both abstract samples. Sixty-seven community college students started the student online survey but only 59 responses were used in the data analysis. Of the 67 responses received, eight students started the survey but stopped at some point, opting not to complete the survey and therefore are not included in the final data set. The community college faculty sample consists of 56 participants who answered all or all but one question. Two faculty surveys were not included because the participants started the survey but did not complete the survey.

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analysis of the survey data for each group. In the first section, the student findings are presented including the demographics, behaviors considered to be cheating at a 70% agreement rate or higher, and the behaviors the students did not agree were cheating. The second section presents the faculty findings including the demographics, behaviors considered to be cheating at an 80% agreement rate or higher, and those behaviors that the faculty did not agree were considered cheating. In the last section, the comparison between the two groups is presented.

## Community College Student Findings

### **Demographics.**

**Gender.** Twelve percent of the 59 student participants were male and 88% were females. Two participants did not respond to this question.

**Age.** The majority of the participants were 21 to 36 years of age (79%). This was followed by 14% in the age range of 37 to 48 year-olds, 5% in the age range of 18 to 20 year-olds, and 1% between the ages of 49 to 67. There was one participant that chose not to respond to this question.

**Ethnicity.** The ethnic composition of this group was primarily White/European Americans at 49%, Hispanic/Spanish/Latin at 22%, and Asian at 17%. This was followed by Other at 9% and lastly, Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander at 3%. No participants declared themselves to be Black/Non-Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or Middle Eastern. One participant did not respond to this question.

**Graduated From A Community College.** A predominant number of students (54%) reported they had previously graduated from a community college with an Associate Degree while 46% had not. Two participants did not answer this question.

**Attended a Four-Year College and Course Modality.** For the 57 participants who responded to this question, 47% indicated they had previously attended a four-year college while 53% have only attended a community college. Students were asked about their experience with different course modalities besides a face-to-face classroom environment. An overwhelming majority of students (80%) had taken hybrid or online courses while a much smaller percentage of the students (20%) had only experiences with the traditional delivery modality of a face-to-face classroom.

### **Behaviors Students Considered Cheating.**

**Agreement.** Participants who chose the response options *Strongly Agree*, *Agree* or *Somewhat Agree* for the behavior questions were considered to agree the behavior was cheating. There was a natural break in the students' data set after 70% therefore, 70% was selected as the minimal total agreement score for behaviors to be considered cheating. An analysis of the student surveys results indicated there were 11 of the 17 behaviors that received a total agreement score of 70% or higher (Table 3). This finding addressed the research question about what behaviors do students perceive as cheating.

Two behaviors, *Copies from another's student's work* ( $n=55$ ) and *Have someone write (not edit) a paper* ( $n=54$ ) had 93% of the students indicating these as cheating. Even though both behaviors were considered cheating for 93% of the group, the level of agreement between the two was quite different. *Copies from another student's work* had considerably more students selecting *Strongly Agree* (74%) than the 52% who indicated agreement at the *Strongly Agree* level on the behavior *Has someone write (not edit) a paper*.

Of the other nine behaviors that students agreed were cheating, 6 had a total agreement percentage ranging from 88% to 83%. *Submits paper purchased from a website* ( $n=59$ ) had the highest response rate for *Strongly Agree* at 73% while *Fabricates or intentionally presents false information* had the lowest percentage at the *Strongly Agree* (28%) level. The other three behaviors had total agreement percentages between 73% and 78%. Of the three behaviors in this percentage grouping, *Downloads material from Internet site* ( $n=59$ ) received the highest total agreement percentage at 78% whereas *Lies about a family emergency* ( $n=59$ ) received a slightly lower percentage of total percentage agreement (73%).

Table 3

*Behaviors Considered By Students To Be Cheating*

Behavior	Total Percentage for Agreement	Level of Agreement			Mean Severity Score
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	
<i>Copies from another student's work</i>	93% (n= 55)	74%	19%	0%	3.88
<i>Has someone write (not edit) a paper</i>	93% (n=54)	52%	31%	10%	3.51
<i>Writes mnemonics on hand or body</i>	88% (n=52)	54%	22%	12%	3.53
<i>Helps others during an exam **</i>	86% (n=49)	58%	26%	2%	3.45
<i>Submits paper purchased from a website</i>	85% (n=50)	73%	9%	3%	3.98
<i>Presents information without citing original source*</i>	85% (n=49)	43%	24%	18%	3.45
<i>Uses technology to get assistance</i>	83% (n=49)	68%	13%	2%	3.75
<i>Fabricates or intentionally presents false information*</i>	83% (n=48)	28%	49%	7%	3.24
<i>Downloads material from Internet site</i>	79% (n=47)	76%	3%	0%	3.45
<i>Copies a homework assignment*</i>	76% (n=44)	16%	26%	34%	2.57
<i>Lies about a family emergency</i>	73% (n=43)	24%	25%	25%	3.05

Notes: N=59; \*one subject did not answer; \*\* two subjects did not answer

**Severity.** How do students rate the severity of those behaviors they consider to be cheating using defined consequences with academic dishonesty is one question this study was designed to answer. To address this, students were asked to rate the severity of the behavior that they associated with cheating. The participants' ratings were converted into a numerical value (*Very Low Severity* = 1; *Low Severity* = 2; *Moderate Severity* = 3; *High Severity* = 4; and *Very High Severity* = 5) based off the severity level they selected and the values of the selected

severity was averaged with the mean score having a range from 1.0 to 5.0. Behaviors with the highest severity mean scores were *Copies from another student's work* ( $M=3.88$ ) and *Uses technology to get assistance* ( $M=3.75$ ). Eight of the behaviors had a mean severity score ranging from 3.05 to 3.53. The behavior that had a considerably lower mean severity score was *Copies a homework assignment* with a mean of 2.57 (Table 3).

### **Behaviors Not Considered by Students to Be Cheating.**

**Disagreement.** The choices to the survey question that indicated a disagreement that behavior presented were associated with cheating included *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Somewhat Disagree* and *Not Sure*. Therefore, these four options were grouped together to represent total percentage disagreement. The students determined 6 of the 17 behaviors presented were not associated with cheating since they received less than a 70% total percentage agreement (Table 4).

The total percentage disagreement on the behaviors associated with cheating spans from 90% *Studies from another student's notes* ( $n=43$ ) to 39% with *Shares finished course assignments*. The students were very clear that they felt *Studies from another student's notes* was not associated with cheating when they disagreed at a 90% total disagreement level and almost half of all the students (49%) selected *Strongly Disagree* as their disagreement level. Of the other behaviors not considered to be cheating, *Shares finished course assignments*, *Works collaboratively on an independent assignment*, *Copies answers from a peer*, *Continues to work on quiz or exam*, and *Uses the Internet to find answers* had a similar percentage of students selecting *Strongly Disagree* with a range from 10% to 19%.

