



Northeastern University

Teaching Matters Newsletter

Center for Effective University Teaching

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TEACHING MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Center for Effective University Teaching

Volume 8 Number 2

Late Fall 2002

Special Edition on Ethics

What do ethics have to do with teaching? A lot! - Miriam Rosalyn Diamond

These days, it's difficult to turn on the television news or pick up a newspaper without being cognizant of the wide-reaching implications of unethical behaviors. These implications include damage to whole sectors of the economy, safety risks, and loss of industrial credibility.

As educators, we constantly face ethical dilemmas. From addressing controversial topics in the classroom in a manner that acknowledges diverse student perspectives, to devising equitable grading and make-up policies, we regularly make decisions that have ethical ramifications. Furthermore, students and colleagues often raise issues that challenge us, and for which we have no ready response. What standards should we keep in mind when choosing a plan of action? How can we be creative teachers who uphold our own beliefs and values, yet be mindful of the fact that we are role models who have a tremendous influence on our students?

Through my consultation with faculty and teaching assistants, I have become aware of a need for guidelines for instructors dealing with ethical

concerns. Consequently, I have outlined some considerations to support faculty with this process.

Guidelines for Ethical Decision-Making by Faculty

When faced with complex situations, I suggest that faculty keep in mind standards of Professionalism, Reliability/Responsiveness, Open-mindedness, and Fairness ("PROF", for short). These principles are useful in evaluating the issues involved and options available.

PROFESSIONALISM

The example that faculty set and the way they interact with students have a strong impact on the education process. Projecting a professional demeanor and behaving with integrity are critical components of being an effective educator.

Have you ever made an error during lecture, or not had information handy when a student asks an intricate question? These awkward situations can actually be transformed into opportunities to model how to learn

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from errors and locate the resources to seek out answers. Don't be hesitant to admit if you make a mistake or lack a ready response to a question.

Honesty is another factor to bear in mind. For instance, if you are uncomfortable providing a reference letter for a student, let them know.

Alternately, you can compose a reference delineating those strengths you can realistically identify.

It is also essential to be clear about your role and responsibilities. Know the boundaries of your position. You may be an instructor, role model, academic advisor or career mentor. Your job is not that of a best friend, surrogate parent, or therapist. Accordingly, it is important to understand when and where to refer students who need help beyond your area of expertise.

If a student seems to require assistance outside your realm, communicate concern and refer them to the appropriate resource. The Center for Counseling and Student Development has a webpage for faculty and staff seeking guidance about identifying students who might benefit from the Center's services, as well as ways to make an appropriate referral (see <http://www.counselingcenter.neu.edu/rcg.h>

tml). The staff in this office are equipped to direct faculty on handling sensitive issues. Don't hesitate to contact them directly if you are apprehensive about a student's well-being.

RELIABILITY/RESPONSIVENESS

Experts maintain that learning occurs when an individual receives prompt, unambiguous feedback after attempting a new skill. In academia, it is critical to return graded examinations and assignments as soon as possible, and include ample information in your comments to facilitate understanding.

Availability to provide assistance is another significant aspect of being an educator. Are you (and your teaching assistants) holding office hours when and where stated? If students do not make use of this resource, inquire as to the reason. (Does the time conflict with another class? Is the location too remote? Would students prefer to call/e-mail you, rather than stop by?)

In addition to being available, students will feel more comfortable asking questions if they sense that you are

approachable. You can chat briefly with students who arrive early or remain behind in class to "check

RESOURCES ON CAMPUS FOR DEALING WITH ETHICAL DILEMMAS

When facing a dilemma, note that you are not alone. There are people around campus willing to advise you (in confidence) and suggest ways of responding to difficult situations. Don't hesitate to call on them for assistance; they are eager to help. These people include:

Professor Perrin Cohen, Director,
Northeastern University Center for the
Advancement of Science Education
<http://www.casdn.neu.edu/~nucase/index.html>

Dr. Miriam Diamond, Assistant Director,
Center for Effective University Teaching,
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Dr. Edward A. Hattauer, Director,
Center for Counseling and Student
Development, e.hattauer@neu.edu
www.neu.edu/counselingcenter

Dean Donnie Perkins,
Director of Affirmative Action and Diversity,
<http://www.aa.neu.edu>

Professor Donna M. Qualters, Director
Center for Effective University Teaching
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Professor Michael Woodnick, Director
Office of Spiritual Life
M.Woodnick@neu.edu

in” on how things are going with them. Encourage questions - and answer them - during class sessions.

