



## Aggie Honor System Office – A one-office approach to academic integrity

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*Introduction.* As educators, we at the Aggie Honor System Office serve to guide students by providing resources to educate them on academic misconduct and integrity to ensure that they are given the tools necessary to perform at their peak. We rely on volunteer faculty, staff, and student members from across the university to fulfill this mission. To be able to do that effectively and efficiently, members of the Honor Council must have a complete and thorough understanding of how the university defines academic misconduct, and how that definition applies to sanctions and student education. By working together and learning from each other, and from the process itself, we continue to evolve the way we handle cases of academic misconduct at one of the world's largest universities.

*Presenters:* Aggie Honor System Staff and Graduate Honor Council Student

*About:* Texas A&M University has one office that handles all cases of Academic Misconduct. Texas A&M University also has over 64,000 students - so how do they do it? Come learn how this office educates their community, promotes academic integrity, and adjudicates over 800 cases of academic misconduct a year

*Benefit to attendees:* *The Plagiarism across Europe & Beyond; and Shaping Ethics in Academia & Society Conference* strives to equip all practitioners in the higher education field with tools to assist in understanding common academic misconduct issues, critically think about ways in which to combat academic misconduct, and address the best practices to adjudicating academic misconduct. This conference presentation falls under three conference themes for this year: Social Responsibility; Teaching effective strategies to encourage academic integrity & prevent academic misconduct; and Making an effective university ethics infrastructure-including research and development on how to address honest errors. This conference presentation will address how the Aggie Honor System Office works within these realms of themes as well as their efforts for proactive education.

*How it fits within the Conference Theme:*

- *Social responsibility:* We encourage our students to uphold the code on a daily basis by requiring the code to be included on course syllabi, and encouraging faculty members to include the code on exams as well as major projects with a signature of acknowledgment from the student. This directly holds students accountable for their actions and leaves no room for doubt as to where the university stands on academic integrity. We encourage our students to self-report as well as turn fellow peers in through education of integrity and the importance of upholding the integrity of the university.
- *Teaching effective strategies to encourage academic integrity & prevent academic misconduct:* Framing our office as a resource on campus and talking about the proactive ways that our office is connecting with the student body to talk about academic integrity. Resource tables, brief seminars, and giveaways encourage students to come learn

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more about what we do and how they can be involved. During our presentations we talk about the easy ways students accidentally engage in academic misconduct, especially with the ease of access to social media platforms. We also give lots of real-life examples so that students can see themselves in potential situations. Additionally, we encourage our students to think about their own ethics and morals, and how they align with the university's core values.

- *Making an effective university ethics infrastructure-including research and development on how to address honest errors:* We are a single office that has broad definitions of academic misconduct so that faculties can narrow the definitions to match their individual courses. By allowing faculty to determine what is considered “wrong” in the scope of their own courses, it assists us in understanding the many different forms that dishonesty can take, without trying to compile a comprehensive list of items that would constantly need to be revised and edited as technology evolves and students find loopholes. Allowing the faculty to be part of the process also encourages and teaches them how to notice and report academic dishonesty.

*Conference Presentation:* The Aggie Honor System Office (AHSO) is currently made up of a Director, Assistant Director, three Academic Integrity Administrators and one Administrative Associate. With this there are six full-time staff members. The AHSO also oversees approximately 100 Honor Council Members. Honor Council Members are unpaid and serve on a volunteer basis. They are trained by the AHSO to properly educate students about what is considered academic misconduct and how to avoid it, and how to effectively educate and sanction students to hold them to Texas A&M's high standards of honor. We equip them with the tools and confidence necessary to be ambassadors for integrity both in and out of the classroom. The main role of the AHSO is to facilitate the process of alleged misconduct. This presentation will talk about the way the office works, the adjudication strategies and our proactive initiatives. The AHSO strives to be seen as a resource for students not just an office they interact with when they have an allegation against them. Through discussions and showing the attendees our office's website and procedures, conference attendees will gain an understanding of our office's approach to not just adjudicating cases but how to proactively engage their faculty and students.

*Closing:* To conclude, our one Honor System office is charged with the responsibility of upholding the university's academic code of honor through an impartial process which utilizes volunteers from all departments of the institution. We educate faculty, staff, students, and our panel of AHSO members on how to better conduct their academic matters with integrity and honesty, connect with the student body to promote these values, and constantly refine and develop methods for accomplishing those tasks. Attending this presentation will address three key conference themes and how our office approaches academic misconduct. Conference attendees will walk away with how the Aggie Honor System Office works and some practices they can implement to hopefully reduce academic misconduct within their instruction.

*Keywords:* integrity, academic, misconduct, university, office.