

**University Task Force on Academic and Institutional Integrity
Report on Activities from Fall 2003-Fall 2005
Including Recommendations for the Future
January 2006**

FINAL REPORT

The following report provides a description of the various activities initiated by the University Task Force on Academic and Institutional Integrity since its official creation in the fall of 2003. The report describes the development of the Student and Faculty Surveys on Academic Integrity and two public presentations that were planned as a follow-up to the survey process. Also included is a list of positive outcomes generated by these initiatives over the past two years. The report concludes with a proposed list of recommended activities for the future and possible leadership models for future academic integrity endeavors.

Task Force Members:

Alice Burmeister, Associate Professor, Art and Design (Task Force Chair)
Tim Druke, Registrar, Office of Records and Registration (Task Force Secretary)
Bethany Marlowe, Dean of Students, Office of Student Affairs
Mark Herring, Dean of Library Services
Gloria Jones, Department Chair, English
John Bird, Professor, English
Barbara Fuller, Associate Professor, Business
Barbara Heinemann, Associate Professor, Modern Languages
Marshall Jones, Associate Professor, Center for Pedagogy
Dave Pretty, Assistant Professor, History
Chris Rice, Student Representative to the Task Force, Council of Student Leaders
Jared Kobe, Student Representative to the Task Force, Council of Student Leaders

Background History of the Task Force:

The process of creating a university group to study issues related to academic integrity first developed in response to concerns expressed by both the Council of Student Leaders and the Faculty Concerns Committee in the fall of 2002.

The Council of Student Leaders focused on several key integrity matters. Foremost among them was a contention that no common understanding existed among students and faculty of students' rights, the proper procedures to be followed in cases of suspected academic misconduct, or common definitions of terms such as "academic integrity", cheating, or plagiarism within the Winthrop community. The students also wanted to know how prevalent academic dishonesty is at Winthrop. Following a lengthy discussion among members of the Council of Student Leaders, the Council created a Subcommittee on Academic Integrity, and subsequently adopted the following goal: "To create a campus environment where Academic Integrity is comprehended, taken seriously, and is a focal point among the students and faculty."

At the same time that the Council of Student Leaders began its dialogue, the Faculty Concerns Committee presented a similar set of concerns to President DiGiorgio in Fall 2002. Some faculty members felt cheating and plagiarism had increased. Just how common were these and other such infractions at Winthrop? Some faculty echoed student anxiety over a lack of common understanding about what constituted academic misconduct, or the proper procedures to follow when a student is suspected of academic misconduct. At the institutional level, discussion ensued over the number of students who participate in the commencement exercises without fully meeting all of the requirements for graduation.

Galvanized by these events, the President appointed a small group of faculty, administrators, and students to study these issues further. In response to this group's recommendation, the President appointed individuals to serve on the University Task Force on Academic and Institutional Integrity. The group began meeting in fall 2003. Alice Burmeister was elected to serve as the Chair of the Task Force, and Tim Druke as its Secretary. The Task Force membership consisted of two deans, one department chair, six faculty members, the university registrar, and two student representatives from the Council of Student Leaders.

The goals of the Task Force were the following:

- To initiate a campus dialogue on issues related to academic integrity
- To increase student and faculty understanding of the university's policies and procedures on academic integrity
- To make recommendations on how to create a "culture of academic integrity" at Winthrop University

The Student and Faculty Surveys on Academic Integrity

[The following section of this report contains information on the development and implementation of the Student and Faculty Surveys on Academic Integrity. Much of this information was originally presented in the "Executive Summary of the Results of the Student and Faculty Surveys on Academic Integrity," written by Task Force Secretary Tim Druke in the fall of 2004].

During the Spring 2004 semester, the Council of Student Leaders Subcommittee on Academic Integrity and the University Task Force on Academic and Institutional Integrity surveyed approximately 500 students and 100 faculty members on student academic integrity. The surveys were developed with the assistance of Dr. Joe Prus, Director of the University Office of Assessment.

Students and faculty were asked to rate the severity of potential integrity infractions, and report the frequency of their engagements in each behavior. Faculty were asked to rate their perception of the frequency of such occurrences. A third section of the survey asked students to rate the importance of possible reasons for cheating from a provided list. The faculty were asked to rate their perceptions of the importance of the same reasons.

