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**Title:** BUSINESS SCHOOL DEANS ON STUDENT ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: A SURVEY.

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**Abstract:** While students and, to a lesser extent, faculty have been surveyed about the student academic dishonesty issue, deans have been virtually ignored. This paper reports the results of an online survey of business school deans on the issue. Deans' perceptions of the level of student academic dishonesty in their schools were much lower than the levels that have been generally reported in student surveys. Further more, only about 5 percent of deans believed dishonesty was a serious problem in their school. Business school ethics requirements and administration of policies related to academic misconduct are also reported. Four specific actions are discussed that the survey suggests could make a contribution toward solving the student academic dishonesty problem. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

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## **BUSINESS SCHOOL DEANS ON STUDENT ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: A SURVEY**

While students and, to a lesser extent, faculty have been surveyed about the student academic dishonesty issue, deans have been virtually ignored. This paper reports the results of an online survey of business school deans on the issue. Deans' perceptions of the level of student academic dishonesty in their schools were much lower than the levels that have been generally reported in student surveys. Further more, only about 5 percent of deans believed dishonesty was a serious problem in their school. Business school ethics requirements and administration of policies related to academic misconduct are also reported. Four specific actions are discussed that the survey suggests could make a contribution toward solving the student academic dishonesty problem.

Student academic dishonesty has been recognized as a problem in U. S. colleges and universities for many years. Much of what is known about the issue comes from an extensive literature that reports the results of surveys of students on the topic. An extensive review of this literature is not warranted here, but Table 1 presents the author(s), year of publication, respondent major, and the percent of respondents reporting participation in dishonest academic behavior for several studies that we believe are typical, spanning nearly four decades. The percentage of students admitting participation is alarming, ranging from a low of 49% for students in undergraduate marketing classes in 1988 to 100% for undergraduate management majors in 2008.

Another population that has been surveyed about the student academic dishonesty issue is faculty. However, the literature on this constituency is not nearly as extensive as the student survey literature. While the student studies have tended to focus on the level of dishonesty, the faculty studies have focused more on perceptions of and attitudes toward the issue. Some examples of faculty surveys are: Campbell, 2006; Hard, Conway, and Moran, 2006; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, and Washburn, 1998; Koljatic and Suva, 2002; Pincus and Schmelkin, 2003; and Volpe, Davidson, and Bell, 2008.

The missing link in what is known about student academic dishonesty appears to be at the administrative level. One possible reason that instructors tend to ignore cheating (Keith-Spiegel et al. 1998) is that administrators, and especially deans, have not given it a high priority. A search of several electronic data bases yielded only one survey of deans on an issue related to the student dishonesty problem ("More Emphasis," 2007). Deans and directors at 50 prominent business schools worldwide were surveyed about several ethical issues. Emphasis on ethics was generally increasing. A 500 percent increase in the number of stand alone ethics courses was reported, while 25 percent of these schools required that their students take such a course. Sixty-five percent of the schools had centers devoted to ethical issues. This article makes a contribution to filling this gap in our knowledge. It reports the results of an on-line survey of business school deans on the issue of student academic dishonesty.

### **Methodology**

A questionnaire was developed that asked business school deans to indicate their perceptions of various aspects of student academic dishonesty at their schools, their schools' policies on the issue, and selected school characteristics. The questionnaire was emailed to deans using the addresses included in the August 2007 Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Membership Directory . The questionnaire was sent to 555 U. S. business school deans during the Spring 2008 semester, with one follow-up reminder. One hundred seventy-seven deans responded for a response rate of 31.8%.

A large majority of the deans who responded were at universities (86.2%) rather than colleges (13.8%). A smaller majority of respondents were from public institutions (59.2%), versus private (40.8%). Almost 81% of the business schools represented were accredited, mostly by AACSB (70.9%). Just under 20% of schools had doctoral programs, while about 80% offered masters' degrees. A slight majority of the schools represented had honor codes, at 52.3%.

All tests for statistical significance were conducted at the  $p = 0.05$  level.

## Results

### Perceptions of Dishonesty at Own School

Table 2 presents the results of three questions about business school deans' perceptions of student academic dishonesty at their own schools. Almost 45% of deans believed fewer than 20% of their students participated in dishonest practices, while another third believed the participation rate to be in the 20 to 39% range. Combining these two categories, we see that 78% of deans believed that fewer than 40% of their students participate in academic dishonesty. Only 5.7% believed the rate to be in the 60 to 79% range, while only 1.1% put the rate in the 80 to 100% range. Combining these two categories, we see that only 6.8% of the deans believed the rate of student academic dishonesty at their school was in the 60 to 100% range. There was no statistically significant relationship between answers to this question and any of the classification variables.