Table 4

*Behaviors Not Considered by Students To Be Cheating*

Behavior	Total Percentage for Agreement	Mean Severity Score	Total Percentage for Dis-agreement	Level of Disagreement			
				Strongly Dis-agree	Dis-agree	Some what Dis-agree	Not Sure
<i>Shares finished course assignments</i>	61% (n=36)	2.58	39% (n=23)	17%	9%	10%	3%
<i>Works collaboratively on independent assignment*</i>	57% (n=33)	2.36	43% (n=25)	12%	12%	14%	5%
<i>Copies answers from a peer</i>	49% (n=29)	2.57	51% (n=30)	14%	15%	19%	3%
<i>Continues to work on quiz or exam</i>	49% (n=29)	2.45	51% (n=30)	10%	10%	29%	2%
<i>Uses the Internet to find answers*</i>	38% (n=22)	2.48	62% (n=36)	19%	26%	9%	8%
<i>Studies from another student's notes</i>	10% (n=6)	1.71	90% (n=43)	49%	32%	9%	0%

Notes: N=59; \*one subject did not answer; \*\* two subjects did not answer

**Community College Faculty Findings****Demographics.**

**Gender.** The majority of participants in the study were female (86%) followed by males at 14%.

**Age.** The largest age group was 49 to 67 year-olds who represented 59% of the participants. The next largest age group was 37 to 48 year-olds, which comprised 29% of the participants. Twenty-one to 36 year-olds were represented at 7% followed by lowest represented age group of 68 year-olds and older at 5%.

**Ethnicity.** The overwhelming majority of the participants were White/European Americans at 77%. Hispanic/Spanish/Latin at 8% followed as the second most highly represented group. Asians, Black/Non-Hispanic and Others each represented 5% of participants

in the survey. There were no participants that indicated that they were American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander or Middle Eastern.

***Time Teaching.*** The highest response rate for the amount of time teaching was the group of participants who had taught 21 years or more (34%). Those who had taught 6 to 10 years made up 19% of the respondents followed closely by those teaching from 16 to 20 years (16%) and from 1 to 5 years (14%). The least represented amount of time teaching included participants who had taught from 11 to 15 years (12%) and under one year of teaching experience (5%).

***Taught in Other Environments and Delivery Modalities.*** The majority of participants had only taught in a community college setting (64%) with the other 36% indicated that they had taught at other types of educational institutions such as a four-year university or for-profit institution. Additionally, less than half of the faculty surveyed (32%) had taught an online or hybrid course.

***Teaching Status.*** Fifty-nine percent of participants indicated teaching was their full time profession while 41% were part-time faculty at a California community college. Even though 59% indicated that teaching was their full-time profession, only 44% stated they were full-time tenured faculty. A very small percent of the participants (9%) were faculty who had continued to teach following retirement.

### **Behaviors Faculty Considered Cheating.**

***Agreement.*** The research question asks what behaviors do faculty member perceive as cheating is addressed in this section. If the faculty selected a response of *Strongly Agree*, *Agree* or *Somewhat Agree* for a behavior, it was viewed as being in agreement that the behavior is cheating. There was an 80% cut off point that appeared to be a natural break point in the data set



therefore any total percent agreement of 80% or higher was considered cheating. Of the 17 behaviors presented in the survey, 12 received 80% or higher total percentage agreement from the faculty (Table 5).

There was a 100% total percentage agreement by the faculty that four behaviors were considered cheating. These four behaviors, *Submits paper purchased from a website* (n=56), *Downloads material from Internet site* (n=56), *Copies from another student's work* (n=50), and *Has someone write (not edit) a paper* (n=56) had a very strong level of agreement with 88% to 93% of the faculty selecting *Strongly Agree* as their response. A closer look at these outcomes identifies faculty believe the level of agreement was at *Somewhat Agree* level (2%) with *Downloads material from Internet site*.

The other eight behaviors that did not receive 100% agreement did have a total percentage agreement range from 88% to 98%. Of these, *Lies about a family emergency* (n=50) having lowest total percentage agreement (89%) of all the behaviors that the faculty agreed were cheating. With these eight behaviors, two behaviors *Works collaboratively on independent assignment* (n=51) and *Lies about a family emergency* (n=50) had the highest percentage of *Agree* responses, which ranged from 43% to 40%. *Works collaboratively on an independent assignment* is also one of two behaviors faculty indicated a lesser level of agreement with a 33% *Agree* response compared to a 40% *Strongly Agree* response. *Lies about a family emergency* is the second behavior with a higher *Agree* (39%) response rate than *Strongly Agree* (43%).

Table 5

*Behaviors Considered By Faculty To Be Cheating*

Behavior	Total Percentage Agreement	Level of Agreement			Mean Severity Score
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	
<i>Submits paper purchased from a website</i>	100% (n=56)	93%	7%	0%	3.86
<i>Downloads material from Internet site</i>	100% (n=56)	91%	7%	2%	3.39
<i>Copies from another student's work</i>	100% (n=56)	89%	11%	0%	3.61
<i>Has someone write (not edit) a paper</i>	100% (n=56)	88%	12%	0%	3.64
<i>Uses technology to get assistance</i>	98% (n=55)	93%	3%	2%	3.59
<i>Writes mnemonics on hand or body</i>	98% (n=55)	73%	18%	7%	3.42
<i>Helps other students during an exam</i>	98% (n=54)	74%	20%	4%	2.81
<i>Presents information without citing the original source*</i>	98% (n=54)	64%	27%	7%	3.24
<i>Fabricates or intentionally presents false information</i>	95% (n=54)	63%	27%	5%	3.43
<i>Copies a homework assignment **</i>	93% (n=56)	50%	32%	11%	3.00
<i>Works collaboratively on an independent assignment*</i>	93% (n=55)	33%	40%	20%	2.05
<i>Lies about a family emergency</i>	89% (n=55)	39%	43%	7%	2.92

Notes: N=56; \*one subject did not answer; \*\* two subjects did not answer

**Severity.** The analysis of the mean severity scores for behaviors considered to be cheating by faculty addressed the question of how faculty rates the severity of perceived behaviors associated with academic dishonesty. Participants were asked to rate the severity of the behaviors that they had identified as cheating. The severity ratings were linked to a consequence to increase the reliability of the response. *Moderate Severity* was overwhelming the most

common selected severity by faculty (Table 6). The severity ratings were converted to a numerical value (*Very Low Severity* = 1; *Low Severity* = 2; *Moderate Severity* = 3; *High Severity* = 4; and *Very High Severity* = 5) and averaged with the score having a range from 1.0 to 5.0.

Table 6

*Comparison of Severity Rating and Their Associated Consequence*

Severity Rating	Consequence	Count That Severity Rating Was Selected
Very Low Severity	No consequence.	21
Low Severity	Option to retake the assignment, quiz or exam and/or receive a lower grade on the activity.	102
Moderate Severity	Activity awarded zero points without the option of retaking the assignment, quiz or exam.	369
High Severity	A failing grade is given for the course without options for redoing or completing activities and may be placed on academic probation.	171
Very High Severity	Suspension and/or expulsion from the institution.	79

The mean severity scores for the faculty ranged from a high of 3.86 to 2.00 with both ends of the array being notable findings. The behavior that had the highest severity rate was *Submits paper purchased from a website* ( $M=3.86$ ) and it had 32% of the participant rated this behavior and its associated consequence as *Very High Severity* ( $n=16$ ), 42% as *High Severity* ( $n=21$ ), and 22% as *Moderate Severity* ( $n=11$ ). On the other end of the spectrum was *Studies from another student's notes* ( $n=3$ ) with the lowest mean severity score of 2.00 and all three participants rated it as *Low Severity*.

