



# INSIDE HIGHER ED

## BEST PRACTICES AND RECENT TRENDS IN MAINTAINING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

November 2022

In the following report, Hanover provides an examination and discussion of the best practices and recent trends for maintaining academic integrity in higher educational institutions, focusing specifically on policy action that best supports integrity in graduate business schools.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*Based on an analysis of the literature on academic integrity, Hanover recommends that the institution:*



### **FORM A DIVERSE COMMITTEE REPRESENTING STAKEHOLDERS FROM STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND THE ADMINISTRATION.**

The literature consistently demonstrates that the key to success in any venture related to academic integrity is to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are brought into the effort. Students in particular should be sought for their input on and involvement in policy revision efforts. Developing a committee that adequately represents their interests, alongside faculty (the first line of defense against dishonesty), administrators, and others such as accessibility officers and conduct officers will give any policy changes the highest chance of success. This committee should begin its efforts by surveying the institutional community to determine what they believe is working in the current policy and what may need to be addressed in any revisions.



### **EXPLORE FURTHER WAYS OF ENGAGING STUDENTS IN MAINTAINING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.**

Building a culture of integrity is touted in much of the literature as an essential corollary to policy action—especially in business schools, where the prevalence of dishonesty is higher than in other academic units. Experts recommend a variety of engagement possibilities including those recommended above relating to policy revision. Further possibilities the institution may wish to explore include annual integrity events, contests, awards, training, and curricular integration. It may also examine new pedagogical approaches surrounding dealing with integrity infractions that allow students greater opportunities to learn from their mistakes, such as implementing a restorative policy rather than a zero-tolerance policy.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Business schools and business students have a higher incidence of academic dishonesty than other disciplines.** Several studies have shown that business students at all academic levels are more likely to engage in dishonest practices and to view these practices as acceptable. By one metric, 47 percent of non-business graduate students admitted to cheating during their studies while 56 percent of business graduate students did so.

**Even so, some data suggests that dishonest practice declines with age—though dishonest practice can follow graduates into their post-college careers.** Data shows that the older a student is, the less likely they are to commit academically dishonest acts. This is generally in line with other studies that show that graduate students cheat less than undergraduates. Even so, those students that do cheat during their studies—whether undergraduate or graduate—are much more likely to embrace dishonest business practices post-graduation.

**While there are significant challenges to addressing academic dishonesty in online classrooms, there are several strategies faculty can employ.** Novel technologies, answer-sharing websites, contract cheating, and increased digital communication all pose new threats to integrity in online spaces. Some of these issues, however, can be addressed at the administrative level, while others can be overcome through faculty diligence. Redesigning large assignments to be spaced out throughout the semester as an incremental process, for example, makes it more difficult for students to find or purchase answers online.

**Overall, in both prevention and policy changes, ensuring student, faculty, and other stakeholders' investment in the process is essential to fostering a culture of integrity on campus.** The literature is clear on the fact that involving students in the policy planning process and ensuring an adequate awareness and training in integrity policies help students better follow honor codes and create a culture where dishonest actions seem unthinkable to students.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

## METHODOLOGY

The institution is currently revising and updating its academic honor policy at an institutional level. Its business school has partnered with Hanover Research (Hanover) to explore how best it can contribute to this effort. Hanover thus undertook a review of the literature to determine the current best practices surrounding promoting, maintaining, and developing policy for academic integrity, specifically in graduate business schools. The goal of this study is to better inform the client as it reviews and revises its own school-level policies around integrity.





## CASE STUDY INSTITUTIONS

University of Minnesota—Twin Cities

University of California—San Diego

Western Carolina University

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

-  What are emerging trends, innovations, and best practices that graduate education schools have implemented to enhance and maintain academic integrity?
-  What is student involvement in developing, implementing, and maintaining academic honor policies?
-  How do institutions ensure the application of an academic honor policy?
-  What unique challenges to academic integrity exist in online learning and how have institutions adapted their policies to them?

# BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

*A Review of the Difficulties with Maintaining Academic Integrity and the Need to Do So*

# SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

## ANALYSIS

Academic dishonesty is a significant challenge in academia of which students may lack awareness. Student belief in what constitutes academic dishonesty varies, with many not realizing that certain “[passive actions](#)”—such as failing to report cheating when they see it or telling someone what was on an exam they have not yet taken—were just as dishonest as copying answers. This lack of awareness and subsequent engagement in dishonest practices can lead to dishonesty later in life in the corporate world. While most studies examine undergraduate students, [studies have found](#) that the higher the academic degree, the less tolerant students are of academic dishonesty.

