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FACULTY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS CONCERNING STUDENT CHEATING

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The relationship between university faculty attitudes concerning student cheating and syllabus statements on academic integrity were evaluated to determine the relationship between faculty attitudes and their actual attempts to deter cheating rates through their syllabi. No relationship was found between attitudes about student cheating and the number of integrity-related syllabus statements, but this lack of relationship demonstrated an important inconsistency between faculty attitudes and behaviors: the amount of cheating that faculty believed happens does not correspond with written guidelines. In addition, faculty generally underestimated the levels of cheating in their classroom, particularly when faculty was on a non-tenured track. This study represents a preliminary attempt to evaluate the role and effect faculty have on student cheating in higher education.

Cheating is a widespread problem in higher education. Whitley (1998), in a review of over 40 studies on student cheating, found that 70% of college students reported cheating. Of these students, 43% reported cheating on exams, 41% reported plagiarizing, and another 41% reported cheating on homework. In addition, Schab (1969, 1979, & 1989) reports that cheating is on the rise. Schab distributed surveys to college students asking them to report their own dishonest behaviors in school and found a 34% increase in the number of students answering yes to the question, "Have you used a cheat sheet on a test?" (33% in 1969, 60% in 1979, and 67% in 1989). Research on student cheating has evaluated many factors related to student cheating, including personality factors (Eisenberger, 1985), motivation (Newstead, 1996), gender (Whitley, 1999) and a host of other factors related to cheating (e.g., Azjen, Shelton, 1969 and 1991). Little research, however, has focused on faculty roles in student cheating. The present study was designed to evaluate the relationship between faculty attitudes towards student cheating and their actual attempts to reduce it through statements on their syllabi addressing academic dishonesty. If the large amount of research conducted on student cheating is any indication of academia and professors' strong desire to reduce student cheating, it seemed likely these attitudes would factor into the creation of their classroom guidelines.

However, data comparing faculty and student attitudes toward cheating in research demonstrates an apparent discrepancy in faculty's general stated discouragement of cheating and their actual involvement in its limitation. For example, Graham, Monday, O'Brien, and Steffen (1994) surveyed both students and faculty at a private Catholic college to compare attitudes toward cheating behavior. The survey asked students and faculty to rank the severities of various cheating

behaviors (e.g., copying someone else's term paper versus looking at notes during a test), and to assess other attitudes and behaviors concerning student cheating. Although previous research has shown that students are more likely to cheat when they think there is relatively little risk of being caught (Whitley, 1998), 20% of faculty in Graham et al. reported that they did not watch students while they were taking a test, and 26% of faculty had no syllabus statements regarding cheating. Furthermore, even though 79% of faculty reported having caught a student cheating, only 9% reported penalizing the student. At the same time, 89% of the students polled in this survey admitted to having cheated in some capacity during their college careers.

The discrepancy between faculty attitudes and their actual behaviors to control cheating in the classroom may be sending conflicting messages to students, which may ultimately influence the rates of student cheating. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) adopted a global approach (compared to a student-centered approach) to reduce academic dishonesty by examining the relationship between the classroom environment, the university policy towards cheating, as well as student personality variables. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel argued that faculty and other situational factors may inadvertently foster a pro-cheating environment, particularly for at-risk students.

Furthermore, Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) recommended that faculty clearly express a firm commitment to uphold high levels of academic integrity in their syllabi. Introduced the first day of the course, the syllabus is a crucial component in forming the student's perception of the class, professor and acceptable classroom behavior, including definitions of cheating and the repercussions of being caught cheating. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel provided eight recommended statements for faculty to incorporate into syllabi as an attempt to reduce academic dishonesty. These eight statements were used in the present study as the foundation for measuring faculty commitment to maintaining high standards of academic integrity in their classrooms. This study investigated the relationship between faculty's stated beliefs about student cheating with syllabus statements from those faculty regarding their cheating policy. This relationship was evaluated across several demographic variables to determine if other situational factors like academic discipline, professional rank, and faculty's gender affected their perceptions of student's academic honesty.

Method

Participants

Fifty-two faculty were sampled from a small private university in Northern California. Sixty percent of participants were male, and 40% female. Faculty were between the ages of 31 and 75 and represented varying professional ranks, both tenured and non-tenured. This study utilized an electronic mailing list to contact all faculty members to request their participation.