**Behaviors Not Considered By Faculty To Be Cheating.** Of the 17 behaviors on the survey, only five did not have an 80% or higher faculty agreement and therefore were considered not to be cheating. The choices that were grouped together to represent disagreement included *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Somewhat Disagree* and *Not Sure* (Table 7). Of the five behaviors that the faculty disagreed were associated with cheating, *Studies from another student's notes*

( $n=52$ ) had a remarkably high total percentage of agreement at 95%. The level of disagreement is primarily associated with the *Disagree* (42%) and *Somewhat Agree* (38%). On the other end of the spectrum of response, *Shares finished course assignments* ( $n=16$ ) had the lowest total percentage agreement at 29% and it had a very high level of disagreement at 14%.

Table 7

*Behaviors Not Considered by Faculty To Be Cheating*

Behavior	Total Percentage Agreement	Mean Severity Score	Total Percentage Dis-agreement	Level of Disagreement			
				Strongly Dis-agree	Dis-agree	Some what Dis-agree	Not Sure
<i>Studies from another student's notes*</i>	5% ( $n=3$ )	2.00	95% ( $n=52$ )	13%	42%	38%	2%
<i>Uses the Internet find answers</i>	21% ( $n=12$ )	2.33	79% ( $n=44$ )	34%	22%	18%	5%
<i>Copies answers from a peer</i>	52% ( $n=29$ )	2.55	48% ( $n=27$ )	23%	11%	5%	9%
<i>Continues to work on a quiz or exam</i>	68% ( $n=38$ )	2.45	32% ( $n=18$ )	17%	9%	2%	4%
<i>Shares finished course assignments</i>	71% ( $n=40$ )	2.73	29% ( $n=16$ )	14%	11%	2%	2%

Note:  $N=56$ ; \*one subject did not answer

### Comparison of Behaviors Between the Groups

This section addresses the research question that asks about the similarities and differences between what students and faculty perceive as cheating and the severity of those cheating behaviors. When comparing the total agreement percentages between the two groups, there were a few notable findings. The first is that for 15 of the 17 behaviors, a higher

percentage of faculty agreed that the behaviors were cheating then the percentage of students (Table 8). Two behaviors, *Uses technology to get assistance* and *Studies from another student's notes* had a higher percentage of students than faculty considering the behavior to be cheating. However, for both of these behaviors, only a small percentage of either of the groups considered these actions to be cheating. For the behavior *Uses the Internet to find answers*, only 12(21%) of faculty and 22(38%) of students agreed it was cheating. The second behavior *Studies from another student's notes* had only 3 of the faculty (5%) and 6 of the students (10%) in agreement that the behavior was cheating.

Table 8

*Comparison Table of Total Percentage Agreement and Mean Severity Score Between the Two Groups*

Behavior	Total Percentage of Faculty Agreement Its Cheating	Faculty Mean Severity Score	Total Percentage of Students Agreement Its Cheating	Student Mean Severity Score
<i>Submits paper purchased from a website</i>	100% (n=56)	3.86	85% (n=50)	3.98
<i>Downloads material from Internet site</i>	100% (n=56)	3.39	79% (n=47)	3.45
<i>Copies from another student's work</i>	100% (n=50)	3.61	93% (n=55)	3.88
<i>Has someone else write (not edit) a paper</i>	100% (n=56)	3.64	93% (n=54)	3.51
<i>Using technology to get assistance</i>	98% (n=55)	3.59	83% (n=49)	3.75
<i>Writes mnemonics on hand or body</i>	98% (n=55)	3.42	88% (n=52)	3.53
<i>Helps others during an exam*</i>	98% (n=54)	2.81	86% (n=49)	3.45
<i>Presents information without citing original source*</i>	98% (n=54)	3.39	85% (n=49)	3.10

(continued)

Behavior	Total Percentage of Faculty Agreement Its Cheating	Faculty Mean Severity Score	Total Percentage of Students Agreement Its Cheating	Student Mean Severity Score
<i>Fabricates and intentionally presents false information</i>	95% (n=54)	3.43	83% (n=48)	3.24
<i>Copies a homework assignment</i>	93% (n=56)	3.00	76% (n=44)	2.57
<i>Works collaboratively on independent assignment</i>	93% (n=51)	2.05	57% (n=33)	2.36
<i>Lies about a family emergency</i>	89% (n=50)	2.92	73% (n=43)	3.05
<i>Shares finished assignments</i>	71% (n=40)	2.81	61% (n=36)	2.58
<i>Continues to work on quiz or exam</i>	68% (n=38)	2.45	49% (n=29)	2.45
<i>Copies answers from a peer</i>	52% (n=29)	2.55	49% (n=29)	2.50
<i>Uses the Internet to find answers</i>	21% (n=12)	2.33	38% (n=22)	2.48
<i>Studies from another student's notes</i>	5% (n=3)	2.00	10% (n=6)	1.71

The next notable finding was that the behavior, *Works collaboratively on an independent assignment*, had a substantial difference (36%) in the percentage of agreement between the two groups. The faculty had a total percentage agreement of 93% (n=51) while the students only had a 57% (n=33) total percentage agreement.

The remaining 14 behaviors had differences in percentage of total percentage agreement ranging from 3% to 21%. Of these 14 behaviors, 4 were within a 10% range between the two groups and the other 10 behaviors were within 11 to 21% range in the total percentage agreement.

When comparing the agreement and disagreement between groups, a chi square analysis was conducted on each behavior to determine whether a significant difference existed based on the group membership. At an alpha level of .05, two behaviors, *Lies about a family emergency*, ( $\chi^2 [1, N=114]=5.208, p < .05$ ), and *Downloads information from Internet site* ( $\chi^2 [1, N=114]=11.755, p < .05$ ), showed significant findings (Table 9).

There was total agreement by the faculty that *Downloads information from Internet site* ( $n=56$ ) was cheating whereas only 47 students (81%) agreed it was cheating and 19% disagreed. Therefore, the faculty had a higher percentage of agreement with this behavior. *Lies about a family emergency* had a different distribution of responses with 50 faculty members (89%) determining it was cheating and 6 (11%) disagreed. The students had only 42 participants (81%) agreeing it was cheating and the other 19% disagreed. Again, the faculty had a higher percentage indicating this behavior was cheating.

Table 9

*Cross-Tabulation of Cheating Behaviors That Were Significantly Different Based Upon Faculty or Student Role*

Behavior: A student downloads material from an Internet site and presents it as his/her own work.		
	Agree	Disagree
Student	47	11
Faculty	56	0

Note:  $df=1, \chi^2 = 11.755, p\text{-value}=.001$

Behavior: <i>Lies about a family emergency</i> , illness or other commitment to reschedule an assignment, quiz or exam to allow him/her more time to complete the assignment or prepared for the quiz or exam.		
	Agree	Disagree
Student	42	16
Faculty	50	6

Note:  $df=1, \chi^2 = 5.208, p\text{-value}=.022$

When comparing each of the four questions where faculty were in 100% agreement that the behavior was cheating, a chi-square analysis was run on each of these four questions to determine the intensity of the agreement. Significant differences were not found among the faculty responses.