Another aspect of responsiveness is replying to student questions and concerns in a timely manner. While you shouldn’t be expected to answer all e-mails and telephone messages on the spot, tell your students what turnaround time they can expect - something that is fair to them, while being realistic for you (for instance, within 24 or 48 hours).

OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Your class should be a welcoming and safe place for all students - regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, ethnic or cultural background. Refrain from making jokes or using metaphors that might offend. Often, the best humor to use is where you laugh at yourself.

It is wise to encourage students to teach you about what they find offensive. If you realize that you have said something which could be construed as insulting, apologize and take the opportunity to learn from the experience.

Sometimes faculty members feel uncomfortable or have difficulty building rapport with particular students. If you feel uneasy around a student, a good place to start is to discuss the matter with a campus resource person or colleague to ascertain why and the best way to proceed.

FAIRNESS

Is it apparent that your grading is fair and that you apply the same standards for all students? Or can anything be construed as biased?

Make sure you have clear standards for the evaluation of assignments, and that students understand what criteria are used. This includes policies for extensions and make-up work, as well as grade appeals.

Be consistent.

In addition to following the PROF guidelines, it is often useful to consult another person about your concerns. There are specialists available who can be of assistance when dealing with perplexing matters (see box to left).

In choosing how to respond ethically in an educational context, it is useful to start by evaluating the situation and possible consequences. By considering how your actions may affect students, keeping in mind some basic principles, and utilizing campus resources, you can make informed ethical decisions.

Miriam Diamond is Assistant Director of the Center for Effective University Teaching.

Quotes

“Good teaching comes from good people.”
-Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*

“Cultivating character is a legitimate—indeed, an inevitable—function of education.”
-Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Education*

- Causes of violence:
- Wealth without work.
- Pleasure without conscience.
- Knowledge without character.
- Commerce without morality.
- Science without humanity.
- Worship without sacrifice.
- Politics without principles.

-Mahatma Gandhi

Creating Classroom Lessons on Ethical Inquiry

How do we go about teaching ethics to our students? A discussion on this topic was held at a recent NUCASE Ethics Forum, led by Glenn Hill, IT Security Manager at Northeastern. The Forum is an opportunity for colleagues to reflect upon and investigate ethical concerns and issues that are experienced in our roles as teachers, administrators, advisors, researchers and scholars.

Steps for teaching ethical inquiry in the classroom:

I. FACULTY REFLECTION:

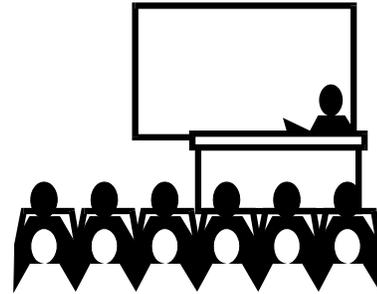
- Consider your teaching goals and course objectives; what is in the best interest of this course? What method(s) can help you achieve your goals?
- Self-examination, know the limits of your competence or perspective in dealing with the topic.

II. SET THE TONE:

- Work with students to establish (and keep) ground rules (such as confidentiality, tenor of discussions).
- Use this as an opportunity to promote effective communication skills (how to talk respectfully to others, listening and checking in on what others seem to be saying, how to disagree, use of "I" statements) in your class.
- Articulate clear objectives for the discussions. For example, the point of discussion may help each person clarify their own thinking on a controversial issue.

III. COMMONLY USED METHODS:

- Storytelling, case studies; encouraging students to tell their own stories/dilemmas (e.g. from Co-op experiences), professor can present a situation s/he experienced to serve as a model.
- Role play, simulations (such as Image Theatre), drama scenes (this type of activity introduces a sense of more immediacy and realism than third-



person story-telling and analysis).

- Discuss the process of making decisions (not merely the decisions) - encourage discovery of "why" (identify basis for choices), explore underlying beliefs and values, examine values not raised by students.