Procedure and Instrument

Faculty were contacted by email, inviting them to participate in a student research project concerning student cheating. If

they responded to the email indicating that they were willing to participate, they were then sent a second email which included a link to an online survey, a request for two distinct representative syllabi, confidentiality and consent information, and a unique identification number to protect the faculty member's privacy.

The online survey had two components: the first section gathered basic demographic information, including faculty's department, age, gender, and university rank, and the second section assessed attitudes about academic dishonesty, both generally and specifically, in the form of 19 multiple choice and Likert-scale questions. The measure was developed based on questions used in other previously successful surveys which assess faculty and/or student attitudes towards cheating (e.g., Graham et al., 1994; McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Questions included general attitudes toward cheating, past actions taken to reduce cheating, and attitudes toward the current university policy and punishment of cheaters (the complete survey can be found in Appendix A).

Syllabi were scored using the eight statements recommended by Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) to incorporate into syllabi designed to reduce academic dishonesty in their classes (the eight statements are presented in Appendix B). The list included statements which should address the importance of academic integrity in higher education, disciplinary actions to take should a student be caught cheating, and a statement of personal commitment to uphold academic integrity. Each syllabus was scored with a ranking ranging from zero to eight, based on the number of statements faculty included in their syllabi.

Results

Although two syllabi were requested from each faculty member, some submitted only one syllabus, either because they only taught one class or because they used nearly identical verbiage in all of their class syllabi. When two syllabi were submitted, the scores were averaged, although generally the scores were identical anyway. Scoring was completed by two of the authors, and when disagreement existed over scores (6% of syllabi), it was never more than a difference of 2 points. Consensus was reached in all cases through joint analysis and discussion of their differing interpretations of the rubric.

Twenty-one percent of the respondents were non-tenure track faculty (defined as academic year lecturer, lecturer, or senior lecturer), 21% assistant professors, 40% associate professors, and 17% full professor. Seventy-nine percent of the faculty members were from arts and science departments (N=20 from the arts, N=21 from the sciences) and 21% were from the business and engineering schools (N=7 from business, N=4 from engineering). This cross-section of the faculty body in the study mirrors the breakdown of the faculty's academic groupings in the entire university: 51% of faculty are in the arts and sciences, 15.8% in business, and 14.4% are in engineering. The sample was 60% male and 40% female, consistent with the campus ratio of male to female faculty (61% male, 39% female).

Sixty percent of faculty members believed that cheating occurred at their

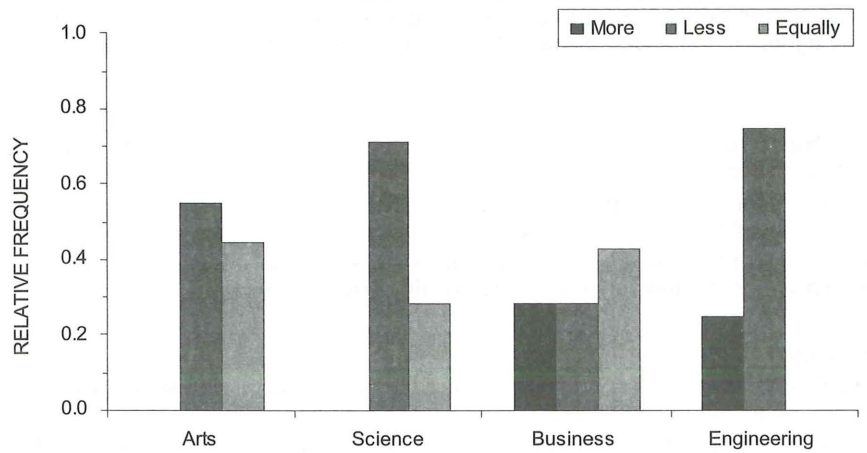
Appendix A
Survey

1. Please fill in your unique identification number you received by email in the box below.
2. Please select your primary department. If your department is not listed below or if you have a joint appointment, please select other and write in all departments.
3. Rank
4. Age
5. I believe that cheating at this university occurs (more, less, equally) often in comparison to other universities.
6. I believe that approximately (%) of students cheat at least once during their academic career at this university.
7. Do you use any of the below methods to reduce cheating in your classes? (mark all that apply). Please note any other methods that you use not listed below.