**Severity of cheating behaviors.** The severity ratings were converted to a numerical value (*Very Low Severity* = 1; *Low Severity* = 2; *Moderate Severity* = 3; *High Severity* = 4; and *Very High Severity* = 5) ranging from 1 to 5. For each rating there were specific associated consequences for consideration. Behaviors with the highest severity scores were consistently the highest with each group. *Submits paper purchased from the Internet* had the highest mean average for the students ( $M=3.98$ ) and faculty ( $M=3.86$ ). This level of severity would result in a very strict consequence of a failing grade in the course without an option for resubmitting the paper and the student may be placed on academic probation. *Studies from another student's notes* had the lowest mean severity score for both students ( $M=1.71$ ) and faculty ( $M=2.00$ ). This level of severity would result in more mild consequence of having the option to retake the assignment, quiz or exam and/or receive a lower grade on the activity.

Mean severity scores for the two groups were compared revealing that both faculty and students each rated 8 different behaviors of the 17 as more severe than rated by the other group. Only one behavior, *Continues to work on quiz or exam*, had a common mean severity score of 2.45. The consequence associated with this mean severity score is student having the option to retake the assignment, quiz or exam and /or receiving a lower grade on the activity. In order to assess for statically significant differences in severity ratings between faculty and students, ANOVA were run on behaviors considered to be cheating by at least 80% or more faculty (Table 10). Only two behaviors, *Works collaboratively on independent assignment* ( $p<.034$ ) and *Copies*



a homework assignment ( $p < .006$ ) showed statistically significant difference in severity ratings by the two groups.

Table 10

*ANOVA of Behavior Severity Ratings Based on Groups*

Behavior	<i>df</i>	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Ratio	<i>p</i> -Value
<i>Downloads material from Internet site</i>	1	.395	.395	.673	.414
<i>Using technology to get assistance</i>	1	.950	.950	1.599	.209
<i>Submits a paper that has been purchased from a website</i>	1	.675	.675	1.029	.313
<i>Uses technology to get assistance</i>	1	.175	.175	.133	.718
<i>Works collaboratively on independent assignment</i>	1	3.255	3.255	4.670	.034*
<i>Helps other during an exam</i>	1	.031	.031	.041	.841
<i>Has someone write (not edit) a paper</i>	1	.485	.485	.700	.405
<i>Copies a homework assignment</i>	1	4.671	4.671	8.023	.006*
<i>Presents information without citing original source</i>	1	.609	.609	.721	.398
<i>Fabricates or intentionally presents false information</i>	1	.738	.738	.896	.346
<i>Copies from another student's work</i>	1	1.594	1.594	2.578	.111
<i>Writes mnemonics on hand or body</i>	1	.272	.272	.342	.560

Note: \*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$

**Types of academic dishonesty behaviors.** The behaviors were grouped into three categories based on the actions involved with the behaviors. First, *Internet Related Behaviors*, involved behaviors that required assessing the Internet. The second group was *Collaborative Related Behaviors*, which were actions that involved interaction with other individuals. Lastly, *Independent Related Behaviors* were those that did not involve mutual interaction with others or Internet. ANOVA was run to determine if there were any significant differences in the student and faculty mean severity scores when group (Table 11). Only the *Collaborative Related Behaviors* grouping had two behaviors, *Works collaboratively on independent Assignment* and *Copies a homework assignment* showing significant differences.

Table 11

*Severity Ratings of Collaborative Behaviors Significantly Different Grouped Per Category of the Action*

Behavior	<i>df</i>	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Ratio	<i>p</i> -Value
<i>Works collaboratively on independent assignment</i>	1	3.255	3.244	4.670	.034*
<i>Copies a homework assignment</i>	1	4.671	4.671	8.023	.006*

Note: \*Statistically significant at  $p < .05$

The mean severity scores ranged from 2.41 to 2.82, which were clustered between the *Low Severity* (2) and *Moderate Severity* (3) rating. When looking at the comparison between the groups, *Works collaboratively on independent assignment*, had a higher mean faculty severity score ( $M=2.82$ ,  $SD=.667$ ) than the students ( $M=2.41$ ,  $SD=1.043$ ) while the students had a larger variance in their scores than the faculty. The second behavior, *Copies a homework Assignment*, also had a higher mean faculty severity score ( $M=2.79$ ,  $SD=.639$ ) when compared to the students score ( $M=2.55$ ,  $SD=.889$ ) and the students had a larger variance in the mean scores but the variability was much smaller then with *Works collaboratively on independent assignment*.

### Summary of Findings

For the students, 11 behaviors were considered to be cheating with a minimum agreement level at least 70%. Of the 11, three had the high mean severity scores ranging from 3.75 to 3.98 and seven had mean severity scores in the medium range (3.05 to 3.53). There was one low mean severity score at 2.57. For the six behaviors the students disagreed were cheating, all had low mean severity scores that ranged from 1.71 to 2.58. Students had a higher mean severity score than faculty on eight of the 11 behaviors considered to be cheating.

The faculty had 4 behaviors that they had 100% agreement that the behavior was cheating. With a minimum of 80% total percentage agreement, 12 behaviors were considered

cheating. Of these 12 behaviors, four had high mean severity scores that ranged from 3.59 to 3.86. Seven of the behaviors considered to be cheating had medium mean severity scores ranging from 2.92 to 3.42. Only one behavior had low mean severity scores of 2.05. There were also eight behaviors the faculty rated more severe than the students. The faculty's total percentage of agreement on behaviors that are cheating is higher than the students in 15 of the 17 behaviors presented in the survey.

#### **Similarities and differences between the groups.**

- The faculty and students have a common agreement on 11 out of 12 behaviors considered cheating.
- The faculty and students have a common agreement on 5 out of 6 behaviors that are not considered to be cheating.
- Faculty and students disagree on whether the behavior *Works collaboratively on independent assignment* is considered cheating or not.
- There were statistically significant differences between students and faculty on the behaviors *Downloads material from an Internet site* ( $p < .001$ ) and *Lies about a family emergency* ( $p < .022$ ) with the faculty having a higher level of agreement than students that these behaviors are cheating.
- One activity, *Continues to work on quiz or exam*, had the same mean severity score in both groups.
- The severity rating of the behavior *Works collaboratively on independent assignment* ( $p < .034$ ) and *Copies a homework assignment* ( $p < .006$ ) were statistically significant.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Issue and Significance

There is an abundance of research to substantiate that academic dishonesty, also referred to as cheating, is commonplace in higher educational institutions. Cheating is a complex problem that weakens the quality of the education a student receives and the integrity and reputation of the associated educational institution (Brent & Atkisson, 2011). The impact of this behavior is not isolated to the educational arena. It can interfere with the development of ethical leaders and professionals. Researchers have shown that students, who participate in behaviors that are associated with cheating while in college, are more likely to be involved in unethical behaviors in the workplace (Brent & Atkisson, 2011).