The data was analyzed using several different cluster analysis methods. Task Force member Dr. Barbara Fuller provided invaluable assistance in generating a majority of the data clusters for our analysis. The data revealed three general trends among student responses. About 45% of the students rated the listed infractions as more serious than the other groups; about 7% rated the infractions as less serious than the others; 47% ranged widely over the choices. In other words, almost half of those students surveyed needed more guidance and direction on the seriousness of the various infractions.

Students and faculty did not differ in their perceptions of the severity of three infractions. Having someone else take a test for you, stealing a copy of a test from a professor's office, and forging a professor's signature to add or drop a course, were rated by both groups as very serious. The remaining 24 behaviors showed statistically significant differences in the responses.

Both groups were asked to rate the importance of several possible reasons for cheating. "Pressure to maintain a scholarship or financial aid" and "Pressure from parents/guardians" proved to be the most important factors. Lack of guidance and not knowing what constituted cheating were rated the least important factors.

The Panel Discussion and Guest Speaker Presentation on Academic Integrity

After lengthy discussions and analysis of the data, the Task Force decided to plan two events for the spring designed to initiate a campus-wide discussion of academic integrity.

The first event was a panel discussion (April 5, 2005). The results of the surveys were publicly presented and discussed by a panel consisting of faculty, students and administrators. One week later, Dr. Daniel E. Wueste, Director of the Robert J. Rutland Center for Ethics at Clemson University, was invited to speak at a cultural event credit forum. His thought-provoking presentation, "Academic Integrity and the Integrity of the Academy," sparked a lively discussion of pertinent issues related to academic integrity. Dr. Wueste also provided the audience with guidance on how to build a "culture of academic integrity" at Winthrop.

In addition to his presentation, Dr. Wueste attended the Panel Discussion and spent a considerable amount of time visiting with members of the Task Force. The Task Force found these informal discussions most helpful. Dr. Wueste's visits were sponsored and publicized with funding from University College.

Presentation at the International Conference on Academic Integrity

During his visit, Dr. Wueste suggested some of the Task Force members should attend and present at the annual International Conference on Academic Integrity (sponsored by Duke University's Center for Academic Integrity). At the October 2005 conference, members presented "Effective Strategies for Promoting Student, Faculty and Administrative Engagement in the Academic Integrity Process."

Alice Burmeister, Bethany Marlowe, and the Task Force student representatives Chris Rice and Jared Kobe served as the presenters at the conference. The panel presented a summary of the year-long events at Winthrop and was very well-received.

In addition to presenting, another benefit of participating in the conference was the opportunity to attend a large number of panels sponsored by a broad range of institutions. Winthrop's participants felt the conference very worthwhile, and came away with a number of exciting ideas and helpful suggestions, many of which are included in the "Recommendations for the Future" section presented below.

Positive Outcomes of the Task Force's Activities

Reflecting upon the Task Force's activities over the past two years, a number of important positive outcomes have been noted, including all of the following:

- A campus-wide constant conversation on academic integrity has commenced and continues.
- Sessions on academic integrity are now included as a part of new faculty training.
- Issues related to academic integrity have been discussed in a number of department and college meetings.
- TLC presentations on academic integrity are routinely made available to faculty.
- Discussion of academic integrity is now included in ACAD 101.
- Discussion of academic integrity is now included in the Peer Mentors and RA training.
- The Dean of Students reports that the faculty are following procedures regarding possible academic misconduct with more consistency.
- Many faculty are now using www.turnitin.com.
- Website updates on issues related to academic integrity are now more numerous.
- Academic integrity is emphasized by the Vice President for Academic Affairs during Freshman Orientation and discussed by the academic deans during opening college assemblies.
- The College of Business sponsored an "Ethics Bowl" last fall, and hopes to sponsor a similar event each year.
- The Council of Student Leaders is sponsoring a student essay contest on academic integrity this spring.

Recommendations for the Future

In light of the positive outcomes described above, and in the hopes that we can continue to build upon these efforts in the years to come, the Task Force proposes the following short term and long term suggestions for further action and leadership.

