

First in 2009 Academic Integrity Subcommittee

Final Report

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Final Report

The Academic Integrity Subcommittee of the First in 2009 Committee was formed in Fall 2005 to “assess the present climate at Miami regarding academic honesty, and develop a plan, as necessary, for promoting integrity at Miami.” To create this plan, the subcommittee was charged as listed below:

1. Review the professional literature and national studies relating to academic integrity (such as those done by Don McCabe at Rutgers).
2. Assess the present Miami climate in terms of academic honesty, using the survey provided by the Center for Academic Integrity and any other relevant and useful methods.
3. Evaluate existing Miami policies, statements, and programs relating to academic honesty; review institutions with excellent academic integrity policies and cultures for new ideas
4. Develop a prioritized set of recommendations on actions that are needed to address the issue of academic integrity.

The Subcommittee met every other week throughout this academic year. During this time, we have:

- Consulted policies and procedures at other institutions
- Reviewed articles and professional literature (see Appendix B: Selected Works Consulted)
- Completed a survey of Miami’s faculty and students
- Hosted focus group sessions on the Oxford and regional campuses
- Hosted a webcast on a plagiarism detection service that integrates into Blackboard.

About Academic Integrity

Academic integrity on a campus does not occur spontaneously. Academia and society in general are served by institutions of higher education that promote high standards of integrity as fundamental to the academic life of the campus. They provide a foundation for robust classroom and campus discussion, encourage rigorous scientific inquiry, and bestow upon the student body the ideals of an informed, ethical citizenry. Academic integrity embraces a commitment to honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility and trust on the part of faculty, students, and staff. These core values are integral to institutional and extracurricular activities. They must be accompanied by policies and procedures that promote and integrate these values into the everyday life of the campus community. The institutional values, policies and procedures must promote a culture that rewards academic integrity, while discouraging academic dishonesty.

To cultivate and nourish academic integrity, the Center for Academic Integrity outlines seven principles which institutions promoting academic integrity should embrace and which the Subcommittee endorses:

1. Adopt clear academic integrity statements, policies, and procedures that are consistently implemented.
2. Inform and educate the entire community regarding academic integrity policies and procedures.
3. Promulgate and rigorously practice these policies and procedures from the top down, and provide support to those who faithfully follow and uphold them.
4. Have a clear, accessible, and equitable system to adjudicate suspected violations of policy.
5. Develop programs to promote academic integrity among all segments of the campus community. These programs should go beyond the repudiation of academic dishonesty and include discussions about the importance of academic integrity and its connection to broader ethical issues and concerns.
6. Be alert to trends in higher education and technology affecting academic integrity on campus.
7. Regularly assess the effectiveness of its policies and procedures and take steps to improve and rejuvenate them.¹

Weaving academic integrity into the fabric of Miami University's culture will require sustained and concentrated effort. We need to change Miami's approach from a reactionary one that is piecemeal, decentralized, and often discretionary, to one that is global, internally consistent, and transformational. While these changes can begin with concrete action, the results of these changes will in many cases be incremental and evolutionary. Our recommendations center on these ideas:

- Miami University should embrace academic integrity as a clear intellectual priority.
- Miami University should clearly and consistently communicate its expectations for academic integrity to all faculty and students.
- Miami University should, adopt a framework of policies that facilitate its adoption by the University community as a cultural norm.

We are pleased to report the outcomes of our activities and submit our recommendations for ways in which academic integrity can be more tightly woven into the fabric of the academic culture at Miami University.

Recommendations:

Embrace Academic Integrity as an Institutional Priority

- **Recommendation #1:** Begin work needed to transform the culture to one which values and actively promotes academic integrity both in oneself and in others. If the University

¹ Center for Academic Integrity (October 1999). *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity*. (Durham, NC: Duke University, 10.

moves toward implementation of a full or modified honor code, transforming our culture will help to promote academic integrity and lessen the burden on members of the instructors at Miami University to function as disciplinarians. In the event that the University moves to a new honor code, transforming the culture will be underway and help to implement the various components of any honor code.