The definition of academic dishonesty varies along with the behaviors that are associated with it. It can include cheating on a quiz or test, plagiarizing, obtaining advanced information about a quiz or test, fabricating information or submitting the same academic work for multiple courses, helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty, and academic misuse of computer software (Waithaka & Gitimu, 2012). Academic dishonesty was defined as any fraudulent actions or attempts by a student to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work” (Lambert et al., 2003, p. 3).

There is some discrepancy in the reported prevalence of acts of academic dishonesty (Brent & Atkisson, 2011; Nathanson et al., 2006; Roig & Marks, 2006; Vandehey et al., 2007). The reported prevalence of acts of academic dishonesty by college students has ranged from as low as 23% to as high as 91% with more recent findings indicating an increase prevalence from 75% to 95% (Berry et al., 2006). The validity of many reports on prevalence has been scrutinized due to the design of the research studies that involved volunteer sampling techniques

and students being asked to self-report on their participation in behaviors associated with cheating.

The majority of research focused on academic dishonesty in higher education has occurred at 4-year institutions. Higher education institutions consist of both 4-year institutions and community colleges. Community college students make up approximately 48% of the students attending college in the United States. Even though an estimated 13 million students attend community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012), there is limited research on this population of students. This has presented a noticeable gap in the information on community college students and faculty and their opinions on academic dishonesty. There is a need to bridge the perceived difference in what behaviors constitutes cheating and the severity of these behaviors with community college students and faculty.

### **Conceptual Foundation**

The conceptual foundation of the study included integrity and academic dishonesty. The learning process is grounded in the concepts of honesty and integrity (McCabe, & Pavela, 2004). It is often assumed that educational experiences, formal and informal, incorporate academic integrity and ethical decision-making (Jones, 1991, p. 387). It is this framework that an individual would use to assess whether a behavior is considered cheating, and evaluate the severity of the behavior.

The concept of integrity in academia encompasses the attitudes, beliefs and values that support the entire educational community, including students, faculty and the institution. There is an underlying belief that students are in charge of their own learning when at a higher education institution and therefore will support an environment of academic integrity. Those that embrace and demonstrate academic integrity will not be involved in situations considered to be

academic dishonesty by their faculty, the institution or themselves since it would be them in conflict with their own personal morals and values (Miller et al., 2011).

Academic dishonesty involves actions that do not incorporate personal integrity therefore attitudes, beliefs or values do not support the overall educational community (Olafson, Schraw, Nadelson, Nadelson & Kehrwald, 2013). Instead, students involved in academic dishonesty and cheating are engaged in activities that are not viewed as morally correct. These acts are justified through a myriad of ways including denial and neutralization of the impact of their behaviors (Olafson et al., 2013).

## **Methods**

A quantitative approach was used to measure the perceptions of California community college students and faculty regarding common behaviors that students often use during their academic experience. The behaviors were grouped into three different categories: collaborative related, Internet related, and independent related behaviors. Both students and faculty were asked to indicate whether they considered the behavior to be cheating and if so, to indicate the severity of this behavior and the associated consequence. Network sampling using social media, web-based sites resulted in 59 community college students and 56 community college faculty members. The research questions were:

1. What behaviors do students and faculty perceive as cheating?
2. How do students and faculty rate the severity of those behaviors they consider to be cheating using defined consequences associated with academic dishonesty?
3. What are the similarities and differences between what students and faculty perceive as cheating and the severity of those cheating behaviors?

Two separate online surveys were designed using *SurveyMonkey*® templates. The questions were developed after a thorough review of the literature to identify behaviors that students and faculty were not in agreement constituted acts of academic dishonesty. The questions were grouped into three categories based on whether the behaviors were done independent of other students and peers (Independent Related Behaviors), with other students and peers (Collaborative Related Behaviors), or if the behavior involved the use of the Internet (Internet Related Behaviors).

To establish content validity for the surveys, a group of three content experts were asked to review the survey for its content and clarity. Following the content validation process, the surveys were pilot tested by three members from each target population. The piloted test was through *SurveyMonkey*® and it assessed the ease of use of the online formatting, determined that the links worked properly, the survey's readability and it established the amount of time it took to complete each survey. All identified issues during the content validation process and pilot testing were corrected prior to launching the surveys. The surveys had three distinct components with the first component asking closed-ended questions where the participants were to agree or disagree on a six point scale whether the behaviors presented was cheating. If a participant chose *Strongly Agree*, *Agree* or *Somewhat Agree* as the response, then it was interpreted as being in agreement that the behavior presented was cheating and the participant was then asked to rate the severity of the behavior considering the defined consequences. The ratings choices consisted of *Very Low Severity* with no consequences associated with it, *Low Severity* with consequences of being able to retake the assignment, quiz or exam and/or receive a lower grade for the activity, *Moderate Severity* with consequences of being awarded zero points without the option of retaking the assignment, quiz or exam, *High Severity* with consequences of a failing grade given

for the course without options for redoing or completing activities and may be placed on academic probation, and *Very High Severity* with consequences of suspension. The last component of the surveys included a few demographics items.

The descriptive statistical methods used to analyze the data collected included item analysis, frequency distributions, chi-square analysis, cross-tabulations of specific items that showed significant differences, and analysis of variance.

### **Summary of Findings**

For the students, 11 behaviors were considered to be cheating with a minimum agreement level at least 70%. Of the 11, three had the high mean severity scores ranging from 3.75 to 3.98 and seven had mean severity scores in the moderate range (3.05 to 3.53). There was one low mean severity score at 2.57. For the six behaviors the students disagreed were cheating, all had low mean severity scores that ranged from 1.71 to 2.58. Students had a higher mean severity score than faculty on eight of the 11 behaviors considered to be cheating.

The faculty, at minimum of 80% total percentage agreement, determined 12 behaviors were considered cheating. Of these 12 behaviors, four had 100% agreement that four behaviors were cheating and four had high mean severity scores that ranged from 3.59 to 3.86. Seven of the behaviors considered to be cheating had moderate mean severity scores ranging from 2.92 to 3.42. Only one behavior had low mean severity scores of 2.05. There were also eight behaviors the faculty rated more severe than the students. The faculty's total percentage of agreement on behaviors that are cheating is higher than the students in 15 of the 17 behaviors presented in the survey.



### **Similarities and differences between the groups.**

- The faculty and students have a common agreement on 11 out of 12 behaviors considered cheating.
- The faculty and students have a common agreement on 5 out of 6 behaviors that are not considered to be cheating.
- Faculty and students disagree on whether the behavior *Works collaboratively on independent assignment* is considered cheating or not.
- There were statistically significant differences between students and faculty on the behaviors *Downloads material from Internet site* ( $p < .001$ ) and *Lies about a family emergency* ( $p < .022$ ) with the faculty having a higher level of agreement than students that these behaviors are cheating.
- One activity, *Continues to work on quiz or exam*, had the same mean severity score in both groups.
- The severity rating of the behavior *Works collaboratively on independent assignment* ( $p < .034$ ) and *Copies a homework assignment* ( $p < .006$ ) were statistically significant.