## FAST FACTS

### Types of Dishonesty

Active actions, such as copying answers from a classmate	Passive actions, such as using a false excuse to delay an exam or assignment
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### Belief that an Action is Dishonest

Students more regularly believe that active actions are “intentionally dishonest”	Passive actions are less commonly viewed as “intentionally dishonest”
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### Likelihood of Cheating

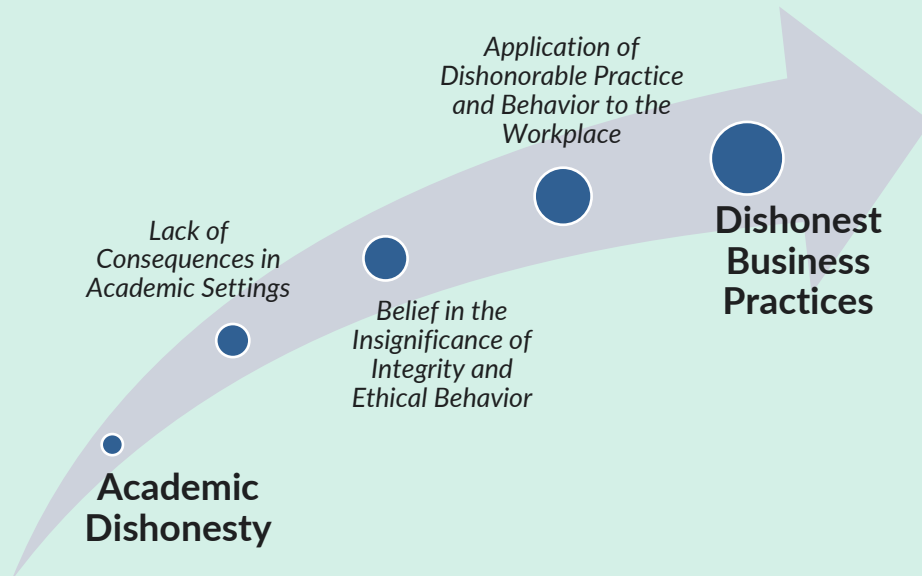
Males, students in the first few years of college, isolated students, and lower GPA students are more likely to cheat	Females, non-athletes, non-Greek-Life students, high GPA students, and self-described “honest” students are less likely to cheat
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Source: [Stowe et al., 2018](#)



## IMPACTS POST-GRADUATION

While many students—and even faculty—may consider academic dishonesty to be an issue that only impacts their educational experiences, studies have shown a correlation between students’ acceptance of dishonesty in education and their likelihood to accept and commit dishonesty in the workplace post-graduation. [One such study](#) performed a wide literature review of all studies looking at the connection between academic and workplace dishonesty. The results found that “academic dishonesty is a threat to both immediate educational quality and sustained professional excellence.” Surveys across multiple studies found that students who were engaged in dishonest practices during their education tended to be more likely to engage in dishonest practices in the workplace. Thus, academic institutions should strive to maintain academic integrity for both their own sake and the sake of their students and communities post-graduation.



# ONLINE CONSIDERATIONS

## ANALYSIS

While preventing academic dishonesty in any classroom can be a challenge, online learning has given students new ways to cheat. These new techniques are not entirely unprecedented; test banks, smuggling in notes, and plagiarism are familiar issues in academia. But online tools and the ease of communication—to say nothing of the prevalence of wearable and disguisable technology—have made them much more difficult to identify. It is thus not surprising that [studies have shown](#) that students in both traditional and online courses tend to cheat more frequently in online courses than in traditional courses—even so, students who only take online courses report less cheating overall than other students. These general trends may not hold for graduate students. Notably, however, the same survey found that [graduate students](#) perceived significantly less difference in dishonesty between online and in-person class formats. The pandemic has only increased these problems. According to [a report from ProctorU](#), an online proctoring service, confirmed instances of cheating went up by nearly 1,400 percent, from 0.5 percent of all exams in the months before the pandemic to 6.6 percent in April 2022. Institutions need to be aware of and prepared to address these difficulties as online learning increases.