Clearly Communicate Expectations to Faculty and Students

- **Recommendation #2:** Expand the time devoted to academic integrity in orientation for entering students. Only 11% of students indicated that they “learned a lot” about plagiarism at orientation programs, and over one third indicated that they learned “nothing at all.” During Oxford campus focus groups, faculty also expressed frustration with the type and amount of information communicated to students at orientation. Students need to understand that academic integrity is a core value of the Miami community. They should also understand the policies and procedures for dealing with academic misconduct.
- **Recommendation #3:** Develop mandatory instruction about academic integrity and what constitutes academic misconduct. We advocate the creation of an online learning module that all incoming students would complete during their first semester on campus. Completion of this module would ensure that all students had an introduction to the concepts of academic honesty and the requisite knowledge and training needed to practice them.
- **Recommendation #4:** Use the application process as a way to emphasize personal and academic integrity as a core Miami value. In order to set up a clear, early expectation that Miami values academic honesty and seeks students who value it as well, Miami University could ask students to reflect on how and why personal and academic integrity is important to them in an admissions essay.
- **Recommendation #5:** Develop a standardized honor statement consistent with academic integrity to be included on all assignments and tests (for example, “I, [insert name], certify that I have upheld the standards of academic integrity in my work, and unless otherwise indicated, the work presented here is solely my own.” Miami should ask faculty to make special note of any exceptions they make to this standard (for example, allowing notes or open books on an in-class examination). This practice will provide students with a clear understanding of what practices are generally acceptable, but give faculty freedom to make modifications.
- **Recommendation #6:** Provide orientation to, and discussion of, academic integrity and Miami’s policies for new faculty, new adjunct faculty, and new teaching assistants. Ideally, these sessions should include someone (such as a department chair or coordinator) to whom they would report academic misconduct.

Adopt a Framework of Supporting Policies

- **Recommendation #7:** Offer opportunities such as workshops to current faculty on methods to promote high academic standards and methods to craft assignments which discourage cheating and plagiarism. Attention should be given to new technological options available to students and faculty.
- **Recommendation #8:** Arrange opportunities for new instructors and teaching assistants to review and critique syllabi, assignments, and examinations, with a focus on the extent to which they guard against academic integrity violations. Provide training to new faculty on strategies for crafting assignments, tests, etc., which limit opportunities for cheating through individual interaction with mentors in their disciplines, or group sessions for new faculty within their division or department. Use of handouts similar to one used by the University of California – Davis (see Appendix C) might help with these efforts.
- **Recommendation #9:** Ensure that departmental teaching plans explicitly recognize efforts to promote academic integrity.
- **Recommendation #10:** Designate a person or office to serve as an ombudsman to faculty and graduate assistants in academic misconduct cases. This ombudsman could outline procedures, project time-tables, provide advice on gathering/documenting evidence, and answer questions.
- **Recommendation #11:** Given the vocal interest from some faculty and the additional capabilities provided by plagiarism detection software, we encourage the University to explore an arrangement that would permit interested faculty to have this additional resource. However, before acquiring a costly site license for such a product based solely on faculty FTE, the University should fund a pilot for those who have indicated an interest in the software. For a fuller discussion, see Appendix A.
- **Recommendation #12:** Academic integrity should be incorporated into the current *Code of Student Conduct* so that students understand that academic honesty is the expected norm. An section dealing with academic misconduct should be incorporated into the current procedures in place for addressing allegations of violations of Section 102, Dishonesty. This addition would serve for incidents of academic misconduct. The amended dishonesty policy should distinguish academic and non-academic conduct. There are no mandatory sanctions for a violation of the dishonesty policy but the range of sanctions includes a minimal sanction of a written warning and the maximum sanction of dismissal from Miami. The academic grievance procedures in the Student Handbook reference academic misconduct and suggest that a student may be suspended for a second violation of the policy. To provide fair and consistent information across disciplines, we advocate mandating an individual or office mandated to maintain accurate records of academic integrity cases including charges, disposition, and sanctions, if appropriate. Submitting information to such a repository should be independent of specific disciplinary actions, including notation on student transcripts.