### **Conclusions of the Study**

Considering the findings, three conclusions are made with implications and recommendations for scholarship and practice.

**Conclusion #1: While faculty and students overall agreed on which behaviors were cheating, there were differences in opinions regarding the severity and appropriate consequences for some of those behaviors.** The high total agreement within and between the two groups was an unexpected finding. The body of knowledge involving academic dishonesty and cheating clearly supports that there has not been agreement within faculty or between faculty

and students (Brown & Emmett, 2001; Burrus et al., 2007; Devlin & Gray, 2007; Finn & Frone, 2004, Thoekildsen et al., 2007; Voelker et al., 2011). This study's findings were different. Due to the nature of this study's population and non-probability sampling methods these findings cannot be generalized beyond the two samples however it raises the possibilities that viewpoints of faculty and students are changing. While the high agreement among faculty and students was unexpected, the variance in opinions about severity of cheating behaviors supports other published studies (Baker et al., 2008; Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003)

The high level of agreement on behaviors considered to be cheating could indicate a trend in the agreement between students and faculty on what constitutes cheating. This could be used by community colleges to change their the focus from trying to educate students on what behaviors constitute academic dishonesty, to a collaboration between faculty and students on how to promote an environment that highlights academic integrity. It is recommended that this study be replicated to include a larger sample of California community college students and faculty. In addition to expanding the sample size, it is recommended that the surveys be augmented with qualitative questions that would all both groups to provided additional information to justify their selected responses to the behaviors and the severity ratings.

Recommendations for community college administrators and faculty include reviewing their current policies on academic dishonesty to confidently and clearly indicate what behaviors are cheating, and then to evaluate if the severity of the consequences associated with the behavior are appropriately severe or lenient. It is difficult to find the fine line where students are held accountable for participating in behaviors they agree are cheating and for them to accept the consequences associated with the behavior.

**Conclusion #2: Behaviors considered to be collaborative had more variation in opinions regarding whether it was cheating, its severity or its deserved consequence than independent-related or Internet-related behaviors.** There was a significant difference between faculty and students on two collaborative behaviors, *Works collaboratively on independent assignment* and *Copies a homework assignment*. With both behaviors, faculty had a higher level of agreement that the behavior was cheating and a higher mean severity score than students. This finding supports the disagreement present in the literature surrounding collaborative work (Kidwell et al., 2003; McCabe et al., 2001; Young, 2007).

There are many issues involved with this conclusion. The first involves differences in teaching methodologies and learning strategies. One faculty could promote collaboration in all aspects of the course including in-class and out-of-class assignments where another faculty member only promotes an independent work environment. This inconsistency can be confusing to students if faculty are not clearly describing and defining the parameters of their class assignments. Secondly, if students determine that they learn more effectively in collaborative settings, and then they may decide not to follow the parameters of a faculty member who states collaborative work is not permitted. The last issue is that collaboration has been documented as a generation trait. Individuals from Generation X and Y are noted to have traits that support the desire to be connected and to collaborate. Ninety-three percent of the student group for this study was from Generation X (14%) and Generation Y (79%), which may have an impact on this finding.

While this research was focused on identifying behaviors considered to be cheating from the perspectives of students and faculty, it is recommended that the focus of future research be shifted to collaborative-related behaviors and their relationship to academic dishonesty. This new

focus specifically at the categorical level could add to the knowledge and understanding of how community college students and faculty perceive cheating.

It is assumed that all community colleges have clearly defined policies on acceptable collaboration behaviors for faculty and students to use as a guideline to promote academic integrity. It is recommended that community college administrators and faculty assess whether they have such a policy, and determine its effectiveness. Colleges can use the evaluation of the policy as a way to open a dialogue between faculty and students. Workshops and trainings can be offered to faculty to enhance their comfort with different teaching methodologies as a way to bridge the gap between faculty who don't allow collaboration on assignments and those that do.

**Conclusion #3: Internet-related behaviors had a high level of agreement between students and faculty regarding whether the behaviors were cheating with similar opinions on the severity and consequences of these behaviors.** The agreement on the Internet behaviors being considered cheating was unexpected and does not support recent research findings that concluded the accessibility to technology, specifically the Internet, has desensitized students to its association with acts of academic dishonesty (Howard & Davies, 2009; Lehman & DuFrene, 2011; Netter, 2010). Students and faculty agreed that three of the four Internet related activities were cheating. Overall, students had a slightly higher mean severity score on these behaviors than the faculty which indicates that students do know that certain Internet related activities are cheating and they understand the severity of the consequences that should be associated with the behavior. This conclusion supports the need to reframe thoughts about the Internet supporting and encouraging cheating and the need to have a shift in methodologies to emphasis authentic assessments. The Internet compliments authentic assessments as an effective learning technology.

There may be an emerging trend where students and faculty do not view the Internet as an avenue to promote or facilitate cheating. This recommendation includes conducting the research at community college campuses as opposed to using social media. Additionally, it is recommended that future research compare community college students and faculty in traditional face-to-face environments to online community college students and faculty. These comparisons could provide insight into whether there are differences in opinions and perception surrounding academic dishonesty between students and faculty in diverse learning environments.

It is recommended that community college administrators, faculty and students use this conclusion to initiate discussions on the use of the Internet as a teaching strategy. Colleges should develop faculty development series or workshops that are extended over a two year period of time to allow multiple opportunities for faculty to attend, learn how to update their teaching methodologies by incorporating learning technologies effectively into their lesson plans, and share best practices with peers.

### **Limitations**

The first limitation of the study involved the two abstract populations and used a non-probability sample technique that limited the ability to know if there the two samples were representative of each population. A second limitation involved the use of social media as a sampling strategy. Online solicitation of participants had limitations that included barriers to connecting with the members in each group. It was found that Facebook would promote the survey link only for a fee. With LinkedIn, there was a need to have a pre-existing relationship with the organizers of the sites in order for them to promote the survey link. If there were connections made with each group, it was impossible to know if the incentive motivated individuals to participate in the study. The same limitation existed with the use of the researchers

personal network of colleagues and students. Lastly, participation rates were much lower than expected with could present a limitation in the interpretation of the study's findings. There was an expectation of greater participation from each group therefore it was determined that social media solicitation with the incentive of two \$50 iTunes gift cards was not as effective as anticipated.

### **Methods to Ensure Internal Study Validity**

There were four processes that supported the internal validity of the research study. First, the study utilized a survey instrument that was scrutinized through a content validation process and was pilot tested to ensure reliability. Secondly, the study methods utilized unobtrusive data collection measures through the use of a web-based survey that insured that the researchers bias could not impact the study results. Thirdly, appropriate statistical analysis procedures were utilized and carried out by a qualified statistician who was competent in the use of IBM SPSS Statistics software. Lastly, due to the non-probability sample, generalizations were not made beyond the sample groups in this study.

### **Closing Comments**

The literature is very clear on the lack of an agreement of the definition and behaviors that faculty and students agree are cheating. This research study did not support this fact. A closer look is needed to determine if the study's findings have identified a new trend in the perceptions of faculty and students or if it is a reflection of a difference in opinions between students and faculty at community college versus those at four-year institutions.