IV. PROMOTING ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Stimulate exploration of possible implications and consequences.
- Identify dividend/payoffs of ethical inquiry; ask students to consider the benefits of taking the ethical stance.
- Ask the question "how do you want to be seen?"; stimulate consideration of how the decision made might appear to outsiders and/or at a later point in time.
- Provide circle of resources to support the decision-making process including NUCASE webpages(www.casdn.neu.edu/~nucase) and Northeastern's ethics related courses (see www.casdn.neu.edu/~nucase/community/courses.html)

The NUCASE Ethics Forum is held once per quarter during a Monday activities period. All are welcome. Please notify p.cohen@neu.edu if you would like to be on the e-mail list of future events.

- Contributors: Perrin Cohen, Miriam Diamond, Glenn Hill, Wendy Smith

Teaching Ethics in Journalism

- Stephen D. Burgard

The School of Journalism requires a course entitled “Journalism Ethics and Issues” of both majors and minors. While semester conversion necessarily has prompted some reevaluation of what we teach and when we teach it, this particular course remains central to our mission of preparing students as future practitioners within the media industry.

The role of journalism is central to having an informed democracy. But as the press serves as a monitor and watchdog on government and other major institutions, it must have its own house in order as well. A procession of embarrassing ethical lapses within journalism in recent years, while representing the misdeeds of a few, reflects poorly on an entire profession. Plagiarism, misrepresentations, fabrications undermine the difficult task the press already has of building and sustaining credibility with a skeptical public.

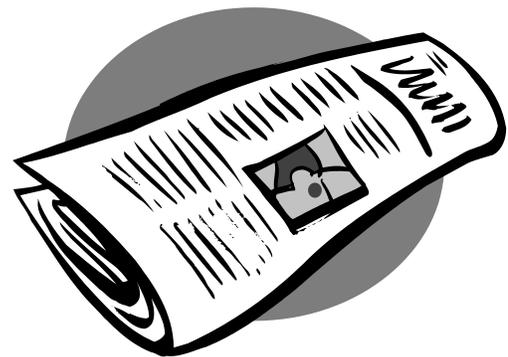
Survey after survey in recent years shows that the press enjoys less support from the public for its work than one might think in a flourishing democracy. Some surveys show a disturbingly high level of public support for restraints or even censorship of the press. Sensationalism and issues of sensitivity in news coverage are as important today as they ever have been as citizen concerns.

In recent years, groups like the Committee of Concerned Journalists have made important strides in trying to build new levels of trust between the press and the public. The press has come to recognize that it must earn and keep the confidence of the public each and every day. In all these efforts, fair, balanced, credible news reporting lies at the core of building better understanding about the mission of a free press.

There is no better place to start in building a reliable, credible press corps for the future than in journalism education programs. In this course, students traditionally have taken up such questions as whether the subject of a story should be allowed to preview it before it goes to print and suggest changes, and whether reporters should go “undercover” to get a story. New technology and a changing society raise other questions that are bound to keep this subject vital and lively in the future for journalism students.

Stephen D. Burgard directs the School of Journalism.

Does your department have courses that address disciplinary or professional ethics? Teaching Matters can be a forum for sharing what and how you cover this topic. Let us know about it!



Teaching Ethics in Business

- Peggy Fletcher

Preparing our students to deal with ethical dilemmas encountered in the business world has always been an important component of the curriculum in the College of Business Administration. Recent headlines, concerning Enron, Arthur Andersen, and others, have certainly not lessened the need for us to address the ethics issue, but has some people questioning whether or not we are doing enough. It is within this context that I discuss some of the difficulties we face in teaching ethics in colleges of business, and how we have chosen to deal with this at Northeastern.

There are three major issues that we have to consider as we redesign the curriculum. One is that we have no trained ethicists on our faculty, which leads to the related issue of faculty development needed to prepare them for teaching ethical issues. A second concern is to recognize that we need to integrate our pedagogical approach to addressing ethical issues into a professional setting. The final issue is that we are going through a professional maintenance accreditation in 2003 which necessitates us covering ethics at the same time we have fewer courses to work with given semester conversion.