While none of these actions, in and of themselves, will establish a climate of academic integrity, this combination of actions will help to create a culture at Miami that more fully and effectively guides the community to embody the virtues of academic integrity both at Miami and in society.

Academic Integrity Survey

Miami University solicited student and faculty participation in a survey administered by the Center for Academic Integrity (Duke University) in Fall Semester 2005. The Center has conducted similar surveys at numerous schools, including Brigham Young University, the University of California - Davis, Duke University, Keene State University, the University of Maryland - College Park, Pueblo Community College, Vanderbilt University, and Washington University - St. Louis. A complete analysis of data from Miami University is ongoing. Dr. McCabe will produce a report on the 2005/06 cohort in June. Analysis to date provides us with valuable information:

Faculty Survey (308 faculty participants):

- Three quarters identified themselves as faculty from the Oxford campus, 41 (13 %) as Hamilton campus, and 28 (9%) as Middletown campus.
- Respondents were equally divided by gender.
- Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Professors, and Others each accounted for between 15% and 25% of responses.

Student Survey (2,793 participants):

- 2,380 (85%) identified themselves as students from the Oxford campus, 188 (6%) as students from the Hamilton campus, and 176 (6%) as students from the Middletown campus.
- Approximately one-third of the respondents were male, and two thirds were female.
- To facilitate the analysis, data were collected on amount of time spent on co-curricular activities, paid employment, care for dependents, athletics, social organizations, and civic organizations.

Key findings from the survey concerning the situation as it exists:

- **Formal orientation programs currently fail to substantively address the subject of academic integrity with sizeable numbers of faculty and students** – Only 18% of faculty report being informed through an orientation program; when students are asked how much they have learned about academic integrity from first year orientation programs, one third of students replied “learned little or nothing, 43% replied “learned some,” and only 11% replied “learned a lot.”

- **To date, few faculty receive formal and systematic information on academic integrity procedures** - In the academic integrity survey conducted by the Subcommittee, 13% of faculty indicated that they had never received information about cheating, and only a minority of the faculty indicated that they had learned about academic dishonesty from department chairs (37%), orientation sessions (18%), and deans (8%). Major sources of information tend to be people or resources consulted by individual faculty members, including the *Handbook* (52%), other faculty (44%), and the campus web site (22%).
- **Expectations are frequently, but not always, communicated to students in syllabi and/or assignments** - Faculty were asked to indicate if they covered information such as plagiarism, citation of resources, and use of Internet resources in their syllabus, assignments, in classroom discussions—or not at all. Of those, 21% indicated they did not discuss it, and 7% indicated no discussion of plagiarism.
- **Faculty and students are concerned about how well the academic integrity policy is understood** – Faculty and students are concerned about student understanding of academic integrity policies, with 61% of faculty and 52% of students rating the average student’s understanding of polices as “very low” or “low.”
- **Some forms of academic dishonesty are widespread** – For example, 57% of students indicated that they had worked on an assignment with others when the instructor requested individual work; 41% admitted to paraphrasing or copying a few sentences of material from an Internet source without footnoting or referencing it in a research paper; 39% admitted to paraphrasing or copying a few sentences of material from a written source without footnoting or referencing; 30% of students admitted to receiving answers at least once from someone who had already taken a test; 18% admitted to fabricating/falsifying a bibliography.
- **Many students accept some forms of academic dishonesty** - 64% of student respondents indicated that “working on an assignment with others when the instructor asked for individual work” would be “trivial cheating” or “not cheating.”
- **Students sometimes ignore cheating by others** – The majority (80%) of student respondents indicated that they would be “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to report an incident of cheating that they observed, and an even larger majority (88%) of student respondents indicated that they believe fellow students would be “unlikely” or “very unlikely” to report an incident of cheating that they observed. Nor do many students seem inclined to challenge this status quo: only 23% of students indicated that “students should be held responsible for monitoring the academic integrity of other students.”
- **Faculty sometimes ignore cheating** - Only a handful of faculty (2%) indicated that they would do nothing if they knew of an incident of cheating; however, close to half (44%) of faculty respondents indicated that on at least one occasion, they had ignored suspected instances of cheating.

