

## *Campus Report*

Sept. 29, 2008

### **University statistics for 2007-08 on academic dishonesty**

Statistics from 2007-08 on academic dishonesty at the University of Saskatchewan continue to show decreases compared to last year's figures. This is the sixth year in which the University has gathered and reported on these statistics.

The term "academic dishonesty" includes both plagiarism, which is the use of other people's ideas or writing without credit, and other forms of cheating, such as taking notes into an exam or lying about admission qualifications. The Office of the University Secretary maintains a record of the number of academic dishonesty cases handled by colleges.

For the last academic year, from July 2007 to June 2008, the university had 45 cases heard by college and university panels. Of these, 42 students were found to be guilty. One student was suspended for a term. The remainder were penalized with either outright failure in the class or with a grade reduction in the class. About two-thirds of the cases were plagiarism on essays and assignments, while the rest involved other forms of cheating such as using notes in an exam or submitting the same essay in two different classes.

Here are university statistics dating from 2002, when the University Secretary's Office began keeping track of these figures:

2007-08:	45 cases heard; 42 guilty. Penalties included 1 suspended.
2006-07:	69 cases heard: 52 guilty (10 pending) Penalties included 3 suspended, 1 expelled.
2005-06:	75 cases heard; 74 guilty. Penalties included 4 suspended, 2 expelled.
2004-05:	52 cases heard; 47 guilty. Penalties included 1 suspended, none expelled
2003-04:	73 cases heard, 60 guilty. Penalties included 4 suspended, 3 expelled
2002-03:	79 cases years, 67 guilty. No data on penalties.

### **Academic Integrity Initiatives**

Colleges report that instructors now routinely include information about academic integrity in their course outlines and in class discussions. This class-by-class approach helps students to understand how integrity and ethical behaviour can be incorporated into all of their learning activities at the university. Specific initiatives include the following:

**Arts & Science:** The college offers presentations on plagiarism in all first year English classes. Because so many first year students from Arts and Science and from other colleges take English, these presentations result in a large majority of first-year students learning about the university's standards.

**Business:** The School presents sessions at student orientation and posts material relating to academic integrity on relevant websites.

**Education:** The College emphasizes that Education students are expected to observe the Professional Code of Ethics for Teachers, both in the college and in schools.

**Engineering:** A faculty-student task force on academic dishonesty was established to develop initiatives and reduce occurrence. The strongest finding was that to be fully effective this issue must be peer (student) driven. This year the Engineering Student Society addressed this issue by giving presentations to all first-year students, without faculty present.

**Graduate Studies:** The College continues to offer workshops on academic integrity for faculty and students, to acquaint participants with the definition of integrity, the regulations and penalties. The College plan for the 2008-2012 time period includes initiatives to help international students improve their language skills. It is the College's belief that with enhanced language ability, fewer students will engage in the shortcuts that result in academic dishonesty allegations. The College has also adopted a statement on academic integrity and included it in the College's policy and procedures manual. The statement includes standardized penalties.

**Kinesiology:** The College has made a point of putting the University's academic integrity policy on all course outlines and all instructors are encouraged to give examples of how the policy will be applied in their class. This year, all instructors with laboratories were asked to be clear in their instructions that a student group may work on a lab together but assignments must be turned in separately. Because Teaching Assistants are the ones who often pick up violations of academic integrity, their role in the process was stressed during orientation sessions.

**Law:** The Studies Committee has developed guidelines for maintaining integrity in open-book exams.

**Student Judicial Processes workshops:** In the spring of 2008, the University Secretary offered several sessions of a two-hour workshop on "Student Judicial Processes at the University of Saskatchewan". Sessions will continue to be offered this fall. The workshop is for faculty, staff and students who are involved in university judicial processes, such as discipline and appeal hearing boards which address violations of the university's academic and non-academic policies, or which hear appeals of college and university decisions. In particular, the workshop is directed toward individuals who serve on hearing boards or who make decisions about student appeals or who provide advice to students about appeals.