Likert Scale Questions:

8. I believe that cheating is more frequent among first year students and sophomores than juniors and seniors at this university.
9. I believe students should be punished to the full extent of the university's policy if they cheat.
10. I have different cheating policies for different courses (i.e., lower vs. upper division).
11. I use class time at the beginning of the term to review and discuss my cheating policy with my students.
12. I have a specific policy in my syllabus regarding cheating.
13. I tend to pursue punishment for certain types of cheating more than others.
14. I prefer to confront cheating problems myself rather than involving other administrators.
15. The amount of time necessary to pursue punishment for cheaters has deterred me from punishing cheating in the past.
16. I have felt guilty about punishing cheaters in the past.
17. I am aware of more incidences of cheating in my classes than I actually punish.
18. I feel better about myself after I have punished incidences of cheating in my classes.
19. I would rather have outside administration help me pursue punishment for cheaters than pursue them alone.
20. Dealing with cheaters is one of my least favorite aspects of teaching.
21. I believe if I actively pursue punishment for incidences of cheating in my current classes, there will be less cheating in my future classes.
22. I believe that even if I punish students who cheat in my class, they will continue to cheat in other classes.
23. I believe that this university's current policy on cheating needs to be better enforced by professors.

Figure 1
Proportion of faculty who believe that students cheat more, less or equally based on the area of study faculty members teach.



own institution at an equal rate compared to other similar institutions, and 33% believed that cheating occurred at their own institution at a lower rate compared to other similar institutions. On average, faculty reported that they believed that 30%-40% of students cheated once in their academic careers. The average number of syllabi statements was 2.3 out of eight possible. There were no significant differences in terms of rank, gender, or area of study for the number of academic integrity statements faculty included in their syllabi.

Additionally, there was no correlation between faculty attitudes concerning student cheating and the number of statements included in their syllabi. A belief that the overall student cheating rate was high (questions five and six on the survey) did not affect the number of statements regarding cheating faculty included on their syllabus. There was no significant correlation between faculty's beliefs about the frequency of student cheating and the number of statements they put on their syllabi.

Interestingly, there were several important demographic differences. Because of the low number of respondents in the business and engineering schools, we combined the faculty from the business and engineering schools into one group (similar to Zimmerman, 1999) and compared their responses to those from faculty in the college of arts and sciences. Faculty in the arts and sciences correctly predicted the lower rate of cheating which occurs in their field (question five in Appendix A). Similarly, faculty in the business and engineering schools correctly predicted increased rates of student cheating in their fields whereas faculty in the arts and sciences were significantly more likely to report that they believed that less cheating occurred at their own institution

compared to other universities (χ^2=11.87, $p < .05$). Furthermore, 27% of faculty from business and engineering believed that more cheating occurred at their own university compared to other similar universities, whereas no faculty from the college of arts and sciences believed that students cheated more. Figure 1 shows the distribution of faculty reporting that students cheat more, less or equally based on the faculty's area of study.

Thirty-four percent of faculty from the arts and sciences departments did not address the penalties for cheating in their syllabi, and 20% did not include any statements regarding academic integrity in their syllabi. Over 50% of faculty from the sciences had zero or only one statement addressing penalties on their syllabi (33% had none; Figure 2 shows the number of syllabus statements by area of study). Furthermore, 72% percent of faculty from the business and engineering schools did not address the penalties for cheating in their syllabi at all (compared to 26% from the arts and sciences).

Although not a significant effect, the results show a trend toward non-tenure track faculty having a slightly greater tendency to believe less cheating occurs than tenure-track faculty; 64% of non-tenure track faculty believed that cheating

Figure 2
Proportion of the number of statements addressing academic integrity on syllabus by area of study.