- **Anti-cheating efforts are in widespread use by some faculty, but not all** - One quarter use Internet search tools or plagiarism detection software to attempt to detect or confirm plagiarism, close to one half hand out different versions of exams, and more than two thirds change exams regularly.
- **Students and faculty have reservations about the handling of academic integrity cases** – Under present policies, 63% of student respondents and 59% of faculty indicated that they are not sure about whether the student judicial process at Miami is fair and impartial. When asked why they might ignore a suspected case of cheating in their courses, faculty cited such reasons as: insufficient proof (60%), system too much bureaucracy (11%), lack of support from administration (11%), and not enough time (40%).

Focus Groups

To flesh out information gathered from the survey, the Subcommittee hosted a series of focus groups during Spring Semester 2006, including two Oxford campus sessions, one regional campus session for faculty and a like number for students. Participants in these groups were given a draft version of key findings from the academic integrity survey, and asked to reflect on *strengths* and *weaknesses* of Miami's current approach to academic integrity issues, *opportunities* for change as Miami examines these issues, and *threats* to changes taking place or possibly inherent in those changes. Recurring themes which emerged from discussions are cited below:

- **There are few strengths in Miami's current approach to academic integrity** - Participants expressed frustration with generating a list of strengths. Some faculty were angered by what they perceive as the University's failure to address this issue and make it part of the core values of this institution. Faculty sometimes noted that it was nice that procedures were spelled out in the *Student Handbook*, and students mentioned that faculty concern for students was a strength.
- **University facilities, class size, and assessment strategies facilitate cheating** – Cramped conditions, large classes, the abundant use of multiple choice tests, and failure to use anti-cheating strategies such as scrambling questions were cited as factors that made it difficult not to see others' answers—and therefore tempt students to cheat.
- **Current policy about academic integrity is not widely understood** - Faculty indicated that there was some confusion about academic integrity policies; in fact, one of the most heated exchanges during the focus groups involved the question of whether or not students should be notified that an investigation of their work was underway. In another session, a graduate teaching assistant was asked whether she would know what to do if she believed one of her students had cheated or plagiarized, and answered "no." Both cases illustrate the degree of confusion that exists, even among instructors who appear to have an interest in this topic. Students indicated that providing a reference from syllabi and assignments to the *Student Handbook* was likely to be ineffective, because students were unlikely to consult it and, if they did so, they believed they might have difficulty understanding it.