## STUDENT AND FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON ONLINE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY



A [2019 survey](#) found that student and faculty perspectives on the challenges online learning pose for academic integrity are relatively in line. 63 percent of students and 56 percent of faculty believed cheating and plagiarism were bigger issues online than in-person. This belief was tempered, however, for respondents with online teaching or online learning experience. Business faculty were more likely than any other faculty to believe that academic dishonesty was a larger issue online than in person.

## WAYS STUDENTS CHEAT IN ONLINE COURSES

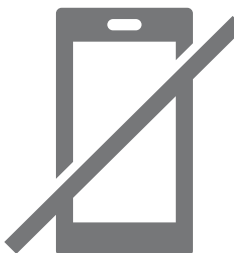


### Group Chats and Digital Conversations

- Most institutions now utilize an LMS system that allows students to send emails to their peers. Some students have used this feature to invite some or all of their classmates to a [group chat](#) through external apps like GroupMe or WhatsApp. While the motivation to do so can initially be good (i.e., to seek assistance with an assignment or connect with peers), this space can easily turn into a forum for answer sharing and other cheating.

### Websites, Plagiarism, and Contract Cheating

- Online exams and assignments allow students to search for answers and plagiarize them. While tools like Turn It In have helped catch directly-matching texts, students have adapted to this new reality. [Paraphrasing](#), whether through [online tools](#) or their own efforts, can trick these tools and make them miss plagiarism. Similarly, [other sites](#) such as Course Hero or [Quizlet](#), have allowed students to share and upload answers for other students to memorize and copy—or even purchase complete papers through [contract cheating](#).



### Novel Technology

- In addition to digital dishonesty in online courses, technology has allowed students to cheat in traditional courses as well. While most faculty are familiar with (and prevent) students (from) using laptops or cell phones, [other technology](#)—such as online-capable pens, micro-earbuds, and other novel wearable technology—can allow students to access notes or share information during exams and assessments in class.

# BUSINESS SCHOOL CONSIDERATIONS

## ANALYSIS

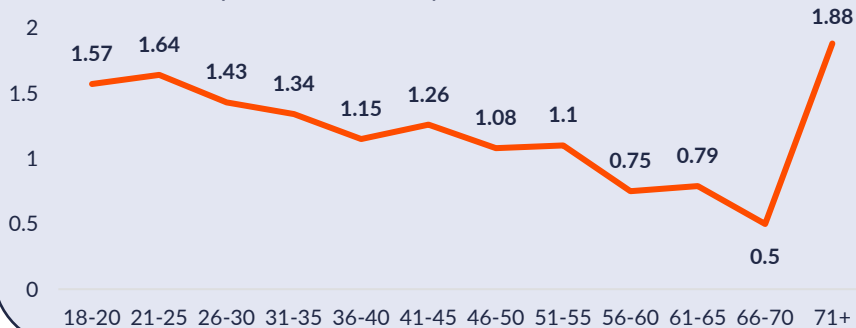
In general, business students are more likely to engage in academically dishonest behavior. Compared to non-business students, both undergraduate and graduate business students are more likely to engage in both active and passive dishonest behaviors. Moreover, business students have grown increasingly comfortable with dishonesty as time has gone on. This academic dishonesty has significant ramifications in the business world post-graduation.

However, adult learners—the most significant demographic for graduate studies—are less likely to engage in dishonest behaviors than younger, traditional-aged students.

## ADULT LEARNERS



A recent survey of students from the University of Maryland found that adult learners across all study levels—both undergraduate and graduate—proved less likely to engage in dishonest practices than traditional students. The study found a significant decline (below) in the average number of dishonest practices students admitted to as their age increased (with the notable exception of the elderly).



## BUSINESS SCHOOL TRENDS



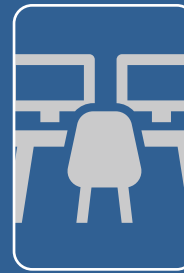
### Prominence

- Studies have consistently shown that business students are more likely to cheat during their studies.
- Data from an older study shows that, while 47 percent of non-business graduate students admitted to cheating during their studies, 56 percent of business graduate students did so.



### Increasing Acceptance

- Two studies conducted in 2006 and 2016 reveal that business students have grown more accepting of cheating as time has gone on.
- Not only do students engage in more academically dishonest behavior than they did in 2006, but they see all cheating as less severe than previous generations of students and are more likely to accept justifications for cheating.