The next result presented in Table 2 is responses to a question about how serious deans believed student academic dishonesty was at their schools. While few of the deans believed it was very serious (5.1%), 48.3% believed it to be moderately serious. A combined 29.5% believed it to be slightly or not at all serious.

A statistically significant relationship was found between the perception of seriousness and whether the school had an honor code. Having an honor code appeared to ease deans' concerns about the seriousness of student academic dishonesty at their school. Deans of schools without honor codes perceived student academic dishonesty to be a bit more of a problem at their schools, with a mean of 3.48 on a five point scale where 1 = "not at all serious" and 5 = "very serious," than did deans of schools with honor codes, with a mean of 3.04.

The third "own school" question asked deans how they believed student academic dishonesty at their business school compared to the level at the "typical" business school. A majority of respondents believed it to be the same, at 63.8 %. A little over one-fourth (28.7%) believed it to be somewhat lower, while 6.3% believed it to be much lower. Only 1.1% believed it to be somewhat higher at their school, and no dean believed it to be much higher.

A statistically significant relationship was found between the perception of the level of student academic dishonesty at their school compared to other schools and all six of the classification variables included in the study. Business deans at the following types of schools believed the level of student academic dishonesty at their school was high compared to other schools: business schools not AACSB accredited; colleges, as opposed to universities; private schools; schools with a religious affiliation; schools with an honor code; and schools offering only bachelors' degrees as opposed to bachelors', masters' and doctoral degrees.

### Reasons for Participation

Table 3 shows business deans' perceptions of reasons why business students participate in dishonest academic practices. Likelihood was measured on a five point scale from 1, "Not at all likely," to 5, "Very likely." Means ranged from 2.11 for "Is a challenge or a thrill" to 3.85 for "To get a high grade."

ANOVA, followed by the Tukey test, was utilized to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between means. An interesting pattern emerged from the analysis. None of the means greater than the midpoint of the scale, 3, was significantly different, nor were any of the means below 3. Yet, all of the means greater than the mid point were significantly different from all of the means below the midpoint. This shows that there are two distinct groups of reasons — those that deans feel are likely reasons and those that they feel are unlikely reasons. The likely group includes to get a high grade, has time but does not study, believes the risk of getting caught is low, does not have time to study, feels no one is hurt by the behavior, difficulty of material, and must do it to compete. The unlikely group includes feels the work is irrelevant, feels the instructor is poor or indifferent, peer pressure, and is a challenge or a thrill.

### **Perceptions of Participation by Major**

Deans were asked to rate the likelihood of a typical student in different majors engaging in dishonest academic practices on a five point scale from 1, "Not at all likely," to 5, "Very likely." The majors included were accounting, finance, economics, health care, management, marketing, industrial relations, and information systems. Mean ratings ranged from 2.78 for accounting to 3.03 for management. However, none of the differences in means was statistically significant. The overall mean was 2.91 Just below the mid point of the scale.

### **Ethics Requirements and Policies**

This section reports the findings on ethics course requirements and on policies concerning academic dishonesty. An ethics course requirement at the school or college/university level was reported by 63% of deans. Statistically significant differences existed between public and private schools and between private secular and religious schools. Just over half (51.1%) of the public schools required an ethics course compared to 81.3% of private schools. Of the private schools, 93.8% of the religious schools required an ethics course compared to 73.9% of the secular schools. Plans to increase the ethics requirement over the next three years were reported by 43.3% of deans, while 37.4% reported no such plans. Almost 20% said they did not know if the ethics requirement at their school would be increased over the next three years. These percentages did not vary by school characteristic.

Table 4 shows the percentages of the different business majors that have a formal requirement that ethics be covered in their courses, from highest to lowest percent. Accounting was the highest at just over 75%. Management was second at almost 69%. About two-thirds of marketing and finance programs had a formal ethics requirement. The bottom three were information systems at 42.9%, economics at 38.4%, and health care at only 12.4%.