- **Pursuing suspected instances of academic integrity can be time consuming** – A major concern among faculty was the amount of time and effort needed to pursue academic integrity cases, particularly where plagiarism was suspected, but a “smoking gun” was not immediately evident. Several expressed concerns that if tenure track faculty have trouble devoting time to these activities, that it must be worse for adjunct faculty or teaching assistants.
- **Miami University should intentionally introduce academic integrity issues as a core value to students** – While some efforts in individual programs or courses are laudable, academic integrity must be seen as a university wide issue. Avenues for addressing this issue include orientation sessions (although these are not mandatory at regional campuses) or an online tutorial incorporated into the first year of study. Also mentioned were creating an abridged version of the *Student Handbook* detailing academic integrity issues and requiring academic integrity information in course all syllabi and tests.
- **Academic integrity should be promoted as a part of the Miami identity** - Several focus group sessions independently came up with the idea of making academic integrity part of the Miami University identity. Students, in particular, mentioned clearly and repeatedly the need to articulate expectations of academic integrity at orientation and on syllabi and tests. Some advocated emphasizing academic integrity information in the admissions process by asking students to reflect on how their life and academic work embodies integrity. Doing so would send a clear message of Miami’s expectations *and* encourage prospective students to reflect on academic integrity.
- **Encouraging academic integrity means countering negative societal values** – There are many real-life role models who embody a “succeed at all costs” mentality and do so despite the lack of honesty and intellectual integrity. The “succeed at all costs” mentality is reinforced by some realities which intrude into the University environment, including competitive hiring and graduate school admissions and competitive scholarships that carry specific expectations about student academic performance. The University needs to offer positive role models in the form of academic and business leaders who succeed by exemplifying honesty and integrity.
- **Many question the failure of the University to provide a plagiarism detection service** – Several respondents in the faculty focus group sessions castigated the University for not making available a plagiarism detection service; in addition, a participant in a student focus group noted a recent news story detailing the use of services at several universities in the Greater Cincinnati area-- but not at Miami University.
- **Making changes to promote academic integrity will be difficult** – We will be implementing a change of cultures and values; change is often disruptive. Faculty expressed concern that some people might resist attempts to alter the way syllabi are written and assignments are designed because of an unwillingness to change. Moreover, even those who are willing to make these changes may struggle to find the time needed for seeking out continuing education opportunities for revising assignments and syllabi.

Conclusion

Each of us on the Subcommittee has valued the opportunity to study academic integrity issues and policies. We hope that our work helps to stimulate awareness, discussion, and – most importantly—action that will help Miami to further encourage excellence in our already outstanding students and faculty.

Appendix A: Plagiarism Detection Software

Plagiarism detection software can provide faculty members with an additional tool to ferret out possible cases of plagiarism, although they are by no means foolproof. Proponents point out two key advantages of such software:

- **Extending the pool of information that can be checked for plagiarism** - Most commercially available plagiarism software works by adding evaluated papers from students into the database used to check papers for the probability that they have borrowed sequences of wording. By doing so, they extend beyond Google searches by including materials not found in Google's list of web sites, including papers from "paper mills," as well as papers shared among students.
- **Potentially deterring students** – While commercial software has limitations, students may not know what they are. Awareness that plagiarism detection software is being used can deter students from risky behaviors. One author notes "'You don't have to use it ...,' observes [one teacher...] 'Students just have to know you have it.'"²

However, others have noted several significant limitations to the software that argue against over-reliance on it:

- **Limited scope** – Most services do not comprehensively search electronic discussion groups, paper mills, or published materials such as books and journal articles (print or otherwise). Studies have indicated that while search tools certainly do catch some instances, they can fail to detect others.³
- **Ambiguous results** – Services such as Turnitin.com do not find plagiarism; what they find are "sequences of words in submitted documents which match sequences in documents in its database."⁴ Discretion is needed to determine which papers actually do constitute plagiarism. In one instance, a faculty member at a university flagged 157 papers suspected of plagiarism. In 43 cases, students were found guilty of plagiarism or admitted to plagiarism; but in 88 cases, students were cleared. The balance of these cases were undecided at the time the article reporting this incident was being written.⁵

While plagiarism detection software are not a panacea for rooting out all instances of plagiarism, they are another tool available to faculty. Among the many services available is SafeAssignment, a service that can be run through Blackboard. However, SafeAssignment

² Hildebrand, J. (2002, December 17) "Using the Internet to Catch Cheaters". *Newsday.com*, Retrieved March 9, 2006 from <http://www.newsday.com/mynews/nylied173049335dec17.story>

