



Tracing the journey of two students' trajectory to becoming advocates of integrity – a case study

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Developing a culture of integrity on campus is a goal we all strive to achieve, albeit a difficult one in the era of mistrust, political turmoil and questionable role models. Current research has shown time and again that fighting misconduct isn't easy. Academics and researchers believe developing a culture of integrity is a constructive, educative mode of beating misconduct (Stephens, 2016; Bertram-Gallant, 2011). Being proactive is believed to be the key. Teaching in itself is a time-consuming and challenging task. We are teaching students critical thinking skills and preparing them for the real world which in itself is a difficult task, particularly when we are constantly battling for their attention against smart phones and other digital distractions. Add to this, our own career progression, research, publications, other governance and administrative tasks including marking, assessment setting and so on that bog down academics' world over. Amid this, developing a sense of integrity in students before they hit the workplace so that they take with them a strong understanding of right and wrong is an added responsibility. But how do teachers go about developing this culture of integrity in their students? This study tracks the journey of two students and demonstrates the use of mentoring to transform them from being passive to active advocates of integrity on campus.

Clutterbuck, Devine and Beech (1991) mention that mentoring is an efficient form of developing talent and suggest that a good mentoring program helps people to recognize their abilities. A "mentor" is someone who "advises, counsels, or helps (younger) individuals" (Feldman, 1988). Murray (2002) defined mentoring as "a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goals of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies" and the backdrop where this occurs is called a facilitated mentoring program, i.e. a structure and series of processes designed to create effective mentoring relationships, guide the desired behavior change of those involved, and evaluate the results for the protégés, the mentors and the organizations (Murray, 2002)

Obtaining a mentor is an important career development experience for individuals (Eby et al., 2000). Rodger and Tremblay (2003) were among few researchers who investigated the positive impact of mentoring on student performance. They used an experimental design to examine the effects of participation in a year-long mentoring program for first year students and found that students who participated in the mentoring program got significantly higher grades than non-mentored students.

Based on the widely reported effectiveness of the mentoring program for improving performance, the researchers undertook to mentor two students on their journey towards self-improvement. This process is discussed through a case methodology. The study uses qualitative case study method, telling the story of the students' experiences. It began with the mentors attempts at recruiting students who started as volunteers for various academic integrity projects. The case highlights obstacles faced both by the mentors and students such as time, governance and influence and attitude of peers (other students and academics) among others. For instance, both students reported positive support in terms of parents, religious beliefs and

upbringing that added to the experience and helped them transition from students to academic integrity advocates under the mentorship they received from the researchers. Mentors used cultural socialization to help use the positivity from the students' lives to provide them with a support system that guided their understanding of integrity.

Among barriers they faced, one student shared negative experiences faced by them such as other students mocking the mentee to disassociating with the student to flagrant disregard for practices and messages shared by the mentee. The second student shared demotivating experiences of seeing other students with unethical practices get awarded more grades or low turnouts at events that were organized to raise awareness on integrity. In both these cases, the mentors played crucial roles in ensuring the barriers did not become hindrance to the students' mindset and progress. Mentors designed one-on-one sessions, creating opportunities for mentees to actively reflect and participate in, so that they would become more metacognitively aware, guiding them to think about why and how they were growing as individuals from the experiences, and how they could go back to face and spread their message to other, less convinced students on campus.

The case study traces the progress of the students from such volunteer assistantship experience to becoming research assistants for several academic integrity projects from whence they became co-authors and finally advocates of integrity at university and into the workplace. One mentee continues to be an advocate on campus as the student pursues graduation completion while the second mentee graduated and joined a workforce where the mentee has established the importance of referencing and citation into all phases of the work, such as data handling, slide preparations etc.

The case study through this journey mapping provides proof of effective mentoring towards developing a culture of integrity in students that they can then become advocates on campus and into the workplaces.

Keywords: mentoring, academic integrity, student cheating, culture of integrity.

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