Let me discuss the last issue first, because it seems to be raising the most eyebrows. We have a course entitled, Managing Social, Ethical, and Legal Issues, currently in our core Business curriculum. It is a very good course and will stay in the curriculum, but is not required for all CBA students. Our accreditation issue is that fifty-percent of our students' courses must be in liberal arts or general education, and fifty-percent in business courses. With a total graduation requirement of thirty-two courses, only sixteen will be business courses: eight courses in the CBA core and eight courses for one or two concentrations. The practical reality is that we had to integrate various topics across the curriculum, selecting those that logically could be

integrated, and have required courses in the functional areas. Ethics is one of the topics that we chose to integrate.

Practicality aside, is this really the best way for the College to stress the importance of ethics? In terms of pedagogical approaches, what are the most effective in assisting students to recognize ethical issues in their own experience and reflect on them? Two approaches to teaching ethics are the moral theory approach and the casuistic approach. The first resolves ethical questions by deduction from general moral principles. The later approach uses cases concerning various ethical dilemmas and then extends the resolutions to new situations. Since our curriculum is a professional one, the case approach is the one that is most beneficial to our students. It is a methodology we use in many of our courses, and will also allow the students to draw on their own experiences.

The last problem is that of developing trained ethicists on our faculty. In other words, what do our faculty already know and what do they need to know? Most faculty members have some background to draw upon, whether from having studied ethics in some courses or from receiving more recent training. In the interest of full disclosure, I attended a week-long session for academics in business across the country to educate us in moral reasoning and the case approach to teaching ethics. The fact that it was sponsored by Arthur Andersen, should not entirely negate that learning. As the faculty integrate ethics into their courses, they are the best qualified to understand the problems that each discipline is facing in business today, and the standards of practice that guide each discipline. For example, an accounting professor is best able to discuss with his or her students how earnings of the firm should be reported and where on that "slippery slope" it crosses over from being

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reported in the "best light" to becoming just plain "fraudulent." Likewise, in finance, there are Standards of Practice and Ethics which professionals in this field follow. Our faculty are well-qualified to discuss these ethical issues found in professional settings.

In summary, what did the CBA propose as we were developing our new undergraduate curriculum? In our revised Introduction to Business course (which we are currently working on), there will be an emphasis on ethics at an introductory level. At this point, Freshmen do not have sufficient background or experience to bring to case analysis. While the discussion of cases may be of interest to them, they do not yet have the necessary knowledge to then extrapolate to other situations. We will discuss issues of fairness, personal integrity, considering the needs of others, and, of course, academic honesty. In addition, the one-credit Co-op course that our students take before going out on their first Co-op includes some basic on-the-job

ethics. After our students complete their first six-month Co-op, they will all take the Organizational Behavior course. This course will help the students integrate their knowledge of the business world into ethical situations. As students move into their required concentration courses, one, or several of these courses, will deal with ethics in the discipline. After the students' last six-month Co-op, they will all take our capstone course, Strategy in Action. This course not only integrates ethics into the curriculum, but also integrates across all the disciplines.

So while it may appear that we are removing a valuable ethics course from our required curriculum, namely the Social Issues course, we are including ethics more extensively in the curriculum in a manner that benefits our students in their professional careers and that draws from the strengths of our faculty.

Peggy Fletcher is Associate Dean of the College of Business Administration.

TA Training and Ethical Exploration: A Good Combination - Santoshi Bandla

This Fall's "Gear-Up" session of Teaching Assistant training was a session par excellence. Organized by the Center for Effective University Teaching, one highlight was a new symposium held specifically for Returning Northeastern University TA's on September 17, 2002. This workshop was custom-made based on the feedback received in previous sessions. This workshop was well received by the 108 attendees.

In addition, a new TA Leadership Credential was introduced. Following on the launching of last year's Expert certificate (recognizing TA's who attended an orientation program, participated in at least 3 workshops throughout the year, collected feedback on their performance, and maintained a portfolio of their work), the new credential will



recognize experienced TA's who assume active roles in training and supporting their more junior colleagues.

A half-day workshop was conducted for the returning TA's and one of the workshops addressed Teaching Ethics. Lead by Perrin Cohen, Director of NUCASE (Northeastern University Center for the Advancement of Science Education), this session

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was an eye opener about the concerns of the TA's regarding the ethical issues concerning teaching. This session was very thought-provoking because of the experiences shared by attendees and many helpful solutions suggested.

