

STUDENT INSIGHT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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There is no shortage of advice from university administration and faculty on ways educational institutions can improve their culture of academic integrity. To put it bluntly, some percentage of students violate academic integrity, many faculty and administrators complain that they do, and at various points in an institution's history – often in response to a cheating scandal or a growing unease that the situation has gotten out of hand – faculty and administration will introduce new programs, policies and/or pedagogical innovations designed to improve academic integrity (e.g. Packalen and Rowbotham, 2020; Raman and Ramlogan, 2020).

For these efforts to improve academic integrity to be successful, however, administration, faculty and students must recognize that there is a problem, be motivated to solve the problem, and be willing to change their attitudes and behaviours accordingly. Change is also more likely to be effective and enduring when solutions incorporate the concerns and recommendations of all affected stakeholders (Eury and Treviño, 2019). In our review of the literature we found that faculty members and university administrators were both well represented in articles offering advice on ways to improve students' adherence to academic integrity. In comparison, students were frequently surveyed on what they do and why, but were only sometimes consulted on whether they perceived their behaviour as problematic, and if yes, what they thought should be done to improve that behaviour.

Our research addressed this shortcoming in the literature by using a methodology – computer-facilitated or electronic focus groups – that to our knowledge had not been used previously to study academic integrity. Due to its combination of anonymous written entries with oral conversation this method was ideal for discussing confidential and sensitive issues. In Winter 2019, 44 Canadian undergraduate business students participated in one of four year-specific computer-facilitated focus groups.

Students responded to questions about the general attitudes among themselves and their peers with respect to academic integrity. They also provided specific suggestions of actions that both students and faculty might take to improve the culture of academic integrity in their program.

Students perceived themselves and their peers to have varying levels of adherence – from ignorance to best effort to selective to poor to complete disregard – and provided different justifications at each of these levels for why they believed they and their peers behaved as such. These responses were skewed by cohort and reflected a growing ambivalence or hostility to academic integrity as their time in the program progressed.

Students also understood what they could do at both a macro- and micro-level to improve their own academic integrity and the culture of academic integrity in the program. Students in the first year of the program focused on ways they could change their own perspectives and attitudes, those in the second year reduced the scope of their ambitions and focused on small proactive steps that would minimize specific incidences, and those in the third and fourth year spoke to ways they could help to change the culture of academic integrity in which they were situated.

Finally, students provided numerous suggestions of actions that faculty and administration could take to improve the culture of academic integrity. These included program-wide suggestions around culture and policy and structure, those directed to the policy and its enforcement and numerous suggestions around coursework including flexibility around submission, learning supports and the logistics of testing situations.

Our contributions to the field of academic integrity are three-fold. First, we give voice to students in an area in which historically their opinions have been lacking, namely in the generation of specific actions that both students and faculty can take to improve academic integrity. Second, we

connect students' opinions and suggestions to the broader literature on academic integrity, classroom pedagogy, and organizational culture to interpret our findings. Third, we introduce readers to an uncommon methodology, computer-facilitated focus groups, which is well suited to gathering rich and diverse insights on sensitive topics.

The chapter on which this abstract and associated presentation are based is forthcoming in Eaton, S. E., and Christensen Hughes, J. (Eds.). (2021). *Academic Integrity in Canada: An Enduring and Essential Challenge*. Springer.

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