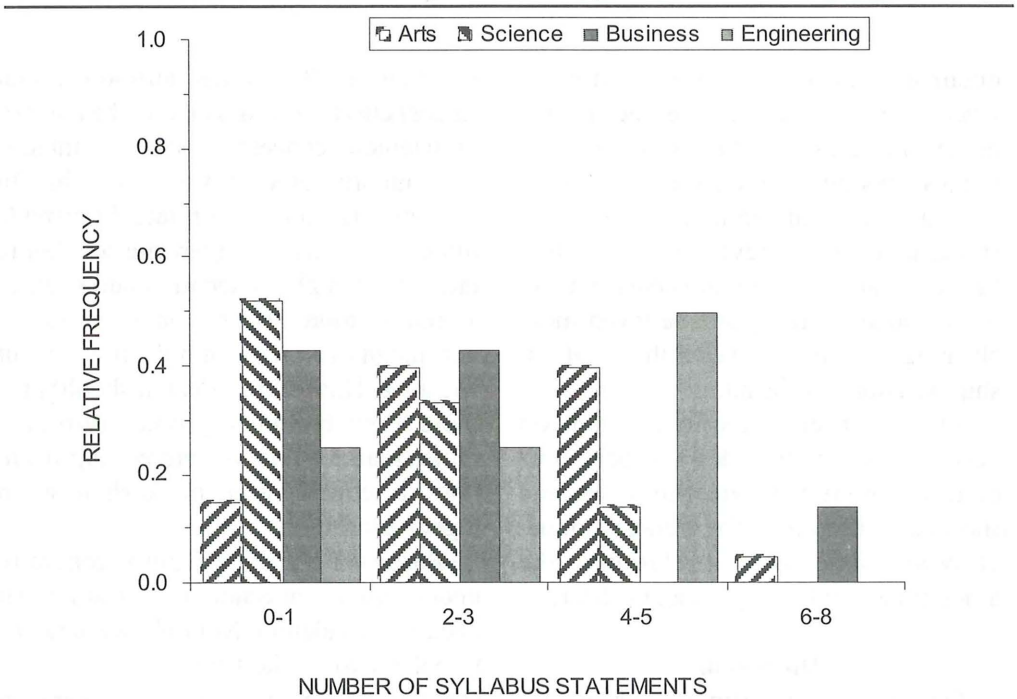
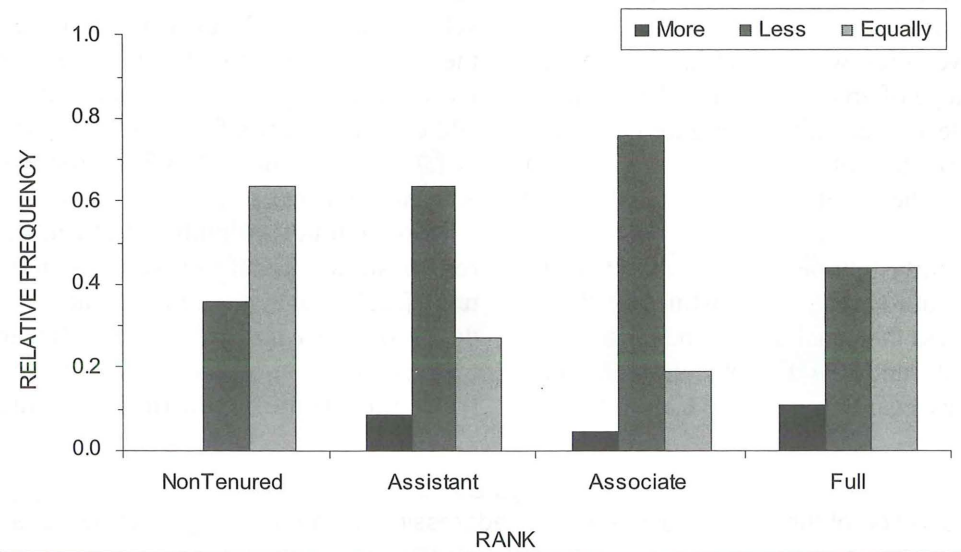


Figure 3
Proportion of faculty who believe that students cheat more, less or equally based on the area of study faculty members teach.



occurred less at their own institution, whereas only 23.3% of tenure-track faculty believed that less cheating occurred. Figure 3 shows this relationship.

Ten percent of the male participants stated that they believed more cheating happened at their own university, whereas no female participants believed more cheating occurred; however this relationship was not significant.