The TA-gear-up for the new Northeastern Teaching Assistants was conducted the following day on September 18. This workshop was attended by 148 people. The dynamic duo - Provost Ahmed T. Abdelal and Vice Provost Malcolm Hill - presented the keynote address, reminding the group about the impact TA's can have on their students.

Undergraduate student panelists Julie Leis and Tina Penmen shared their perspectives of being taught by TA's, as well as student expectations and concerns. They answered many questions from the group about how TA's can best work with undergraduates to promote effective learning.

The day ended with an Experienced Teaching Assistants Panel consisting of Stephen Lovett (Mathematics - Recipient of the Outstanding Instructor of Record Award), Dan Marshall (Engineering -

Nominee for the Outstanding Laboratory Instructor Award) , Amit Arora (Alumnus of Engineering - Recipient of the Outstanding Tutor Award) and Santhoshi Bandla (Biology - Nominee for the Outstanding Laboratory Instructor Award). The team presented real-life challenging situations they experienced and invited the new TA's to share what they would do in such situations.

On the whole, the 2 day event for both the Returning TA's and the new TA's was a worthwhile experience for all. More of such gear-ups and workshops will be offered throughout the year to raise teaching by Northeastern TA's to a new level.

For more information on the TA Development and Recognition Program, see the TA Homepage at <http://www.northeastern.edu/ceut/ta.htm>.

Santoshi Bandla is a graduate student in Bioinformatics, a member of the TA Leadership Board, and a Teaching Assistant in the Biology department.

Ethical Awareness in the Life of a Northeastern Undergraduate: A Former Student's Perspective - Kelley Bethoney



Every year, as hundreds of Northeastern students head out on co-op, they apply their classroom knowledge to jobs in their fields of intended study. As co-op is one of NU's defining features and a characteristic that has made Northeastern nationally recognized, the co-op experience can be a vast source of learning for the student, both in practical knowledge and developing professional

skills. While these co-op rotations can often shape a student's interests and give him or her a view of the "real world", does this include learning the role of ethics in the workplace? Some companies and institutions may provide students with some ethical training to establish codes of conduct, but many students remain unaware of positive and negative ethical situations that surround them daily on the job. The bottom line: Can students identify ethical issues and respond to them if necessary? Can they make ethical decisions when faced with moral dilemmas in the workplace? Do they realize that they are an integral part of the

working community and that their moral conduct and decisions can affect the balance of the company as a whole?

Students confront ethical issues everywhere on co-op, in the classroom, and in extracurricular activities. What has NU done to bring ethical awareness into the lives of its students? Northeastern's answer resides in NUCASE, an ethical education center brought into existence by dedicated faculty and staff, who continually seek to bring ethical understanding to the NU student body. Two years ago, NUCASE instituted a series of ethics courses, NUCASE Ethics Forums: Topics in Business, Criminal Justice & Arts & Science (INT1852, 1862, 1872). These unique courses, taught by NUCASE faculty and co-op coordinators and commonly referred to "Ethical Awareness on Co-op" are unlike any other course offered by the university. These courses supply students with a vehicle to confidentially and thoroughly identify, address, and investigate moral and ethical issues that they encounter on co-op and that are personally meaningful. These 1 credit courses also provide students with a platform and foundation in ethical inquiry with which to apply to other aspects of life, including the classroom, laboratories, and dormitories. In addition, the courses give students the ability to stay connected to the University during co-op, a time of the year when students often feel isolated and out of touch with the NU community.

When I participated in this course during my junior year, I never knew how I would radically evolve my view of ethics and the tremendous influence the course would have on the daily activities in my life. I had already completed two science co-ops, both in the private and academic settings, and was currently participating in my third co-op rotation. During these co-op jobs, I was

exposed to many scientific and ethical issues that I was unaware of at the time. In situations in which I identified an ethical concern, I was not sure how to react or if I had a "right" to respond. As a biochemistry student, I was aware of a few of the major ethical issues, such as animal testing and the importance of publishing accurate scientific data. That, however, was the extent of my understanding. I did not by any means consider myself living in a "bubble", but I thought "I'm only a co-op, what ethics could I possibly be exposed to?" I was about to find out.

