

September 30, 2013  
Volume 5, Issue 7

# The Weekly Reader

Teaching and Learning Center, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC

## UpComing Sessions

1. Retirement Counseling Sessions  
10/8
2. Boots to Books: Student Veterans  
10/8
3. Identifying Students for ONCA Awards  
10/22
4. Flipped Classrooms  
10/23
5. Blackboard Training (various)  
Register at:  
<http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/TrainingCalendar/default.asp>

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## The Growing Epidemic of Academic Dishonesty—We Need To Talk

According to surveys in *U.S. News and World Report*, 80% of “high-achieving” high school students admit to cheating. 51% of high school students do not believe cheating is wrong. 95% of cheating high school students said that they had not been caught. But that’s just high school, right?

Well, 75% of college students admitted cheating, and 90% of college students don’t believe cheaters would be caught. Almost 85% of college students said cheating is necessary to get ahead.

But it’s just those crazy kids, right? According to an NPR survey, two-thirds of parents think cheating is “no big deal” and that “all students do it.”

I could go on and on with such statistics from numerous studies and surveys, both scientific and informal. Academic dishonesty has always been a problem, but the problem now is epidemic.

Winthrop’s Academic Council, chaired by Jo Koster, will be addressing the issue this year. About a decade ago, Winthrop formed a taskforce on academic honesty, chaired by Alice Burmeister. I was part of that taskforce for a time, which met for two years, culminating in a report and a presentation to the campus community, including students. The time has come to return to this important issue.

I found a short article on The Teaching Professor website that makes three recommendations for preventing cheating: 1. Affirm the importance of academic integrity; 2. Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty; and 3. Develop fair and relevant tests (and/or forms of assessment).

How much time do we spend on step one in our classes? Do we do anything beyond putting an academic honesty policy on the syllabus? Do we talk with students

about the penalties and processes for cheating? Do we even know the penalties and the processes? If not, Student Affairs has recommendations and guidelines on their website: <http://www.winthrop.edu/ai/> You can contact Dean of Students Bethany Marlowe for more information.

The Teaching Professor article contains eight recommendations for the second step, reducing opportunities for cheating. These are clear, practical ideas, like knowing our students’ names and faces, requiring that they do not wear hats or hide their eyes on test days, having them spread out in the classroom if possible, and having more than one version of tests for large classes. Here is the link to the full article:

<http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/cgi-bin/tomprof/posting.php?ID=1011&search=>

The last step suggests that we develop fair and

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*“Some of those same national studies contain disturbing findings about faculty: over 60% of faculty report that they knew of cases of cheating but did not report them or do anything about them. If student attitudes about cheating have become looser and most of the faculty do not care or do not want to go to the trouble of dealing with cheating, we are in big trouble”*



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relevant tests. They recommend taking the test yourself, timing yourself, then multiplying that time by five for first-year students. They also recommend writing new tests every semester. We know that fraternities and sororities have test files, right?

The TLC has had sessions on academic honesty regularly in the past few years, and we will no doubt have more in the future. But it is time for the discussion of academic honesty to become much more widespread, among both faculty and students. Academic Council will no doubt spark such discussions.

In their meeting last week, the conversation turned to faculty conduct. Some of those same national studies contain disturbing findings about faculty: over 60% of faculty report that they knew of cases of cheating but did not report them or do anything about them. If student attitudes about cheating have become looser and most of the faculty do not care or do not want to go to the trouble of dealing with cheating, we are in big trouble.

. This discussion will continue...

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