### Post-Graduation

- Like academic dishonesty in other majors, studies have shown that dishonest practices in business schools have “implications for later ethical behaviors in business contexts.”
- Business students who are more tolerant of cheating or other dishonest practices are “significantly more likely to be tolerant toward dishonest work place practices.”



# STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION

*Institutional- and Classroom-Level Policies for  
Mitigating Academic Dishonesty*

## ANALYSIS

A blend of specific classroom management approaches, pedagogical and curricular design methods, and culture change efforts can help minimize dishonest behaviors. Being aware of the diverse ways that students attempt to be dishonest intentionally is a necessary first step. This can help instructors and administrators effectively block or monitor websites and design assignments that are difficult to plagiarize or purchase. Some students, however, do not intentionally break codes, and dedicated training, especially in introductory graduate school courses, can help nip any negative habits in the bud. Finally, specific policies can be combined with “soft policies” to fuel cultural transformation and make dishonesty unthinkable for students.

## BUSINESS SCHOOL-SPECIFIC STUDIES



### Culture Change

- Some experts have advocated for a [culture-based approach](#) to academic integrity in business schools. These scholars argue that both *Formal Systems* (such as leadership, policies, and trainings) and *Informal Systems* (role models, community norms, rituals, and language) must work together to build a culture that finds dishonesty unthinkable, ensuring student investment in integrity—an [integral component](#) to a culture's success.



### Pedagogical Approaches

- Research shows that [incorporating integrity training](#) into introductory MBA courses can help minimize and prevent dishonest behavior among business students. This includes [strong and detailed feedback](#) from faculty, though students believed that [dedicated training](#) would be more useful for them. Training in when to cite sources, how to format them, and how to properly synthesize information was identified as most helpful.

## ONLINE PREVENTION METHODS

Online learning presents unique challenges for maintaining academic integrity. There are several methods instructors and administrators can use, however, to try to keep students honest. In addition to those below, [experts recommend](#) offering multiple assignment types, requiring students to explain their process, using [monitoring software](#) during exams, and building [larger randomized question banks](#).

### Dishonest Action

Group Chats and Digital Conversations

### Prevention Method

LMS Settings and Discussion Boards

- Many students initially pursue group chats for legitimate reasons: they need a space to ask questions and find answers. [Dedicated message boards](#) on the LMS that the instructor checks regularly can serve as an alternative. Many LMSs also have the option to hide the course roster from the public, which can prevent students from easily finding the contact information of all their classmates.

### Content-Sharing Websites

Regular Content Searches

- [Experts recommend](#) that faculty or department administrators search the websites where answers have been shared once a month for course, instructor, or institutional names and, if materials are found, contact the website to have them removed. The website may also provide the contact information of the uploader, allowing the institution to take disciplinary action against students.

### Plagiarism and Contract Cheating

Break Up Large Assignments

- [Scaffolding assignments](#) and large papers can help not only disincentivize students from plagiarizing or purchasing papers, but also make it more difficult for them to do so. Having students begin with topics, then move to annotated bibliographies, and then move on to first drafts, and so on, makes the assignment more manageable and makes it harder to find direct answers for each phase online.

### Novel Technology

Specificity and Awareness

- The large number of new technological options available to would-be cheaters can be difficult for faculty to manage during exams. The first step to prevent their usage is to be aware of them and specifically tell students to put them away before exams. For [smart watches](#), for example, explicitly mentioning that students must remove watches and waiting to hand out exam materials until all items have been removed from the desk can help minimize opportunities for cheating.

# IMPROVING SUCCESS CHANCES

## ANALYSIS

Most methods to improve the success of integrity initiatives revolve around ensuring stakeholder investment. Experts agree that students should be involved in new academic integrity initiatives at every step of the way to give them a sense of ownership over the new policies and help enculturate the institution's ideals. Similarly, as the first line of defense against academic dishonesty, faculty must be brought on board early and continually engaged with the policy and new initiatives. Dedicated trainings can go a long way to building a sense of investment and support among faculty.

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

INFORM      CONSULT      INVOLVE      PARTNER      CONTROL



Research has shown that getting students **involved as partners** in new institutional initiatives, including in academic integrity, increases the chances these initiatives succeed. Students must first be **informed** of the problem, then they should be **consulted** to determine their thoughts on how to address it. Students should be **involved** directly in every step of the planning process and should be made **partners** in any resulting efforts. Finally, students should gain **control** over final decisions. An experiment in applying this method to a **new graduate-focused Academic Integrity Week** saw great success not only in getting graduate students involved, but also in building a sense of ownership and expanding student understanding of academic integrity principles.