³ Royce, J. (2003 April) "Has *Turnitin.com* Got it All Wrapped Up?" *Teacher Librarian* 30:4. Retrieved March 8, 2006, from *Academic Search Premier* <put URL here>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Foster, Andrea L. (2002 May 17). "Plagiarism-Detection Tool Creates Legal Quandry." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 48:36. Retrieved March 8, 2006, from *Academic Search Premier* <put URL here>.

does not enable individual students to opt out—all faculty who use this service must submit all papers in their class. Like many plagiarism detection software, SafeAssignment adds all submitted papers to a database used to detect plagiarism. Because papers added from a participating institution are not shared with other institutions who use their service, they assert that it is able to safeguard these Miami documents from use by other institutions or searchers and to protect the property and privacy rights of the students who author these documents. These documents would be stored on the SafeAssignment server, not a Miami server.

Other services, such as Turnitin.com, make papers available to other institutions. In response to concerns about intellectual property, they do not require that all papers for a class be submitted. Several institutions specifically allow students to decline to have their papers submitted if they believe that it infringes on their intellectual property rights.

The University should consider fiscally sound models for licensing such a service. Plagiarism detection software is not universally embraced; some faculty may choose not to use such a service for a variety of reasons, including pedagogical objections, time and effort needed to learn to use the service and interpret the results.⁶ At the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, only 40 faculty signed up for plagiarism detection software during a one year trial, and at Duke University’s College of Arts and Sciences, fewer than 15 faculty signed up in the first year.⁷

⁶ Some object to use of plagiarism detection software on pedagogical grounds. For example, see Howard, R.H., (2001 November 16). “Forget About Policing Plagiarism. Just Teach” *Chronicle of Higher Education*

⁷ Foster.

Appendix B: Selected Works Consulted

Articles and Professional Research

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Appendix C: Tips to Prevent Cheating

Students are expected to be honest and fair in their studies, and to treat others with respect. In turn, faculty maintain high academic standards by encouraging honest work, setting and communicating clear expectations, using assignments and test formats that discourage cheating, and reporting violations to your academic dean. The following suggestions can help you promote academic integrity

PROMOTING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- **Stress the importance of integrity to the learning process.** Honest work builds self-esteem, knowledge, and skills. In contrast, cheaters don't learn, they undermine the quality of education we provide, and they devalue the University's reputation and the degrees we confer.
- **Highlight our Code of Conduct** and the importance of academic honesty in class and in handouts; remind students of the Code before exams; link your website to the Code; and refer suspected violations to your academic dean.
- **Discuss issues of integrity** with your class, especially those relevant to the course and to students' future careers. Give criteria for the "hard choices" in your field, with examples of how ethical issues can/should be resolved.
- **Enlist students' help in creating a climate of integrity in your class.** Give students opportunities to earn your trust. Encourage them to tell you immediately if they see cheating.
- **Inspire, encourage, and model integrity.** You don't have to threaten or scold. Positive reinforcement works better than scare tactics, and internal constraints (morals, ethics, character) are the most effective. As educators, faculty influence students' attitudes and development, and can reinforce student integrity.
- **Set clear standards** for assignments and grading. Tell students whether they may collaborate, and if so, how much.

GENERAL PREVENTIVE STEPS

- **Have students sign an honor statement** on exams and papers, attesting that all work is their own and that no unfair advantage has been taken.
- **Monitor exams** to assist students in maintaining academic integrity and confront suspicious conduct promptly.
- **Prohibit talking or any communication** among students during exams; for questions about the test, have them talk to you.
- **Number exams** and include the number at the top of each page.
- **Use a sign-in sheet** for each row, by exam numbers, to record where students sit.
- **Tell students not to leave the room** during exams.
- **Have students sign each page** of exam with ink.
- **Require written excuses** for make-ups or extensions, and check authenticity.
- **Encourage students to sit away from study partners or friends during exams and to cover their work.**