Just under 90% of deans reported their business school has a written policy on academic dishonesty. The only statistically significant difference by school characteristic was whether the school had an honor code. Written policies were reported by 95.6% of schools with honor codes, compared to 83.1% of the schools without codes. Of the schools with written policies, 94.3% had a formal procedure in place for making faculty aware of the policy. Penalties for specific forms of dishonesty were included in the policies at 72% of the schools.

Deans were also asked how students are made aware of the school's student academic dishonesty policy. Inclusion in the student handbook was the most frequently used method, at 78.5%. Just over two-thirds require the policy to be included in course syllabi, but only 25% require instructors to discuss the policy in class. Discussion at student orientation and publishing on a web site were reported at 58.8% and 54.8%. The amount of variation by school characteristic was about what would be expected by chance.

### **Ethics Policy Administration**

Deans were asked how many formal complaints of student academic dishonesty were made at their business school during the 2005-06 academic year. Almost two-thirds (63.2%) said five or fewer complaints were made. Just over one-fourth (26.3%) said six to ten complaints were made. About ten percent reported over 10 complaints. The only statistically significant relationship was with the type of degree programs the school offered. Fewer complaints were reported at schools that had only undergraduate programs. Five or fewer complaints were reported by 80.6% of such schools, while 63% of schools offering bachelors' and masters' degrees and 40.6% of schools offering bachelors', masters' and doctoral degrees were in this category. Six to 10 complaints were reported by 12.9% of bachelors' only schools, compared to 27% that also offered masters' degrees and 43.8% that offered all three types of degrees. The schools reporting more than 10 complaints increased across the three types of programs offered from 6.5% to 10% to 15.6%.

When asked why deans believed faculty did not make more formal complaints against students involved in dishonest conduct, more than two-thirds (68.4%) of respondents said it was too time consuming. About another 40% (41.2%) believed that faculty refrained from making complaints out of sympathy for students, while another 28.2% believed faculty fear legal action. Only about 10% said the reason was that such charges reflect negatively on the school or faculty.

Very few students were expelled or suspended for academic dishonesty during the 2003-04 to 2004-06 period. Three or fewer such actions were reported by 95.3% of respondents. The number of observations in the other categories was so small valid statistical tests of relationship were not possible.

## Discussion

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is the large disparity between deans' perceptions of the level of student academic dishonesty at their schools and the level reported in most of the self-report studies. Seventy-eight percent of deans believed that fewer than 40% of their students participate in academic dishonesty, while only 6.8% believed the proportion to be in the 60 to 100% range, which is consistent with the levels reported in much of the literature. Furthermore, business deans appear to underestimate the level of student academic dishonesty in general, not just at their own schools. Almost two-thirds of the deans believed the level of dishonesty at their school was about the same as it was at the "typical" business school. This disparity between deans' perceptions and what is actually occurring might be explained by the nature of the dean's position. Many deans do not teach classes regularly, and are, therefore, somewhat detached from the day-to-day problems faced by classroom instructors. This conclusion is supported by the data on the types of schools where deans perceived dishonesty to be more of a problem. These types were colleges, as opposed to universities, religious schools, and schools offering only undergraduate degrees. These types of schools are presumably smaller schools where the dean might maintain closer contact with the teaching process and faculty. This finding suggests a need for better communication between deans and their teaching faculty. If deans are made more aware of the extent of the dishonesty problem, they might assign a higher priority to developing solutions to it.

A second important finding of this study is that business school deans do not perceive student academic dishonesty to be a very serious problem in their schools. Only 5.1% of responding deans said it was a very serious problem, while just under 30% said it was a slight problem or not at all a problem. This finding might be a result of deans' perceptions that the level of participation is fairly low at their schools. More awareness of the extent of the problem could increase perceptions of its seriousness.

Another factor that might explain deans' perceptions of the extent and seriousness of student academic dishonesty is that either there are few complaints being filed and serious disciplinary measures being handed

out relevant to the problem or information about these actions is not being communicated up to the dean's level. Almost two-thirds (63.2%) of the responding deans said five or fewer complaints about student academic dishonesty were filed at their business school during the 2005-2006 academic year. In addition, they reported three or fewer suspensions or expulsions for academic dishonesty over the 2003-2006 period. There is some evidence that deans might believe there is more dishonesty than is being reported. A little over two-thirds (68.4%) of the deans believed the time involved was the main reason more faculty do not file formal complaints. Investigations into how complaint processes can be streamlined without violating student rights seem to be in order.

