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05.43 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY/FACULTY

An honor code among faculty members

Most *LPR* readers are familiar with Bill Taylor's "A Letter to My students," setting forth a brilliant exposition of the connection between academic integrity, higher learning, and the shared responsibilities of teachers and students. The Letter can be found at:

http://www.jmu.edu/honor/wm_library/Letter%20To%20My%20Students.htm

Bill Taylor is a retired Professor of Political Science at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines, Illinois. We recently completed an e-mail interview with him for an upcoming issue of *Synthesis: Law and Policy in Higher Education*. During the course of the interview we learned that Bill has been working on another project, described as "an honor code among faculty members." He wrote us that:

"The idea is to get an increasing number of faculty to commit themselves to talk about academic integrity and its importance in their discipline, and to then model integrity in their teaching. This is based on my reading of one part of Don [McCabe's] research that seems to suggest that students cheat less often if they respect their teacher and that teacher demonstrates a concern for academic integrity . . . [The document] grows out of my letter [to students], but the list of behaviors includes recommendations that we received from faculty across the disciplines that are specific to their circumstances."

Bill graciously permitted us to share the proposed faculty "honor code" with you. The full text follows:

PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN ACADEMIC LIFE AND BEYOND

We faculty members at Oakton Community College, sharing a commitment to academic integrity, acknowledge that one of our professional responsibilities is to model the kind of integrity we wish our students to develop. By letting them know that the norms of academic integrity apply every bit as much to us as they do to them, and then living up to those standards, we can bear witness to the values that motivate us as professionals. In so doing, we believe we will foster the growth of integrity in the lives of our students.

To that end, we pledge to conduct our professional lives in accordance with the standards of behavior spelled out below in the list of strategies for promoting academic integrity, choosing from that list those practices that best fit our teaching style and the circumstances under which we teach. We also pledge to talk with our students about our commitment to academic integrity, letting them know what they can expect from us and what we expect from them.

Strategies for Promoting Academic Integrity

I. When Preparing a Course

With regard to preparing a course, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by:

- giving careful consideration to the syllabus to make sure it is updated to reflect the latest scholarship and the best available texts,
- spelling out clearly in the syllabus the nature of the work required of the students, the criteria for grading, as well as any expectations s/he might have of the them,
- respecting copyrights, trademarks, and patents (on software, for example), and
- planning to talk about what integrity requires of the students as each new task occurs (exams, written or lab assignments, group work, oral presentations...).

II. At the Beginning of the Semester

At the beginning of the semester, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by:

- providing the students with a syllabus that clearly spells out course requirements, teacher expectations, and the grading process, and
- discussing why s/he is committed to academic integrity and why integrity is important for the discipline, perhaps including examples of how professionals in the discipline have violated those principles, and the consequences of those violations.

III. When Preparing for Class

With regard to preparing for class, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by doing the things necessary to make the class a worthwhile educational experience for the students. This can be done by:

- staying up to date on recent scholarship and trends in the discipline, as well as the current issues,
 - giving credit to his or her sources,
 - rereading the assigned text materials, and/or working out problems ahead of time, in preparation for class,
 - clarifying information s/he might not be clear about,
 - recognizing that some subjects may be uncomfortable for some students and trying to find ways to deal with those issues in a direct, constructive manner,
 - preparing the class with an eye toward what is current today (that is, not simply relying on past notes), and
 - creating opportunities for intellectual growth rather than devoting class time to a recitation of facts or can
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learn for themselves by reading the text.