CONFRONTING SUSPECTED CHEATING

- **Do not stop a student from completing an exam, even if you believe he/she is cheating.**
- **Confront suspicious conduct** as described below, **identify** those involved and **record** their names.
- **Announce to class** that **no talking is permitted during exams, record names** and **quietly ask specific student(s) to stop** talking.
- If students appear to be **exchanging information** (talking or copying), record names and **quietly ask student(s) to move** to new seats.
- You may **take and/or photocopy** what the student has done so far and give student a blank exam or the copy to complete the test.
- If students appear to be **using notes or have notes visible**, promptly and discreetly confiscate notes. These materials may be important in proving the cheating if a student denies responsibility.
- If you see "wandering eyes" **announce that eyes must be kept on one's own paper, and quietly warn specific student(s).**
- If you learn a "**ringer**" **may be taking an exam for another student**, approach quietly and ask for ID. If he/she cannot or will not provide ID, **confiscate exam** and record a description of the individual.
- **After the test, review exam(s) for evidence of cheating** and report suspected misconduct to your academic dean.

Deterring Copying or Collaborating During Exams

- Use multiple exam versions, “scrambling” the order of questions or changing key variables.
- Use alternative seating.
- Put multiple choice and true/false questions at bottom of page where it’s harder to copy.
- Refuse credit for correct answers unless ALL WORK is shown.
- Require students to remove hats and dark glasses during exams, unless they have a medical reason.

Watch for:

wandering eyes; talking; passing notes; or other communication (e.g., cell phones, headphones, and pagers can transmit and receive information by voice, e-mail, data transfer, message function, or “pager code”).

Deterring Use of Unauthorized Materials/Notes

Give oral and written instructions regarding which materials can or cannot be used on the test.

Have students put away books, notes, or other prohibited items and store them out of sight.

Change exam questions often, preferably every semester.

Do not permit programmable calculators or require students to “clear” all programs before exams begin.

If you provide sample questions or study sheets, do not use the exact same questions on the exam.

Have students turn in blank blue books to you at the class before the test, mark to show you’ve seen them, and redistribute at random, or have students pass blue books two seats down.

Require students to begin writing on a certain page in their blue books, leaving a specified # of lines/pages blank.

Watch for:

crib notes up sleeve, under leg; inside pockets, clothing, pen, calculator cover, or cap brim; written on hands, arms, pencils, desks, chairs, blackboards, walls; visible on clipboard or floor, binders or backpacks; stored in programmable calculators or electronic datebooks; pre-written in blue books; or hidden in bathroom or nearby classroom.

Also watch for:

students leaving room without submitting test (to use notes or key outside class); attempting to sneak complete exam back into room at end of exam, or into faculty office, or having accomplice “find” and turn in “lost” exam later.

Preventing “Ringers” and Loss/Theft of Exams

Count the number of exams handed out, of students taking the test, and of exams turned in (before leaving room), and make sure numbers match. Use exam numbers and sign-in sheets.

Collect exams from students while still seated rather than have a chaotic rush to the front.

Have consistent “lost-proof” method of transporting papers between class, office, and home (e.g., locked briefcase). Keep office and desk locked, papers secure when you are out.

Watch for:

ringer taking test for enrolled student (who may be present or not). Ringer may do own test, then re-copy Scantron for student. Or, ringer may do real exam while enrolled student does “fake” exam. When done, switch papers, enrolled student writes own name and submits test. Fake exam is discarded or submitted with phony name.

Also watch for:

theft of upgraded exams/papers from submission pile/box; or from office, computer lab printout tray; or other student’s computer, account, backpack, or room. Thief erases name and submits as own. May destroy original work to avoid detection. Student may come to test (or earlier section) take exam copy (or have friend get copy) then go study before own section test/scheduled make-up. Rarely, exam questions or answer key taken from faculty office or computer.

Still watch for:

student who fails to submit paper or exam, then claims faculty error caused loss of work (goal: to make-up exam or extension).