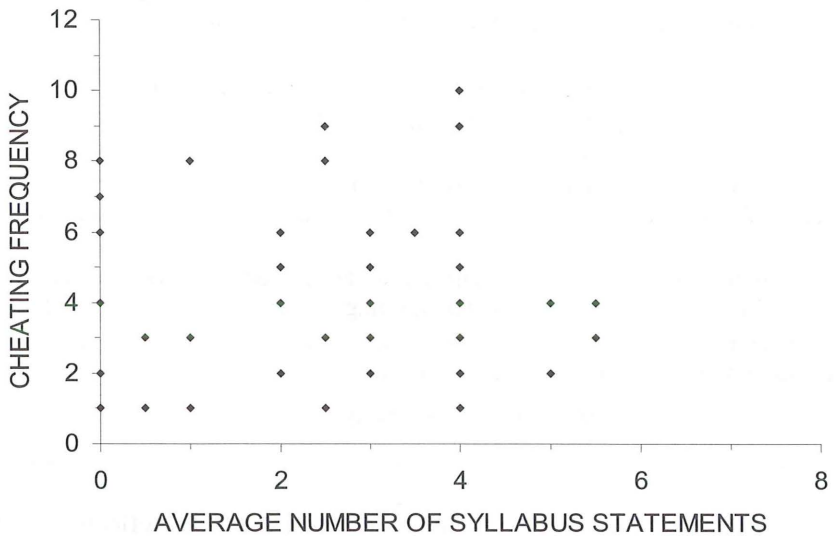
Finally, there was no correlation between faculty attitudes and behaviors concerning student cheating (Figure 4 shows a scatterplot of the average number of syllabi statements in relation to the amount faculty believe students cheat).

Discussion

Our results do not support our hypothesis that faculty's stated attitudes about student cheating would predict the number of statements concerning academic integrity as incorporated into their syllabi. In spite of this finding, our data do provide important insights regarding academic integrity in higher education and suggest a need for more research on the contribution faculty can have in reducing student cheating. This future research should promote a much needed global approach, rather than a student-centered approach, towards reducing academic dishonesty in higher education.

Based on our data, faculty generally underestimate the amount of cheating that occurs in academia. Not only were faculty beliefs about the frequency of student cheating at their own institution lower than

Figure 4
Scatter plot of cheating frequency in relation to the number of syllabus statements. A score of 1 for cheating frequency means that the faculty member believes that 10%-20% of students cheat (2=20%-30%, etc.).



they should have been (on average faculty believed that 30%-40% of students cheat at least once during their academic career), but 60% of faculty believed that this percentage represented the amount of cheating in higher education at large. These perceptions are, unfortunately, not supported by the literature, which generally reports that students cheat at a much higher rate of 70% (e.g., Whitley, 1998). In fact, an unpublished study at our institution found that 83% of students admitted to some form of cheating (Brutoco & Genereux, 1997). In the present study, only three faculty members (less than 1% of faculty polled) believed the rate of student cheating to be at or above 80%. Although Brutoco & Genereux's study has not been replicated, and thus must be considered preliminary, the contrast between the self- reported rate of student cheating and the rate at which faculty believe students cheat is striking.

When analyzed with respect to rank, these low prediction rates became even more apparent. Non-tenure track faculty members believe that only 20-30% of students have cheated at least once in college. Tenure-track faculty members believed that 30%-40% of students have cheated at least once. Clearly, both non-tenure and tenure-track faculty members are grossly underestimating the levels of student cheating in their classroom, which may lead to a dismissive attitude regarding the seriousness and prevalence of student cheating in higher education.

Sixty-three percent of faculty members in the arts and sciences, and 45% of fac-

Appendix B
Syllabi Statement Rubric

Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) recommends that each syllabus contains the following eight elements:

1. A brief general statement about the importance of academic integrity in higher education.
2. A personal statement declaring your commitment to upholding academic integrity in your classes.
3. How you will deal with any incidents that you observe or that come to your attention.
4. A brief list of the types of academic dishonesty in your school's policy (or a reference to where the complete list can be found).
5. A brief list of any types of academic dishonesty that could occur in your particular course that could benefit from more detail (e.g., oral plagiarism in a class that requires an oral report).
6. A brief list of campus resources that may help reduce the risk factors associated with cheating (e.g., writing clinic, counseling center, learning center or tutoring program).
7. An invitation to come directly to you to discuss anything that is unclear or confusing regarding the appropriate way to complete assignments.
8. An invitation to report incidents of academic dishonesty.

ulty in the business and engineering departments predicted that less cheating occurred at their university compared to other similar universities. Furthermore, 27% of faculty in business and engineering believed that cheating occurred more at their own institution compared to other similar universities, while no faculty in the arts and sciences believed this. These percentages are in line with other research, which showed that self-reported student cheating was more common in the areas of science, technology (Newstead et al., 1996) and engineering (Zimmerman, 1999) and less common in the liberal arts (Zimmerman. Thus, although faculty can underestimate the frequency of student cheating, faculty in the business and engineering schools appear to more accurately predict rates of cheating in their departments.