When I took the course, I was amazed to learn the positive and negative ethical issues that I had encountered, which included professional behavior, appropriate work attire, and conduct codes. During the quarter, I learned to develop "ethical radar" with the help of the NUCASE professors, and in-class discussions. Through these mentors and class tools, I became able to recognize ethical situations and realized that many students, including myself, thought the word "ethics" only encompassed negative issues. I began to see that positive ethics can influence decisions, company policy, and the daily actions of employees within the working community. The professors offered their students guidance and allowed me to fully realize the ramifications of ethics on co-op. As the course continued, I found that I was able to express myself and voice concerns with fellow classmates within the confidential setting of the course. My classmates and I learned to listen to one another and give advice when needed. The class granted me the rare opportunity to take a moment and step back to reflect on and investigate a particular situation in depth. By the end of the course, a few of my friends, who had not taken the class, noticed a positive change in me, which was directly related to my participation in the program. I began applying the

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knowledge I gained in the course on my next co-op job, and in my extracurricular activities. I enjoyed the course so much, I decided to take it again-this time in the capacity of a student mentor and later I became a teaching assistant for the course.

During the second quarter, I served as a student mentor, helping to lead discussions on Blackboard, a useful tool that keeps the class connected during weeks the students do not meet. Through the Blackboard ethics discussions and in-class exercises, I saw that each time the class is given, new ethical situations are uncovered leading to fresh perspectives and new, fascinating discussions. By the end of the second quarter, the fame of the course gained momentum and through word of mouth and reputation, more students expressed an interest in this unique and practical course. And I admit, I was hooked.

The next quarter Ethical Awareness on Co-op was offered, there were enough students to create four classes. These classes were drawn from some of majors with the highest student enrollment and represented several of the Northeastern colleges. As the teaching assistant for all of the sections, I now moved into the teaching realm. I developed a strong mentorship with my students using the tools I learned from my experience with the course and from the course directors. I was able to help create an environment where students felt comfortable discussing ethical issues in a setting that promoted respect for one's opinion. I was able to ask the students thought provoking questions that enabled them to think ethically while they developed their own ability to acknowledge ethical situations and respond to them as necessary. I saw that many of the students were open to new perspectives, and through discussions, were able to see situations from different angles. I was able to help students discover ways to respond to situations in a caring, thoughtful

way. I aided in the creation of conditions that helped students "think outside the box" and arrive at their own conclusions about ethical situations presented in class and on blackboard. I often played "devil's advocate" and presented students with options and scenarios which required thought before immediate action. I was able to help students understand that a solution to one ethical dilemma may not be the only resolution. Through TAing these courses, I was able to witness first hand, the student's progress from being "ethically unaware" to obtaining the ability to acknowledge, understand, and respond appropriately to the ethics of their co-op job, classroom, and extracurricular activities. Through this experience, I was able to truly understand the rewards of teaching. I was able to watch my students grow, learn, and use this practical knowledge they gained from this unique course in real life settings. I kept in touch with a few of my students and saw that they applied their new knowledge in areas outside of co-op, truly fulfilling the goal of the course: to raise ethical awareness in many aspects of a student's life. It was one of the challenging, yet most rewarding things I have done in my life.

After the course ended, I received much positive feedback from students who participated in the course. Many had recommended it to their friends and peers and some even expressed interest in meeting outside the classroom to continue ethical discussions. The Ethical Awareness on Co-op class had caught on and word was spreading about the course's ability to enhance a student's co-op experience dynamically and the class' ability to aid students in gaining knowledge that can be used in every day life.