Short Term Recommendations:

- Plan to bring in an outside speaker each academic year to address issues related to academic integrity.
- Identify and recommend a common book for the ACAD 101 course that addresses issues related to academic integrity.
- Seek out additional ways to integrate issues of academic integrity into the first year experience, including residential life, the “Live. Learn. Lead.” programs, etc.
- Develop a website linked to Winthrop’s main homepage that would contain pertinent information related to academic integrity at Winthrop, including useful information and resources for students, faculty and administrators.
- Develop fun promotional materials such as folders, bookmarks, t-shirts, etc. that contain relevant information about academic integrity at Winthrop. Encourage student groups to become involved in distributing and talking about the materials across campus.

Long Term Recommendations:

- Develop a required online student tutorial for all incoming students that would take participants through a step-by-step explanation of all available resources, guidelines, policies and procedures related to academic integrity at Winthrop University.
- Develop additional creative initiatives to help get students involved. Some ideas include:
 - 1). Encourage students to write, perform and produce videotaped scenarios that address issues relevant to academic integrity for use in ACAD 101 or Freshman Orientation.
 - 2). Encourage students to re-examine statements referencing academic integrity in the “Dedication for Excellence.”
 - 3). Encourage students to open up dialogues with their professors and with each other in their classes, dorms, etc.
- Take concrete steps to ensure that all campus populations (faculty, students and administration) have equal ownership of the process. This will ensure that academic integrity remains a central focus of attention within our campus community.
- When talking about academic integrity, focus on the positive – build what Daniel Wueste describes as a “culture of academic integrity”, where Winthrop’s ideals about academic integrity permeate every aspect of campus life. Communicate the idea that individual or collective engagement with issues of academic integrity is a life-long process, not something that can be achieved overnight.

Recommendations for Future Leadership as Relates to Academic Integrity at Winthrop

- The Task Force applauds the early initiative and strong leadership role played by the Council of Student Leaders, and recommends that they continue their efforts via the Council’s Subcommittee on Academic Integrity.
- As for the future of academic integrity initiatives at Winthrop, the Task Force strongly recommends that these efforts continue in some concrete and legitimized form. The Task Force proposes two possible leadership models for this effort:

1). The creation of a **University Committee on Academic and Institutional Integrity**, that would function as a standing committee under the auspices of Academic Council with representation from all academic areas and the Division of Student Life.

Potential advantages: A university committee such as this would ensure a wide representation of all areas of campus, and would increase faculty and administrative ownership of the ongoing process.

Potential disadvantages: It may be difficult to recruit potential committee members from an already over-burdened faculty, and current Task Force members have expressed concerns that some academic areas may not be as enthusiastic to participate as others.

2). The appointment of an **Academic Integrity Liaison**, a single individual appointed by the President who would coordinate a university-wide committee that would be in charge of all activities and initiatives related to academic integrity campus-wide. This individual's office could be housed in University College or elsewhere, and might be linked with other academic programs.

Potential advantages: Recruiting a single individual (with appropriate course release time or other incentives) to serve in this capacity for designated periods of time would be a simpler and more effective means for getting things accomplished in a timely fashion.

Potential disadvantages: The only disadvantage to this option would be if the individual did not have a committee of people to assist in the coordination of activities. If a single individual is seen as being "in charge" of all academic integrity efforts, then some faculty might not feel a sense of collective ownership of the process, and thus may be less inclined to exercise their own individual efforts in this regard.

Conclusions

To conclude, the Task Force feels satisfied that it has achieved its initial goals of creating a campus-wide dialogue on academic integrity, raising student and faculty awareness of the university's policies and procedures as relates to academic integrity, and making recommendations on how to create a "culture of academic integrity" at Winthrop University. It is the sincere hope of the Task Force membership that our efforts over the past two years will continue to bear fruit and evolve into additional initiatives and substantial improvements as we work toward achieving a common understanding of academic integrity that permeates every aspect of campus life. Finally, the Task Force wishes to thank all of the various individuals and administrative and academic offices who have provided us with guidance and support in our ongoing efforts. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to the Office of the President, the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of Student Life, the Office of Assessment, and University College for their tremendous assistance over the course of the past two years.