**Academic Integrity Week:** From Sept. 29 to October 4, 2008, the University Learning Centre and the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness are organizing the University's sixth annual Academic Integrity Week ([www.usask.ca/integrity/](http://www.usask.ca/integrity/))

### **Background information about academic dishonesty**

The U of S takes a proactive approach in educating students about honesty and integrity so that their degrees are earned honestly and are respected by their future employers.

One of the contributing factors in students' decisions to plagiarize is poor time management – students who had not allocated enough time to work on an essay or assignment, taking what appeared to be the easy way out by cutting and pasting material from the Internet. However, faculty do know their students' writing abilities through in-class assignments and exams, and can identify phrases which appear “canned” or overly sophisticated. Instead of having to search through books and articles in a library to find the source, faculty can now use simple exact-phrase Google searches to find out whether an essay or assignment has been plagiarized.

Most plagiarism cases are discovered in classes taught by the College of Arts and Science, particularly in classes such as humanities and social sciences which require submission of a significant amount of written work such as essays, reports and other assignments. Almost all of the 20,000 students at the university take classes in Arts and Science, particularly in their first and second years. About a third of the dishonesty cases in Arts and Science classes involve first-year students.

Surveys of other universities indicate that most other universities comparable to the University of Saskatchewan in size penalize about 80 to 100 students a year.

Over the last six years, the Office of the University Secretary has embarked on a campaign to educate students about honesty, and to give students and faculty access to resources to avoid plagiarism. The “Writing it Right” campaign began in the fall of 2002, with posters advertising a web address ([www.usask.ca/honesty](http://www.usask.ca/honesty)) which provides tools for faculty and students to encourage honesty. The site includes guidelines for correct citations of sources, resources for faculty in designing course assignments, and guidelines for academic conduct and on how accusations of dishonesty are handled. The website is designed to be accessed by students online, to offer immediate help as they are writing their essays and assignments.

For the last three years, the College of Graduate Studies & Research and the Associate Vice-President for Information and Communications Technology collaborated on a PAWS channel through which students were encouraged to familiarize themselves with the University policies for academic integrity and for computer usage.

Faculty are also encouraged to discuss academic integrity in class, and to provide information about plagiarism and cheating in class outlines. Handout sheets describing university policies are available on the Honesty website.

## University penalties

The University of Saskatchewan policy on academic dishonesty requires that accusations of cheating are dealt with by faculty committees at the college level. Penalties are not prescribed in the policy but are left to the discretion of the faculty committee hearing the individual case.

As the college which has dealt with the most cases of academic dishonesty, Arts and Science has articulated its rationale for penalties. Their penalty for a first offense of plagiarism or cheating is normally a zero on the assignment or exam in question, plus an additional final grade penalty of between five percent to 15 per cent. The severity of the final grade penalty is decided through committee discussion of the following factors: the year of the student; the student's understanding of the offense and of the general academic rules of the university; the student's accountability for their actions and their cooperation with the committee in the hearing; and the degree to which the instructor outlined relevant issues such as including a note in the course outline about academic honesty. The penalty is discussed with the instructor and student. If a student is found guilty of a second case of plagiarism or cheating, usually that student is suspended or expelled.

The College of Graduate Studies and Research (CGSR) has also published a document on academic honesty which describes the range of penalties that will apply in cases including plagiarism and research dishonesty. The document clarifies that graduate students can be expelled for plagiarism in coursework, even for a first offense, and that plagiarism in a thesis or in research data will almost inevitably result in suspension or expulsion.

In the other professional colleges penalties may be severe even for a first offense, because the professions for which these students are being trained require high standards of ethical behavior for professional certification.

### Websites:

Main site: [www.usask.ca/honesty/](http://www.usask.ca/honesty/)

Academic Integrity Week: [www.usask.ca/integrity/drupal/](http://www.usask.ca/integrity/drupal/)

Links to U of S policies and other resources:

[www.usask.ca/university\\_secretary/honesty/resources.php](http://www.usask.ca/university_secretary/honesty/resources.php)