## NOVEL APPROACHES

In addition to the methods profiled here and in the previous slides, some research shows other novel approaches, linked below.



Experiential Learning



Tutorial-Based Education



Values-Based Approach to Integrity

## FACULTY TRAINING

As necessary components of building a culture of integrity on campus, one study examined ways to boost faculty investment in and understanding of academic integrity specifically through trainings during an annual Academic Integrity Week. The study recommends the following approaches to faculty training.



*Develop educational opportunities about topics relevant to faculty members*



*Identify local champions of academic integrity*



*Consider ways to promote academic integrity, not only prevent academic dishonesty*



*Consider timing and delivery that is most appropriate for the faculty audience*



*Involve the entire campus community in programming*

Source: [Pethrick, 2020](#)

# REVISING POLICIES

*Expert Guidance on How to Revise Current Integrity Policies*

# REVISION PROCESS

Maintaining a strong and updated Academic Integrity institutional policy is [essential to promoting integrity](#) on campus. Experts recommend a six-step process for Academic Integrity policy revision. Essential to the whole process is ensuring that the entirety of the campus community feels invested in the process—including students.

## Step 1

- **Review Current Academic Integrity Policy**
  - *Does it reflect values? Is it fair? Is it understandable?*
  - *Survey and poll faculty, staff, and students about what is working and what is not.*

## Step 2

- **Gather Stakeholders**
  - *These stakeholders should be as broad as possible, representing faculty, administration, conduct officers, accessibility officers, students, and any other unit that supports teaching and learning*
  - *Preliminary discussions about what needs to be addressed and what does and does not work should happen in this large group. Goals should be established.*

## Step 3

- **Establish a Writing Committee**
  - *This should be a more pared-down group than the Stakeholder Group, ideally including “Two or three faculty members, an engaged student, a conduct officer, a representative of upper administration, and a lawyer or someone with policy-writing experience.”*
  - *Ensure deadlines are established and allow the Committee to begin with the current policy if its structure is found to be strong*

## Step 4

- **Return to Stakeholders**
  - *Bring drafts back to the Stakeholders for input to ensure the broader community feels invested*
  - *Make any necessary changes or alterations*

## Step 5

- **Implement the Policy**
  - *Once all Stakeholders are in agreement, bring the new policy to legal for markups and approval before bringing the policy to the Board or the Regents for final approval and implementation*
  - *Adequately advertise the new policy to improve faculty buy-in and ensure that all students—not just those who break the rules—are aware of the changes and policy*

## Step 6

- **Follow-Up**
  - *Keep track of how the implementation of the policy goes and monitor student, staff, and faculty feedback*
  - *Be ready to revise the policy further in the future as necessary*

Adapted from the [International Center for Academic Integrity](#)

# REVISION CONSIDERATIONS

## What Response Model Should an Institution Use?

### Zero-Tolerance

- A student is expelled for their first reported policy violation
- For ethical implementation, zero-tolerance must be advertised heavily and constantly so students know about it
- **Benefits**
  - General deterrence to all students
  - Specific deterrence to prevent recidivism
- **Drawbacks**
  - May not be the most ethical system as students from lower social statuses are most likely to be caught
  - Does not allow for second chances and learning from mistakes

### Restorative Model

- Restorative policies do not have traditional punishments (such as expulsion, failing grades, or suspension), but rather seek to have students both learn from their mistakes and give back to their academic community
- Students admit the wrongdoing and then meet with a committee to determine how best to make restitution, generally through a remedial assignment and volunteering
- **Benefits**
  - Students can learn from their mistakes and remain part of the academic community
- **Drawbacks**
  - Some worry that without specific punishments, this system may incentivize recidivism

Source: [The International Center for Academic Integrity](#)

## WHO SHOULD FACILITATE THE RESOLUTION OF VIOLATIONS?

While faculty are generally the “first line of defense” against dishonesty through reporting, relying solely on them can lead to inconsistent implementation of punishment and policy. Some faculty may be lenient, and some may be harsh—whether to everyone or to specific students.