The agreement between faculty and students on which Internet related behaviors are cheating and the strong agreement of the severity level and consequences associate with these

behaviors provides a strong foundational support to review campus policies and guidelines with Internet usage in the classrooms and within the learning environment on campuses.

In closing, it is imperative that administrators and faculty at community colleges become more knowledgeable about the similarities and difference in agreement of the behaviors associated with cheating and their associated severity rates and consequences between students and faculty. The findings of this study show that students and faculty agree on behaviors associated with cheating which can be the motivation for changing the focus within academic environments from catching students who have cheated and the punitive nature of the acts to developing an environment that instills academic integrity. Designing curriculum and developing a campus culture that emphasizes personal and academic integrity could then reduce the incidence and prevalence of cheating. College policies involving academic dishonesty should be a working document that is reviewed and updated at regular intervals to assist in incorporating generational trends and shifts in perceptions. These steps, redesigning curriculum and a change from a punitive focus to one that reinforces personal integrity, could evolve from a culture focused on academic dishonesty to one focused on academic integrity.

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## APPENDIX A

## Invitation To Participate And Consent Form - Students

**Academic Dishonesty - Community College Students****Invitation and Consent to Participate in the Study**

Dear Community College Student:

My name is Donna Lesser, and I am a doctoral student in the Learning Technologies Program at Pepperdine University, who is currently in the process of recruiting individuals for my study entitled, "Exploring Community College Students' and Faculty Members' Perceptions on Academic Dishonesty". The professor supervising my work is Dr. Kay Davis. The study is designed to investigate community college faculty members' and students' perceptions on what acts they believe are associated with academic dishonesty (cheating) and the severity of these acts. I am inviting individuals who are currently enrolled in at least one traditional (face-to-face) class or who have taken at least one traditional (face-to-face) class at a California community college in the last 12 months to participate in my study. Please understand that your participation in the study is strictly voluntary. The following is a description of what the study participation entails, the terms for participating in the study, and a discussion of your rights as a study participant. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. Please complete the survey in one single sitting. Upon submission of the survey, you may also choose to participate in a drawing for one of two \$50 iTunes gift cards. Should you choose to participate in the drawing, you will be redirected to a form, not connected to the survey, which will collect your name and email address to be added to the random drawing of student participants who have chosen to participate in the drawing. Should you choose not to participate, you will be directed to the final page to exit the survey.

Although minimal, there are perceived risks that you should consider before deciding to participate in this study. The greatest perceived risk might be that your identity may be revealed to faculty members at your institutions or that your participation could impact your grade in a course. The survey is being administered through a third party, SurveyMonkey, who will strip your IP address and all personal identifiers from your submitted survey. Therefore, you will be anonymous to me as well as to faculty members at your institution.

The potential indirect benefits to you for participating in the study will include providing data to help understand what acts are considered to be acts of academic dishonesty that may start new dialogues at institutions to reexamine their current policies and procedures on academic dishonesty. If you should decide to participate and find you are not interested in completing the survey in its entirety, you have the right to discontinue at any point without being questioned about your decision. You also do not have to answer any of the questions on the survey that you prefer not to answer—just leave such items blank and move on to the next question.

After 3 weeks, on February 15, 2014, the study will close and the survey will no longer be accessible. I will be emailing or posting a reminder on day 7 and 14 of the study, so please take advantage of your first opportunity to participate in the survey prior to the deadline of February 15, 2014.

If the findings of the study are presented to professional audiences or published, no information that identifies you personally will be released. The data will be kept in a secure manner for at least five years, at which time it will be destroyed.

## Academic Dishonesty – Community College Students

If you have any questions regarding the information that I have provided, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address and phone number provided below. If you have further questions or do not feel I have adequately addressed your concerns, please contact Dr. Kay Davis (kay.davis@pepperdine.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional School IRB, Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education & Psychology Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Drive 5th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

By completing the survey, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand what your study participation entails, and are consenting to participate in the study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information, and I hope you decide to complete the survey.

Sincerely,  
Donna Lesser  
Doctoral Candidate

### 1. Consent to participate.

To begin survey, check this box.

To exit survey, check this box.

## APPENDIX B

## Invitation To Participate And Consent Form - Faculty

**Academic Dishonesty - Community College Faculty Members****Invitation and Consent to Participate in the Study**

Dear Community College Faculty Member:

My name is Donna Lesser, and I am a doctoral student in the Learning Technologies Program at Pepperdine University, who is currently in the process of recruiting individuals for my study entitled, "Exploring Community College Students' and Faculty Members' Perceptions on Academic Dishonesty". The professor supervising my work is Dr. Kay Davis. The study is designed to investigate community college faculty members' and students' perceptions on what acts they believe are associated with academic dishonesty (cheating) and the severity of these acts. I am inviting individuals who currently teach at least one traditional (face-to-face) class or who have taught at least one traditional (face-to-face) class at a California community college in the last 12 months to participate in my study. Please understand that your participation in the study is strictly voluntary. The following is a description of what the study participation entails, the terms for participating in the study, and a discussion of your rights as a study participant. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that will take approximately 20 minutes. Please complete the survey in one single sitting. Upon submission of the survey you may also choose to participate in a drawing for one of two \$50 iTunes gift cards. Should you choose to participate in the drawing, you will be redirected to a form, not connected to the survey, which will collect your name and email address to be added to the random drawing of faculty member participants who have chosen to participate in the drawing. Should you choose not to participate, you will be directed to the final page to exit the survey.

Although minimal, there are perceived risks that you should consider before deciding to participate in this study. The greatest perceived risk might be that your identity may be revealed to administrators at your institutions or that your participation could influence your credibility with peers. The survey is being administered through a third party, SurveyMonkey, who will strip your IP address and all personal identifiers from your submitted survey. Therefore, you will be anonymous to me as well as to administrators and peers at your institution.

The potential indirect benefits to you for participating in the study will include providing data to help understand what acts are considered to be acts of academic dishonesty that may start new dialogues at institutions to reexamine their current policies and procedures on academic dishonesty. If you should decide to participate and find you are not interested in completing the survey in its entirety, you have the right to discontinue at any point without being questioned about your decision. You also do not have to answer any of the questions on the survey that you prefer not to answer—just leave such items blank and move on to the next question.

After 3 weeks, on February 15, 2014, the study will close and the survey will no longer be accessible. I will be emailing or posting a reminder on day 7 and 14 of the study, so please take advantage of your first opportunity to participate in the survey prior to the deadline of February 15, 2014.

If the findings of the study are presented to professional audiences or published, no information that identifies you personally will be released. The data will be kept in a secure manner for at least five years at which time the data will be destroyed.

## Academic Dishonesty – Community College Faculty Members

If you have any questions regarding the information that I have provided, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address and phone number provided below. If you have further questions or do not feel I have adequately addressed your concerns, please contact Dr. Kay Davis (kay.davis@pepperdine.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional School IRB, Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education & Psychology Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Drive 5th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

By completing the survey, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand what your study participation entails, and are consenting to participate in the study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information, and I hope you decide to complete the survey.