IV. In Class

With regard to class sessions, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by taking her/his students seriously and treating them with respect. This can be done by:

- showing up for all class sessions, unless s/he's simply unable to do so,
 - coming to class on time, and for the most part, not ending the class early or keeping the class late,
 - not wasting class time, but using it well to fulfill the objectives of the course,
 - fostering and expecting mutual respect among the students and creating a safe environment in the classroom,
 - talking about and modeling for students file sharing and downloading protocols, as well as respect for software licensing rights,
 - doing his or her best to answer the students' questions, or arrange to do so outside of class,
 - being especially careful when a student asks what might be considered a "dumb" question, or one that was just answered,
 - honestly acknowledging when s/he doesn't have an answer or doesn't know something, and then going out and getting an answer by the next class,
 - making clear when s/he's expressing an opinion, and not imposing on the student her or his views on controversial issues,
 - respecting the views the students express and not making fun of the students or their views,
 - treating all students the same and not playing favorites in applying the policies spelled out in the syllabus,
 - both encouraging the students, and giving each of them an equal opportunity, to participate in class discussions,
 - containing those students whose enthusiasm for participating in the discussion makes it difficult for others to participate,
 - discussing discipline-related ethical dilemmas that the teacher has faced and how s/he dealt with them,
 - engaging in an ongoing process of self-evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching methods and whether students are learning from those methods,
 - not allowing students to ridicule other students or their ideas,
 - not talking with students about other students or faculty members,
 - adequately preparing students to do the class assignment or activity,
 - providing equal opportunity and treatment for all students, such as not modifying syllabus requirements unless willing to do so for all students,
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encouraging the students to ask her or him and not their classmates for help with assignments and laboratories,

working to identify students who look as though they may not have the study skills and/or study habits necessary to succeed without cheating, and either working with them to help them develop those skills and habits, or taking them to the Learning Center where they can get help, and

knowing what his or her students are capable of doing by watching them work in laboratory situations.

V. With Regards to Student Contact Outside of Class

With regard to being available to students outside of class, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by:

being available during office hours or at arranged times to work with students on an individual basis, and

returning calls and emails in a timely fashion.

VI. With Regard to Exams

With regard to exams, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by:

doing his or her best during class time, and through appropriate and meaningful out-of-class assignments, to prepare the students for the exams,

developing exam questions that will be a meaningful test not only of the course content, but also of the student's ability to express and defend intelligent judgments about that content,

making clear what constitutes a violation of academic integrity with regard to exams,

setting up the classroom in such a way that it reduces the chances of cheating,

carefully monitoring all exams to ensure fairness and to ensure that honest students will not feel disadvantaged by other students who might choose to cheat if given the opportunity,

being consistent in his or her policy regarding makeup exams,

being aware of the fatigue factor when grading exams, and giving due and careful consideration to exam answers when evaluating them and assigning a grade.

VII. With Regard to Written Assignments

With regard to written assignments, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by:

devising meaningful assignments that grow out of and further the work done in the classroom,

making clear what constitutes a violation of academic integrity with regards to written assignments (i.e., what constitutes "doing your own work"),

providing students with a clear written description of all written assignments so they know what is expected of them and what the teacher will be looking for when grading them,

providing students with samples of well-written assignments,

- finding out if students know how to do the assignment, and if not, teaching them how to do so,
- looking at the students' work at the various stages of a long term assignment,
- giving due and careful consideration to the papers when evaluating them and assigning a grade,
- returning assignments in a timely fashion, and
- confronting students whom s/he suspects of having plagiarized or in other ways not handed in work that is entirely their own.

VIII. With Regard to Assigning Final Grades

With regard to assigning the grade the student earned, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by:

- having, and adhering to, a clear process and set of criteria for grading spelled out in the syllabus,
- helping students know throughout the course of the semester what grade they are earning,
- carefully weighing all of the student's grades during the course, as well as the other factors that affect the final grade as spelled out in the syllabus, before assigning a final grade, and
- giving respectful consideration to students who question the grade they received.

IX. With Regard to Academic Integrity Violations

With regard to possible academic integrity violations on the part of students, a faculty member can promote academic integrity by:

- not overlooking a possible violation, but taking the time and making the effort to determine if a violation did occur,
- not violating the confidentiality of students who bring information about academic integrity violations, and
- being familiar with and following the College's policy on dealing with academic integrity violations.

Editor's note:

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