Faculty

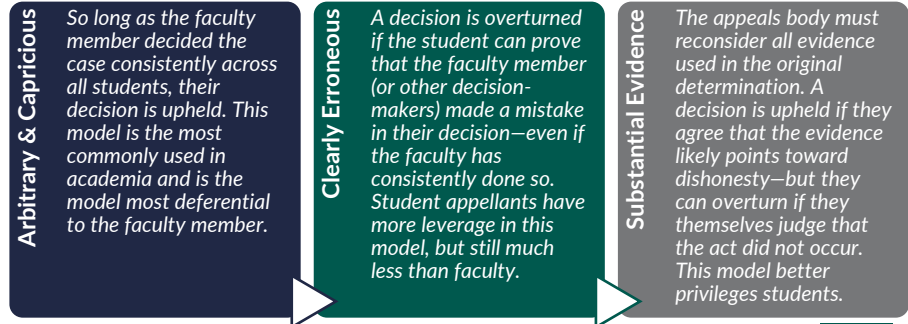
Some institutions have every case of dishonesty go through a “neutral third party” facilitator. These not only help provide for dialogue between students and faculty, but they ensure the policy is implemented consistently. Even so, this requires more resources, staffing, and training—and faculty may be frustrated by the process and the possibility of their judgments being overruled.

Independent Facilitators

Source: [The International Center for Academic Integrity](#)

## WHAT APPEALS MODEL WILL YOU USE?

Ensuring a defined and adequate due process model for appeals is integral to maintaining a legal and equitable Academic Integrity policy. [Experts identify](#) three possible models to follow, shown below from least intensive to most. While models deferential to faculty are most common, some critics argue that the standards of review should be raised to make appeals more reasonable for students.



# SPOTLIGHT INSTITUTIONS

## ANALYSIS

Several institutions throughout the United States provide helpful examples for key considerations in revising academic integrity policies. These range from the actual steps involved in the revision and the recommendations reached, as at Western Carolina University, to the way an institution can consider different forms of response to academic integrity, such as the restoration-focused AIM program at the University of Minnesota. The exemplary outreach efforts at the University of California – San Diego are also profiled to outline ways an institution can consider raising awareness around academic integrity, an integral component of improving honesty in the campus community. These institutions were chosen as a complement to the concurrent benchmarking report Hanover has prepared on the subject.



### REVISION SPOTLIGHT

*Western Carolina University*



While specific studies of the process and outcomes of revising an academic integrity policy were difficult to track, Western Carolina University has made public a [2019 report](#) from its Academic Integrity Task Force. This report provides a helpful window into the process other institutions have undergone in revising their policies. The impetus for the revision came from the student government which passed a resolution in 2017 requesting that the university update its policies and more adequately train faculty to avoid test banks and ensure integrity in their classrooms. The result of the request was the creation in 2018 of a 13-member taskforce to examine and redesign the integrity policy, consisting of administrators, faculty, and students. The report lays out the problems of academic dishonesty and gives key recommendations for the institution to provide faculty training, revise and heavily advertise the integrity policy in various ways, and partner with external proctors for online testing.



### RESTORATIVE SPOTLIGHT

*University of Minnesota—Twin Cities*



The University of Minnesota's [Academic Integrity Matters](#) (AIM) program provides an excellent example of a policy that revolves around restorative justice rather than simple zero-tolerance. As long as a student has not had prior offenses and is “not subject to additional sanctions such as probation,” they are eligible for the program. The student meets with a [volunteer group](#) composed of faculty, instructors, and students to [discuss](#) what happened during the confessed incident and develop “a plan for the student to repair the harm that their actions caused.” This can include workshops, classes, or other activities. If a student fully completes the plan, their record for the incident becomes “non-disciplinary”—but if they fail to complete it, the disciplinary record is maintained.



### ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

*University of California—San Diego*



UC San Diego's Academic Integrity Office hosts a variety of events throughout the year to engage the campus community with academic integrity more directly, an approach that [experts agree](#) is essential to the success of academic integrity on campus. These include an annual [Integrity Awareness Week](#) which includes “events, workshops, and resources with the goal of bringing awareness to integrity,” such as a heightened awareness of the dangers of contract cheating. San Diego also hosts [contests](#) surrounding integrity, like the annual Excel with Integrity Art Contest, to increase student and faculty engagement. Finally, San Diego also hosts the annual [UC San Diego Integrity Awards](#) to “recognize campus community members who have made substantial contributions to academic, research and professional integrity”.