The number of statements faculty included in their syllabi reflects this general underestimation of student cheating. On average, faculty only included 2.3 statements (out of a possible 8) on their syllabi addressing academic integrity. In fact, almost 20% of faculty members did not include any statements regarding cheating in their syllabi. These data are in accordance with Graham et al. (1994), who found that 36% of faculty did not address academic dishonesty in their syllabi. These statistics are particularly alarming in light of the syllabus' role as a written contract between the student and professor. Davis, Grover, Becker and McGregor's (1992) survey of over 6000 university students demonstrated that students themselves believe communication about academic dishonesty is necessary to reduce cheating. These students listed "informing students why they should not cheat" as the number two preferred method (second only

to the use of separate forms of tests) for faculty to reduce incidences of academic dishonesty in their classrooms. This finding further illustrates the need for faculty to clearly communicate their policy on academic integrity. Communicating a firm intention to uphold academic integrity in the initial written interaction with students through a syllabus should be an integral step in every classroom setting. Syllabi could be an integral part of defining every classroom's set of ethics and should be considered part of the multitudinous set of personal, situational, and institutional factors which affect student cheating.

Our study demonstrates a need to conduct further research approaching student cheating from a more global perspective. One limitation of the current study was the low response rate from faculty. This return rate may be due, in part, to the fact that faculty find issues of academic dishonesty difficult to deal with. Keith-Spiegel et al. (1998) reported that faculty find academic dishonest to be one of the most onerous aspects of their profession.

In the future, literature pertaining to academic dishonesty needs to further expand to include not only the students' and faculty's behaviors and attitudes, but also consider the policies and beliefs of the administration and institution as a whole. One participant in our study felt the administration had a great deal of influence on the pervasiveness of cheating on campus, commenting that the institution was, "very reluctant to put some teeth in the policy [related to academic integrity]... [thus], students learn they can get away with at worst a bad grade." Several other faculty members also noted that they believed the administration was not adamant enough about punishing cheaters.

Little research has been conducted to examine faculty behavior and its relationship to student cheating. Our study is, to the best of our knowledge, one of the first to examine this relationship simultaneously. Our data correspond with past research which found that faculty tend to underestimate the amount of cheating in their classes (e.g., Keith-Spiegel et.al. 1998). Our research also found departmental differences, where faculty in business and engineering fields predicting increased rates of student cheating compared to the arts and sciences. This study has emphasized a global approach to student cheating, maintaining that academic integrity must be promoted by the institution, the administration, and especially the faculty.

If faculty are proactive about reducing the level of student cheating in their classes then maybe cheating could be reduced. There are a number of effective methods available to minimize cheating occurrences. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) recommends requiring students to turn in photocopies of all their research, teaching students how to correctly cite documents, and requiring students to turn in rough drafts. Whitley (1998) also found students are more likely to cheat when they believe there is relatively little risk of being caught. This reinforces the importance of communicating a firm stance against academic dishonesty in the classroom from the onset. Syllabi, presented at the beginning of courses, were looked at in this study, principally to measure actions taken to reduce

cheating, but they can also be considered an important resource for outlining cheating policies, thereby reducing ambiguity between faculty and students about the consequences for cheating. Sims (1995) suggests several other ways for faculty members to reduce student cheating, including assigning term paper topics which may be less likely to be plagiarized, giving clear instructions to the students of exactly what is expected of them on assignments and in the course in general, and using different physical arrangements of classrooms to minimize cheating during examinations. Faculty have a responsibility to minimize the risk factors for student cheating if they are easily able to do so, and have a duty to address the importance of academic honesty in their courses. While faculty have some control over cheating in their classrooms, it is equally the responsibility of everyone, including students and the administration, to foster an academically honest learning environment.

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