

Chapter 15

Technology–Infused Education and Academic Integrity: Are They Compatible?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the challenges of maintaining academic integrity in a technology-infused learning environment. The authors review recent findings from a qualitative study of students' views of academic integrity and the effect of technology on students' perceptions of ethical behavior in the online environment within the context of the earlier study which forms the core of the chapter (Cole, Swartz, & Shelley, 2014). Of the 42 graduate students participating in the qualitative study, all responded that ethical behavior should be equal if not higher in the online environment. These students also felt that while technology could facilitate dishonest behavior, it could also provide instructors with the tools to mitigate such behavior. These results are in contrast with those from the earlier studies in which students accepted that the differences in the two learning environments allowed for a more fluid, if not a lower, standard of behavior in the online environment.

INTRODUCTION

The question at the heart of this chapter is whether or not students can be expected to treat expectations of academic honesty the same in the online and onground environments, given that technology has reshaped the educational landscape (Chertok, Barnes, & Gilleland, 2014). Results from the authors' research from 2010 to 2016 on academic integrity in the learning environment indicate that students, graduate

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as well as undergraduate level students, do believe that technology has changed how one should be able to conduct research and to investigate issues proposed by instructors. When asked if the standards for academic integrity should be different in the online and onground environments, graduate students in the 2016 study said “no.” They were also asked how they thought technology affected academic integrity. To some extent, their responses were in contrast to the student responses to the earlier surveys. The students in the most recent study acknowledged that technology afforded more opportunities to cheat, but at the same time, it/technology provided instructors with more tools to combat cheating.

In the following sections, the authors elaborate on the findings from the qualitative study and present the results of the earlier surveys examining business students’ perceptions of academic integrity and the role of technology in e-learning.

BACKGROUND

In the last decade, there have been a number of studies of academic dishonesty (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001; Ghaffari, 2009), the prevalence of plagiarism in academia (Thomas & Sassi, 2011) and the frustration instructors and administrators face in trying to foster a culture of academic integrity in their schools (McCabe & Pavela, 2000; Kidwell, Wozniak, & Laurel, 2003). Faculty members have been surveyed (McNabb & Olmstead, 2009). Students have been surveyed (Cole, Shelley, & Swartz, 2013; Thakkar & Weisfeld-Spolter, 2012; Miller, Shoptaugh, & Wooldridge, 2011). In a broader discussion of the components of academic integrity, Hineman (2002) considered the intersection of ethics and academic integrity with technology, specifically with regard to the internet and the challenges posed by student use and misuse.

Studies of students’ use of technology in the classroom and online show a growing reliance on the internet and other Web 2.0 technologies to master course material (Cole, Swartz, & Shelley, 2013). Huang and Nakazawa (2010) found that certain Web 2.0 technologies assist student learning by facilitating access to others in the course, including the instructor. Some might argue that this is but the beginning as new technologies emerge and become integrated into the learning environment (Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009; Kerner & Gunderson, 2012; Otte, Gold, Gorges, Smith, & Stein, 2012; Baggett & Williams, 2012).

How does technology impact academic integrity in online courses and in the classroom? Conflicting results have been reported when online learning platforms have been compared with traditional classroom settings. While online learning has been said to be ripe for cheating, Grijalva, Kerkvliet, and Nowell (2006) found no evidence that academic dishonesty was any more pervasive online than it was in the classroom. McNabb and Olmstead’s (2009) study of faculty beliefs about academic integrity online and in the classroom had similar findings. Faculty members surveyed said that they believed that there was no difference in the amount or nature of academic dishonesty in the two environments.

Chertok, Barnes, and Gilleland (2014) maintain that the continuing advances in technology contribute to academic dishonesty because they create new modes and avenues of cheating. They found that it is crucial that educators and their institutions educate students on what is and is not acceptable in a culture of academic integrity in order to change student attitudes and actions.

Eshet, Peled, and Grinautski (2012), whose focus was on student motivation, assert that students in classroom courses have more motivation to cheat than students in online courses. In their study of nursing students enrolled in online and classroom-based programs, Hart and Morgan (2010) found higher levels

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