A multi-pronged approach to academic integrity awareness: Methods used by a Canadian Undergraduate Business Program

Kate ROWBOTHAM, Kelley PACKALEN, Lori GARNIER
Queen's University, Canada

After a number of isolated but complicated academic integrity cases over the past few years, the Commerce Program at Smith School of Business determined that it was necessary to develop a renewed approach to discussing academic integrity with students and faculty members alike. Raising awareness about academic integrity was a top priority for the administration, with an emphasis put on the broad concept of integrity for the students and process-related concerns for the faculty members. In our presentation, we will set out the steps that were taken, what was learned, and how we will continue to build a culture of integrity in our undergraduate business program.

Context

The Commerce Program at Smith School of Business is one of the top undergraduate business programs in Canada (Maclean's, 2017), drawing students from across the country and around the world due to its reputation, the experience it provides its students, and the success that its graduates are able to obtain in the corporate world. Students complete a four-year Bachelor of Commerce degree, with the first two years concentrating on core courses in all business areas, and the last two years of the program allowing students to focus on their own areas of interest through electives in the business school and other faculties at Queen's University (Queen's Bachelor of Commerce, 2018). The vast majority of students participate in an international exchange during their third year in the program. Students are taught by award-winning faculty and researchers, including tenured and tenure-track professors as well as adjunct instructors and lecturers. Previous research has shown that business students cheat more than non-business students (McCabe, 1997; McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2006), which provides further incentive for us to ensure a clear understanding of academic integrity in our program.

Educational Approach for Students

Like many members of the International Center for Academic Integrity, we take a values-based approach to talking to students about academic integrity, focusing on the core values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage (Fishman, 2014). Our educational component took place inside and outside the classroom, using a number of different formats and involving different members of the Smith School of Business Community, and consisted of the following:

- Video and Online Quiz: The Commerce Program produced a video featuring five professors talking about academic integrity and what it means for our community. All students, in all four years of the program, were required to watch the video (which was accessed through the learning management system) by the end of the first month of classes, and then complete a quiz that asked them to respond to different scenarios and recognize issues relating to potential breaches of academic integrity. Because the quiz

was done through the LMS, the Commerce Office could see which students completed it, which allowed them to follow up with those who did not. Students averaged above 80% on the quiz (Smith School of Business, internal data).

- First Year Talks: The first year students in the Commerce Program participated in talks about academic integrity twice: once in the classroom in their sections (approximately 80 students per section), and once as part of a larger lecture for all first year students (approximately 480 students). In the classroom, the Executive Director of the Commerce Program spoke to all students about academic integrity and what it means in our community, as well as the consequences of violating academic integrity. In the larger lecture, a member of the school's Academic Integrity Panel talked to the students about integrity more broadly. This talk highlighted current students and alumni who demonstrate the core values of integrity beyond the confines of academic integrity. Further, content from this talk was incorporated into an exam question in the introductory Business Management class, asking students to speak to the values and their relevance to them as Commerce students.
- Teaching Assistant Training: Many of our undergraduate business students also work as teaching assistants in the Commerce Program; as part of the educational approach, the teaching assistant training was redesigned to emphasize the role that those students play in protecting academic integrity in both of their roles (that is, as students and as teaching assistants).

Addressing Faculty Members' Handling of Academic Integrity

The majority of our faculty members agree that academic integrity is a problem in the Commerce Program, but tend to not engage in the formal process (Smith School of Business, internal data). While not done maliciously, this approach risks the violation of natural justice for the students (e.g. the right to appeal a decision) and limits the data collection and management that would allow the identification of students who violate academic integrity multiple times. Therefore, the approach for faculty members focused on education and awareness of the process, including resources to make the investigation, decision, and sanctioning less onerous for them, and consisted of the following:

- Commerce Program Update: At the end of the school year, at the invitation of the Executive Director of the Commerce Program, members of the Academic Integrity Panel spoke at a lunch for faculty members who taught in the Commerce Program. In this talk, they broadly discussed procedural concerns in the academic integrity process, as well as briefly highlighted steps that could be taken by individual faculty members to prevent violations of academic integrity in their courses.
- Dean's Retreat: At a start of the school year retreat for all faculty members in the school (including those who are not affiliated with the Commerce Program), a member of the Academic Integrity Panel shared results of an internal study about faculty perceptions of academic integrity and its surrounding issues, including process. This presentation was intended to further highlight the issues around not following the process of investigation, decision-making, and sanctioning.
- Coffee Talk: Midway through the first term of the school year, the Commerce Program hosted a coffee session for faculty members. Its intent was to highlight the messages of process and the support that could be offered therein, as well as provide some examples of cases that had been investigated by other faculty members in the previous year.

Institutional Alliances

The Commerce Program has benefited immensely from connections to other institutional groups dealing with the issue of academic integrity, both inside Queen's University and beyond. The people involved in these educational efforts sit on roundtables and Senate sub-committees in the university, and work with others in different institutions in the research and administration of academic integrity issues. For example, the quiz that all students were required to take was developed based on a similar quiz used by another Canadian school.

Assessing Success in our Approach

While we are heartened and excited by the interest and involvement of students and faculty members in our different approaches to academic integrity awareness and education, it is still early to understand the full impact of our varied initiatives. Ironically, we expect that if our approach is successful, we may see an increase in the reporting of cases of academic integrity because our faculty members will be following the full process (which actually benefits the students due to the adherence to the principles of natural justice). From the student side, we expect to see students holding each other accountable to maintain the fundamental values of academic integrity.

Next Steps

We will continue to build on the early success of our approach, but have recognized some areas that should be addressed in further initiatives to ensure that we are truly developing a culture of integrity. First, we would like to see more student involvement in the educational process (e.g. involving students in the video alongside faculty members), which would show that the issue is as important to students as it is to faculty members. Student involvement would also ensure that we are crafting messages that will resonate with that group. Second, we will take a more customized approach with faculty members. In a business school, where quantitative and qualitative courses are taught, it is necessary to acknowledge that the academic integrity issues that are faced in one type of course are not the same as are faced in another. Finally, we will continue to gather data about the perceptions of students and faculty members as well as about behavioural differences relating to academic integrity, in order to ensure that our approach meets the needs of all the involved parties.

Keywords: awareness, fundamental values, culture of integrity.

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