Deciding to participate in the course during its initial trial phase, then later becoming student mentor and finally, the teaching assistant, allowed me to view the progress of the course from different

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perspectives. It was one the best decisions I have ever made. Not only have I gained a vast deal of knowledge through taking the course and teaching it, but I have grown personally. I have also developed an awareness and appreciation that I have carried with me through my first job following my graduation from Northeastern and into graduate school. Although I am now a full-time graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics, I am constantly aware of ethics both in my research lab and in the classes I am taking. I feel equipped to

handle both positive and negative ethical situations that I may encounter. Ethical Awareness, on Co-op, is truly a wonderful opportunity. What one student learns, can be passed onto his/her friends and have a tremendous impact on their future. The course provides students with the ethical foundation to grow as individuals, and teaches them the necessary tools to deal with the ever present ethical matters that surround students on a daily basis. I, and other students who have taken the course, are proof of that.✿

Academic Integrity Matters - William Fischer



You may be wondering about the current state of academic integrity at Northeastern University. Here is some information for you, in question and answer format. The Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution serves as a resource to the university for academic integrity issues. Please feel free to contact a member of our staff (at x4390) for advice and guidance regarding this important issue.

What do NU students have to say about academic integrity?

Academic integrity is an important value of our students at Northeastern. In the Spring of 2001, the Student Government Association Senate passed a Resolution recommending the implementation of a number of action items to supplement the current Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy. These items would advance the current policy further along the “honor code continuum” toward a modified honor code.

What is a modified honor code?

A modified honor code differs from a traditional honor code in a number of ways. The traditional honor code contains elements that include unproctored exams, a written pledge signed by students affirming the integrity of their work, significant if not exclusive involvement of students in the judicial process in responding to allegations of academic dishonesty, and a requirement that students report themselves or

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others that have violated the policy.

Modified honor codes differ in they typically do not include provisions for unproctored exams, a written pledge, or a requirement for students to report themselves or others for violations of the policy. The emphasis of the modified honor code rests with a strong, clearly articulated academic integrity policy, a significant student role in the judicial process, and strong student involvement in educating their peers regarding the value of academic integrity and the university policy.

Research seems to reveal that traditional honor codes are more successful at private institutions of smaller size, and largely residential in nature where the environment is conducive to building a strong sense of community, capable of embracing acceptance of fostering of such a policy. Institutions with larger enrollments comprised of residential and commuter, full and part-time students have not been as successful in implementing and enforcing a traditional honor code.¹

Where is Northeastern's academic integrity policy positioned on the continuum, and how do the proposals set forth in SGA's Resolution impact the current policy?

The good news is that Northeastern has a strong, clearly articulated academic honesty and integrity policy that is capable of being enforced university-wide through the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution's judicial board, comprised exclusively of students. So in essence the university already has in place a modified honor code. Our student body has clearly demonstrated

passion for preserving academic integrity through its work in adapting the senate resolution. The compelling voice of our student body was also strong enough to heighten the severity of the sanction for a first and second offense of violating the academic integrity policy: for a first offense, a student is placed on deferred suspension; for a second offense, the student is expelled from the university.

While some of the principles contained in SGA's resolution are already incorporated in the current policy, others that are currently being considered include an honor pledge, a signed statement by students acknowledging receipt and review of the policy, and more faculty emphasis of the policy by including a reference to the policy in all syllabi and explaining the policy in detail in the first class session.

What is the status of the resolution and its proposals?

In response to the SGA Senate Resolution, the Office of the Provost formed a committee to examine the SGA Senate resolution proposals in relation to the current academic honesty and integrity policy and procedures. The committee agreed to design and conduct a sampling survey of the university community to assess current perceptions and opinions regarding academic integrity issues in the community and the current policy in effect so as to make recommendations regarding implementation of further initiatives/principles as outlined in the resolution. The committee affirmed the importance of publication of the policy in the student handbook. Other action items included more emphasis of the

policy during new student orientation, heightening the severity of the disciplinary sanction for first and second offenses, and continuing implementation of educational programs that explain and emphasize the policy. The committee is continuing its work this year.

What can faculty do to promote academic integrity and enforce the current policy?

Be clear in your expectations of students regarding honesty in their academic work. Set the tone in your first class session by reviewing the university's Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy. Include it as a reference in your syllabus. Define and clarify what is acceptable to you in terms of collaboration, if applicable.

Let students know that the entire university community (students, faculty and staff) have a shared responsibility in enforcing the policy and confronting known instances of academic dishonesty. Emphasize to your students that the student body and the university community consider academic integrity a core value of the institution.

Engage in intentional and periodic review of your methods of assessment of student's academic work in your course. This includes examinations, papers and projects. As an example, consider revising your examinations for a given course yearly to not only reflect current trends and information regarding the subject matter of the course but also to ensure the integrity and security of the examination contents.

