To: University of Maryland Faculty and Staff  
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Date: August 2, 2018  
Subject: Report on Academic Integrity

Annually, the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) gathers and shares information with relevant stakeholders regarding the state of academic integrity on campus. This document serves to provide academic departments with statistical analysis of annual and trend data, and proposed solutions, which further involve the University community in the implementation of successful prevention efforts around academic dishonesty. This report will discuss the renovation of the College Academic Liaison Program and will also offer recommendations to those providing instruction in courses on ways to mitigate misconduct and promote academic integrity on all assignments and exams.

**College Academic Liaison Program**

In discussions with University faculty, administrators, and colleagues at peer institutions, it is evident that cultivating a strong academic integrity program requires “resident experts” in colleges and academic departments. These experts can be utilized as a resource for faculty within those units to offer guidance on how to address academic misconduct in a given course. Best practices show a strong correlation between knowledgeable and engaged instructors working with conduct administrators minimizes the occurrence and severity of academic dishonesty exhibited by students.

OSC requests each college designate at least one person from each college to serve as a liaison to OSC to:

- Be trained by OSC in the Academic Misconduct Process
- Be consistently informed of academic misconduct referred from their respective college
- Receive updates and information from OSC on latest trends and practices
- Provide college-specific information on how to promote academic integrity

While this may add to the responsibilities of staff in your colleges, we expect this to minimize the number and severity of academic misconduct matters that we experience on campus. There are already many individuals who serve in this role for their colleges or departments in an unofficial capacity. Our plan is to formalize this arrangement to ensure consistent treatment of referrals and sound interpretation of the Code of Academic Integrity. By August 13, OSC will be in contact with college deans and their staff to select a liaison.
Trends in Academic Misconduct

The number of instances of academic misconduct referred to OSC regarding the use of technology in an improper manner increased during the 2017-2018 academic year. Below are some of the more prevalent issues and recommendations to address them:

1. Group Chatting Applications
   a. Problem: There are numerous web- and smartphone-based applications students use to discuss course material and share information. We have learned that is common for entire classes to be in a single group chat. Applications like WhatsApp, GroupMe, and WeChat are easily accessible and used for many purposes, including academic misconduct. OSC adjudicated issues of cheating, attempted cheating, and facilitation of academic dishonesty (students providing answers or course materials) via group chatting.
   b. Recommendations: Banning of these applications in an academic setting is impractical and violates students’ rights. However, it is important to be aware they exist and to have discussions with your students as to how they can be used constructively through the course of the semester. If you think group chats would be helpful for your course, then encourage your TAs to initiate and monitor their use. Include information in your syllabus and in class discussions about this practice.

2. Clicker Applications
   a. Problem: Physical “clickers” were once commonplace in classrooms. However, smartphone applications like Top Hat and Socrative allow students to participate in class-wide polls from the lectures. We have seen many situations where students are participating in these polls without attending lectures. Such behavior leads to cheating and fabrication (falsely attending class).
   b. Recommendations: Give clear instructions in syllabi on how polling will be scored and utilized in classes. When using these applications in conjunction with lecture slides that are posted in class, put answer options on something other than slides (e.g. dry-erase boards, reusable index cards, etc.).

3. Assistance Sites
   a. Problem: Students often access course assistance websites like Chegg, Course Hero, and Koofers to view course material—including graded past exams and assignments—as their first option to address current homework assignments or take home examinations. When instructors realize their works are published without authorization on these sites, efforts to remove them takes time, and often result in the materials being reposted by another student. This type of cheating and facilitation may be frustrating to instructors who go through extensive efforts to create original assignments each term.
   b. Recommendations: Review these websites for evidence of past coursework. While most of these websites require payment for full access, you may be able to view samples of what is available. Speak candidly with students about the problem these websites cause you and your colleagues, and give clear instructions on what you permit. Slightly modifying your assignments (and informing your students of this) will encourage them to look carefully at the work they are submitting.

These and other recommendations can be found in the rubric provided by the Department of Undergraduate Studies in their guidance on how to promote academic integrity in the classroom.
Statistics on Academic Misconduct in 2017-2018

This past year OSC received 687 reports of academic misconduct. This was a 21% increase from the previous year. As the chart below illustrates, more than half of the students referred were alleged to have cheated.

There were 14 courses where ten or more students were referred by the instructor of that course. Most of these referrals had to do with issues mentioned in the previous section on trends and involved both undergraduate and graduate students spanning different departments across campus.

Students accused of academic dishonesty are typically offered three options to resolve the allegation:

1. Informal Resolution - admit responsibility and accept the sanction presented to them by OSC (in consultation with the instructor);
2. Disciplinary Conference – contest the charge or penalty before a staff member; or
3. Honor Review – contest either the charges or the sanction before an Honor Board comprised of 3 students and 2 faculty/staff members.

Below is a table indicating the percentage of cases resolved in each type of resolution. Cases lacking sufficient evidence were dismissed prior to adjudication.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Resolution Type</th>
<th>Percentage of Cases</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Resolution</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Conference</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honor Review</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Dismissed</td>
<td>19%</td>
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</table>
The percentage of students found responsible for, or who admitted to, violating the Code of Academic Integrity is 75%. The high percentage of informal resolutions is attributed to well-crafted referrals and supporting information provided by the instructors of the courses.

OSC would like to thank the 67 faculty and staff members who participated as board members in Honor Reviews this past year. Your service to OSC is instrumental to our success and ensuring students receive a fair process to resolve their cases. For those interested in volunteering for this important role, please inform James Bond at the email below. Trainings will happen periodically during the fall semester.

Larger academic colleges see more referrals to OSC for academic misconduct than their smaller counterparts. However, OSC will provide each college with their own academic misconduct report, which provides a statistical analysis of referrals for that particular college.

Reminders and Conclusion

Here are some reminders for the coming year:

1. When referring a case to the Office of Student Conduct, please use our referral form. Include any necessary attachments as PDF documents.
2. Refrain from grading the assignment(s) in question until the matter has been resolved by OSC. Leave grades blank for those assignments.
3. Instead of entering a grade for the student in the course, enter a “J” for the student on UMEG. While this will not show on the student’s transcript, it will aid the student’s advisor in providing proper information for that student.
4. Speak early and often about academic integrity in the classroom and how that relates to work in a professional setting. Draw from real life examples for students. Over the past year, the Campus Assessment Working Group surveyed Maryland’s first year students regarding Academic Integrity and the results illustrate that the way students are best made aware of academic integrity is from their instructors.

For a community to thrive, everyone must play an active role. The academic community of the University of Maryland is evidence of this. Instructors, teaching assistants, administrators, and students need to be vigilant about promoting academic integrity and confronting academic dishonesty when it occurs. OSC will continue to provide training materials (such as the Academic Integrity Tutorial), conduct presentations as feasible, and resolve allegations of misconduct in a timely manner. We ask for your thoughts on how to improve our process, your patience as we experience an ever growing number of cases, and your participation in the liaison program and other initiatives promoting integrity, character, and ethics with our students. Please contact us with questions, concerns or suggestions:

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We wish you the best of luck as you begin this academic year. We look forward to supporting your efforts in any way we can.