

SYNOPSIS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF A MEDIUM-SIZE COLLEGE IN THE GALILEE, ISRAEL

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Abstract: An important measure of the success of an academic institution is evaluation of its moral health. We therefore administered the Academic Integrity Survey (McCabe et al., 2002) to 384 students from different departments, and analyzed 24 disciplinary hearing files from the previous academic year and 25 appeals against disciplinary decisions.

Approximately 60% of the respondents believed that academic misconduct occurs at the college sometimes or often; 45% had witnessed such cases, but 98% had never reported them. Comparison of the disciplinary hearings revealed that the Arabic-speaking students were more likely than their Hebrew-speaking counterparts to react impulsively to charges and attribute their behavior to external causes, such as personal difficulties at home. In general, these students are younger and have less life experience outside their homes compared with the Hebrew speakers.

The findings suggest that prevention of academic misconduct should focus on specific at-risk populations. In our research, these included students who had not done national service, science faculty students, and Arabic-speaking students. The latter are part of a national minority that has been marginalized. They are welcomed in our institution but require services to foster appropriate study skills and self-belief. The paper offers an approach to identifying groups at risk for academic misconduct and understanding the underlying reasons for such risk. We also suggest possible directions for effective intervention.

Key words: academic misconduct, at risk population, moral health

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