Take appropriate measures to reduce the risk of instances of academic dishonesty occurring in your classroom. Some examples include ensuring examination security, establishing the appropriate physical environment in which the examinations are administered to manage the risk of cheating, and establishing clear guidelines and expectations regarding integrity in academic work (for instance, the nature and extent of approved collaboration in group projects).

Most importantly, confront acts of academic dishonesty when they occur. Failure to do so may send the message to students that the university community is not consistent in enforcement of the Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy, and that academic integrity is not valued at the university.



References

1. "Some Good News About Academic Integrity," *Change Magazine*, September/October 2000, pp. 32-35.
2. *Synthesis: Law and Policy in Higher Education*, vol. 9, no. 1, Summer 1997, p. 645.

William Fischer is Director of the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution.



The purpose of the Jonas Chalk "Chalk Talk" column is to initiate a dialogue on best practices, successes, and frustrations in teaching. (Although the concerns covered are often universal, we do put a particular emphasis on the challenges and rewards of teaching freshmen.) This column hopes to stimulate, engage and occasionally nudge professors to share their wisdom and ideas about the best ways to achieve outstanding learning outcomes in the freshmen year. I would like to encourage readers to submit letters, questions, or ideas that you have to jchalk@coe.neu.edu.

Old Jonas columns can be accessed at: <http://gemasterteachers.neu.edu/documents/documents.html>

Dear Jonas,

I'm trying to work through a frustrating experience. I gave an exam to my freshman class yesterday and finished grading it late last night. When I got to my office this morning I had a call from someone in the Student Services Office who wanted to give me a heads-up. She told me that a few of my students had stopped by to complain that some others in the class were cheating during the exam. Even though she urged the students to speak directly with me, they indicated that they wouldn't. I'm upset about the cheating. I'm upset that the students who observed it don't want to talk to me about it, and I'm upset that I didn't detect it.

Frustrated Faculty Member

Dear Frustrated,

I understand your frustration; we would like to think that everyone around us would behave in a highly ethical manner. Unfortunately, as we are too often reminded, there are always

some who cross ethical boundaries. Don't be overly concerned that freshmen are reluctant to approach you about issues like this; they are not yet the mature decision-makers that most will become by graduation.

In the short run there's not much you can do about the current situation without proof. You could review the exam solutions with an eye toward looking for evidence of cheating (e.g., unlikely identical solutions, identical misspellings, unlikely identical names for variables, wrong work but right answer, etc.). Hidden notes (cheat sheets) are long gone.

Diligence in preventing and detecting cheating takes effort that we'd rather invest elsewhere. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I have the sense from your letter that you feel you weren't as diligent as you might have been. Setting appropriate expectations and environments are critical. Some questions might provide a guide. Is there a statement about academic honesty on your syllabus? If so, is it clearly and constructively stated to reflect your expectations for ethical behavior and society's expectations of engineers' behavior in general? Did you restate your expectations prior to the exam? Were there obstacles presented by the exam setting? Was the room too congested? If so (and a better one wasn't available), did you prepare a couple of different versions of the exam? Was there adequate attentive supervision throughout the exam? While no one enjoys a prisoner camp environment, students do appreciate measures that insure fairness.

Distasteful as it might be, my last comment focuses on the critical issue of dealing with offenders when detected. Don't be a vigilante; bring the situation to the attention of the Office of Student Conduct and Contact Resolution for advice. They are set up to adjudicate, to issue fair findings/punishment and to keep appropriate records. Quite often, a first offense is punished by a grade of zero on the work involved, disciplinary probation, etc. A second offense (indiscernible if there is no official record of a first offense) typically results in suspension or expulsion.

Unfortunately, there will always be those who try to cheat. Equally unfortunate is that we must invest the effort to prevent, detect and report cheating.

Jonas

HAVE YOU DEVELOPED INTERESTING TEACHING TECHNIQUES THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHER FACULTY? YOU CAN HELP RUN A WORKSHOP OR WRITE A TEACHING MATTERS ARTICLE. CONTACT US AT X8583 AND LET US KNOW WHAT YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE!!

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