The assumption is often made that one possible solution to the student academic dishonesty problem is to increase the ethics requirements of programs. For example, Iyer and Eastman (2006) found that business students did not cheat more than other students, contrary to what has usually been reported in the literature. They offer as a possible explanation for their finding that the AACSB mandates that ethics be taught as a fundamental requirement for program accreditation.

If this relationship between ethics requirements and behavior does in fact exist, our results indicate an opportunity for improvement, especially in public schools. Only about half of the public schools had a formal ethics requirement, compared to about 80% of private schools overall and 94% of the private religious schools. Furthermore, plans to increase the ethics requirements were limited. About 37% of respondents said their school had no such plans, while 20% did not know if such plans existed, again indicating a detachment of deans from the student dishonesty problem. These results did not vary by type of school. The existence of a formal ethics requirement showed considerable variation by major, ranging from about 75% for accounting to about 12% for health care. Implementation of a requirement at the school level would eliminate this wide disparity.

While almost 90% of schools had a written policy on student academic dishonesty, what is perhaps the most effective means of communicating the policy to students was not widely used. While about two-thirds of schools required the inclusion of the dishonesty policy in course syllabi, only about one-fourth required instructors to discuss the policy in class.

In summary, the results of this survey suggest several possible actions business schools might take to deal with the student academic dishonesty problem. The first is to increase the awareness of business deans of the problem, perhaps through better communication from faculty. Second, the possibility of streamlining the complaint process without impinging on student rights should be investigated. Third, there exists the opportunity to increase formal ethics requirements, especially in certain majors. Finally, better communication of school policy on student academic dishonesty appears to be possible, especially by requiring instructors to discuss the policy in class.

Table 1: Student Surveys on Academic Dishonesty

Legend for Chart:

A - Author(s)		
B - Year		
C - Population		
D - Rate(%)		

A	B	C
D		
Baird	1980	Undergrad, various majors
75.5		
Sierles,		

Hendrickx, and Circle	1980	Medical students
87.6, college 58.2, medical		
Singhal	1982	Undergrad, engineering
56.0		
Sisson, Todd-McMancillas	1984	Undergrad, engineering
56.0		
Haines, Diekhoff	1986	Undergrad, many business
54.1		
Stern, Havlicek	1986	Undergrads, major not given
82.0		
Tom, Borin	1988	Undergrads in marketing class
s 49.0		
Moffatt	1990	Undergrads, various majors
78.0		
Greene, Saxe	1992	Undergrads, major not given
81.0		
Sims	1993	MBA, when undergrad
91.0		
Brown	1995	Graduate business
81.2		
Brown, McInerny	2001	Undergrad mgt. majors
96.7		
Chapman, Lupton	2004	Undergrad business majors
88.7		
Brown, McInerny	2008	Undergrad mgt. majors
100.0		

**Table 2: Perceptions of Participation in Dishonest Practices at Dean's Own School**

Legend for Chart:

A - Characteristic

B - Rating: (1)

C - Rating: (2)

D - Rating: (3)

E - Rating: (4)

F - Rating: (5)

G - Mean

A	B	C
D	F	G
Participation level	> 20%	20%-39%
40%-59%	80%-100%	
14.9	44.8	33.3
5.7	1.1	1.85
Seriousness of problem (%)	Not at all	Slightly
Somewhat	Moderately	Very
17.0	5.1	24.4
48.3	5.1	3.24
Comared to other schools (%)	Much Lower	Somewhat Lower
Same	Somewhat Higher	Much Higher
63.8	6.3	28.7
1.1	0	3.40

Note: All three scales were coded 1 to 5, lowest to highest.

**Table 3: Perceptions of Reasons for Participation in Dishonest Practices at Own School**

Reason	Mean Rating[*]
To get high grade	3.85
Has time but does not study	3.77
Believes is low risk of getting caught	3.58
Does not have time to study	3.49
Feels no one hurt by behavior	3.48
Difficulty of material	3.44
Must do it to compete	3.25
Feels work is irrelevant	2.73



Feels instructor is poor or indifferent	2.65
Peer pressure	2.63
Is a challenge or thrill	2.11
Scale: 1 = not at all likely, 5 = very likely	

#### Table 4: Concentrations with Formal Ethics Requirements

Concentration	Percent
Accounting	75.1
Management	68.9
Marketing	64.4
Finance	62.7
Information systems	42.9
Economics	38.4
Health care	12.4

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