Sincerely,  
Donna Lesser  
Doctoral Candidate

### 1. Consent to participate.

To begin survey, check this box.

To exit survey, check this box.

## APPENDIX C

### Survey Instrument – Students

#### **Behaviors:**

1. You download material from an Internet site and present it as your own work.
2. You use technology to get assistance in completing an in-class quiz, exam or test. (Example: text messaging or using a phone to get assistance to answer a question).
3. You submit a paper that has been purchased from a Website.
4. You use the Internet to assist with finding answers to questions on a take home or out-of-class online assignment, quiz or exam.
5. You copy answers from a peer while working in a group environment.
6. You work collaboratively on an assignment that was supposed to be done independently.
7. You provide a classmate answers or allow him/her to look onto your work or computer screen during an exam.
8. You have someone write (not edit) a paper for you or you write (not edit) a paper for someone else.
9. You study with someone else's notes.
10. You copy a homework assignment from another student.
11. You share finished course assignments or laboratory reports with a student who is going to take the same course the following semester.
12. You present information in a paper from another source as your own without citing the original source.
13. You fabricate or intentionally present false information in a paper, course or lab assignment.
14. You copy from another student's work during an exam or quiz, with or without his/her knowledge.
15. You write mnemonic and/or abbreviations on your hand or any object that you bring into a testing environment.
16. You lie about a family emergency, illness or other commitment to reschedule an assignment, quiz or exam to allow you more time to complete the assignment or prepared for the quiz or exam.
17. You continue to work on a quiz or exam after the time limit is up.

#### **Severity Rating**

- Very Low Severity:** No consequence
- Low Severity:** Option to retake the assignment, quiz or exam and/or receive a lower grade on the activity
- Moderate Severity:** Activity awarded zero points without the option of retaking the assignment, quiz or exam
- High Severity:** A failing grade is given for the course without options for redoing or completing activities and may be placed on academic probation
- Very High Severity:** Suspension and/or expulsion from the institution

## APPENDIX D

## Survey Instrument – Faculty Member

**Behaviors:**

1. A student downloads material from an Internet site and presents it as his/her own work.
2. A student uses technology to get assistance in completing an in-class quiz, exam or test. (Example: text messaging or using a phone to get the answer to a question).
3. A student submits a paper that has been purchased from a Website.
4. A student uses the Internet to assist with finding answers to questions on a take home or out-of-class online assignment, quiz or exam.
5. A student copies answers from a peer while working in a group environment.
6. A student works collaboratively on an assignment that was supposed to be done independently.
7. A student helps other students by providing them the answers or allowing them to look onto his/her work or computer screen during an exam.
8. A student has someone write (not edit) a paper for him/her or he/she writes (not edits) a paper for someone else.
9. A student studies with another student's notes.
10. A student copies a homework assignment from another student.
11. A student shares finished course assignments or laboratory reports with a student who is going to take the same course the following semester.
12. A student takes information from another source and presents it as his/her own without citing the original source.
13. A student fabricates or intentionally presents false information on a paper, course or lab assignment.
14. A student copies from another student's work during an exam or quiz, with or without their knowledge.
15. A student writes mnemonics and/or abbreviations on his/her hand or on any object that is brought into a testing environment.
16. A student lies about a family emergency, illness or other commitment to reschedule an assignment, quiz or exam to allow him/her more time to complete the assignment or prepared for the quiz or exam.
17. A student continues to work on a quiz or exam after the time limit is up.

**Severity Rating**

**Very Low Severity:** No consequence

**Low Severity:** Option to retake the assignment, quiz or exam and/or receive a lower grade on the activity

**Moderate Severity:** Activity awarded zero points without the option of retaking the assignment, quiz or exam

**High Severity:** A failing grade is given for the course without options for redoing or completing activities and may be placed on academic probation

**Very High Severity:** Suspension and/or expulsion from the institution

## APPENDIX E

## Pepperdine Institutional Review Board Approval

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

January 22, 2014

Donna Lesser

Protocol #: E1213D02

Project Title: Exploring Community College Students' and Faculty Members' Attitudes and Perceptions on Dishonesty

Dear Ms. Lesser:

Thank you for submitting your application, *Exploring Community College Students' and Faculty Members' Attitudes and Perceptions on Dishonesty*, for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB appreciates the work you and your faculty advisor, Dr. Davis, have done on the proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohersite/guidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

In addition, your petition to **waive documentation of informed consent**, as indicated in your application has been approved.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).



Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact Kevin Collins, Manager of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu). On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thema Bryant-Davis".

Thema Bryant-Davis, Ph.D.  
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives  
Mr. Brett Leach, Compliance Attorney  
Dr. Kay Davis, Faculty Advisor

## APPENDIX F

## Summary of Chi Square Analysis of Behaviors Between Students and Faculty

<b>Behavior</b>	<b><math>\chi^2</math> Value</b>	<b><i>p</i>-Value</b>
<b><i>Internet Related Behaviors</i></b>		
Downloading material from an Internet site and presents it as his/her own work.	11.755	.001*
Using technology to get assistance in completing an in-class quiz, exam or test. (Example: text messaging or using a phone to get the answer to a question).	6.713 <sup>a</sup>	+
Submits a paper that has been purchased from a website.	8.307 <sup>b</sup>	+
Uses the Internet to assist with finding answers to questions on a take home or out-of-class online assignment, quiz or exam.	3.380 <sup>b</sup>	+
<b><i>Collaborative Related Behaviors</i></b>		
Copies answers from a peer while working in a group environment.	.036	.849
Works collaboratively on an assignment that was supposed to be done independently.	15.900 <sup>b</sup>	+
Helps other students by providing them the answers or allowing them to look onto his/her work or computer screen during an exam	5.043 <sup>d</sup>	+
Has someone write (not edit) a paper for him/her or he/she writes (not edits) a paper for someone else.	4.003 <sup>b</sup>	+
Studies with another student's notes.	1.475 <sup>d</sup>	+
Copies a homework assignment from another student.	6.383 <sup>b</sup>	+
Shares finished course assignments or laboratory reports with a student who is going to take the same course the following semester.	1.555	.212
<b><i>Independent Related Behaviors</i></b>		
Takes information from another source and presents it as his/her own without citing the original source.	6.720 <sup>c</sup>	+
Fabricates or intentionally presents false information on a paper, course or lab assignment.	5.096 <sup>b</sup>	+
Copies from another student's work during an exam or quiz, with or without their knowledge.	4.003 <sup>b</sup>	+
Writes mnemonics and/or abbreviations on his/her hand or on any object that is brought into a testing environment.	4.617 <sup>b</sup>	+

continued

Lies about a family emergency, illness or other commitment to reschedule an assignment, quiz or exam to allow him/her more time to complete the assignment or prepared for the quiz or exam.	5.208	.022*
Continues to work on a quiz or exam after the time limit is up.	3.749	.053

\*Statistically significant +Indicates insufficient data to calculate  $p$ -value

a = 1 cell has an expected count less than 5.

b= 2 cells have an expected count less than 5.

c= 3 cells have an expected count less than 5.

d= 4 cells have an expected count less than 5.