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University Committee on Academic Policy
Academic Dishonesty – Subcommittee

Proposal for UCAP Consideration: Establishment of Category
“Academic Dishonesty Probation” and Increasingly Severe
Consequences for Students Who Repeat Acts of Academic
Dishonesty

Committee Members:

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Summary

The Academic Dishonesty Subcommittee was charged with examining the issue of a grade marker being placed on a student's transcript to indicate if a course was failed as a result of cheating.

After due deliberation, the subcommittee arrived at a recommendation to address the problems that prompted consideration of an academic dishonesty grade marker, but a solution that did not include a literal grade marker on a student's grade transcript. The committee rather converged on a proposed policy to track substantiated cases of student academic dishonesty, and further on a proposed strong institutional response to substantiated cases of academic dishonesty, particularly when repeatedly undertaken by a given student.

Current Policy

The current policy at Michigan State in regards to academic dishonesty goes no further than to say that cheating is unacceptable and that a student may be failed in a course if found guilty after due process. (See Appendix A) Additional consequences may be proposed by the dean of the student's college, and with ultimate decision on the proposed additional consequences made by the Associate Provost (currently Dr. Estry).

Under current policy, it is discretionary on the instructor as to action in cases of clear academic dishonesty. The instructor may choose to give the student a 0 for the specific graded work on which the student "cheated"; the instructor may choose to give the student a term grade of 0 for the course; or according to recent interpretation by the MSU Ombudsman, the instructor may choose to take an intermediate position as regards to grade in the course. In addition, at the discretion of the instructor, the instructor may inform the student's dean of the infraction. There are a number of well-defined appeal possibilities that a student may exercise following an allegation of academic dishonesty. Under the current system, the student is presumed "guilty" once the allegation is made, and must "appeal" to have any punitive actions reversed.

Currently there is no tracking of cases that are available to deans or faculty regarding a student's prior cases of academic dishonesty. In the case of an uncontested case of academic dishonesty or one which was unsuccessfully appealed, and which resulted in a term grade of 0, the student's transcript reflects the 0.0 received from the failed course, but provides no indication as to why the course was failed. The student could retake the course in any succeeding semester. After repeating the course, the 0 is factored OUT of the students GPA, yet remains on the transcript.

In effect, currently a course failed because of a charge of academic dishonesty is treated the same as a course failed for poor academic performance.

Proposed Strengthening of MSU Policy on Academic Dishonesty

After substantial analysis, the committee came to view the issues of academic dishonesty around two dimensions: effects on student grades, and appropriate institutional response to substantiated cases of academic dishonesty. As can be seen above, current policy regarding academic dishonesty convolutes these two dimensions, and in effect collapses both to punitive action on student grades.

We as a committee propose to strengthen MSU position on cases of academic dishonesty by making clear the distinction between individual faculty actions on student grades and the MSU institutional response to substantiated cases of academic dishonesty. We recommend leaving actions on student grades as they are currently. Options open to an instructor who alleges academic misconduct should be the full range of options currently available. Options range from warning only, to giving the student a 0 for the graded work on which the academic misconduct took place, and all the way to giving the student a 0 for a term grade in the course. Any effect on student grade resulting from academic dishonesty should continue to be reported to the student and to the relevant academic dean(s), and the student should retain the right of appeal.

To institutionalize a strong response to substantiated cases of academic dishonesty, the committee further proposes the establishment of a new category of “probation” that would be tracked as cases of “academic probation” are currently tracked. This new category will be called *academic dishonesty probation*.

Unlike academic probation, which can be lifted once a student raises his or her GPA above threshold values, academic dishonesty probation would remain internally in effect until the student graduates. The core of our proposal is to build on current procedure by establishing tracking of students who perform acts of academic dishonesty and using that tracking to impose increasingly severe consequences on students who repeat such acts.

Faculty and students alike have the right and the responsibility to report cases which they perceive as cases of academic dishonesty to the appropriate academic dean or associate dean.

We as a subcommittee recommend the following University policy if the charge of academic dishonesty is uncontested or unsuccessfully appealed.

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1. **First Offense**

- a. The student is placed on Academic Dishonesty Probation for the remainder of their undergraduate career at Michigan State.
- b. The information regarding Academic Dishonesty Probation will not appear on the student's transcript.
- c. Information regarding Academic Dishonesty will be available to the Associate Provost and staff serving the Associate Provost, and to associate deans for undergraduate education within each college and to appropriate academic staff serving the associate deans.

2. **Second Offense**

- a. The student is suspended for the duration of the following semester (not to include a summer term).
- b. A hold is placed on the student's account.
- c. In the event that the student were due to graduate, graduation would be blocked until the one-semester hold/probationary period was complete.

3. **Third Offense**

The student is expelled from the University, forbidden from enrolling in MSU ever again. Formal proceedings leading to expulsion are conducted through the Associate Provost's office.

4. **Administrator Discretion**

Flexibility of action is left the relevant administrator (a dean or the Associate Provost normally) to take additional action beyond that prescribed above in egregious situations.

5. **Course Drop or Withdrawal**

The subcommittee also recommends that a change in policy be made so that a student who has been accused of academic dishonesty in a course may not drop or withdraw from the course during the judicial appeal of a charge of academic dishonesty.

The faculty person bringing the charge should not seek to ban the student from the classroom during any appeal process: the student has the right to attend the class during the judicial process.

Should the student be cleared of the charge of academic dishonesty, he/she will be given the option of dropping the course within five business days of being cleared. If the originally alleged action of the student precedes the tuition refund drop date and if the student is cleared of charges, then if the student chooses to drop the course, the student

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should be refunded applicable tuition dating to the time of the allegation of academic misconduct.

Discussion

After considering a number of other possibilities we settled on the above for a number of reasons. The two options we considered were essentially polar opposites with the one extreme being the above and the other being the establishment of a transcript marker permanently indicating an incident of cheating.

First, it was decided a grade marker would be too harsh. For a student to be penalized for the rest of their life for what may have just been a bad decision at a bad time was not something the subcommittee wanted to consider.

Second, the two options

(a) permanent grade marker on the student's transcript

versus

(b) the establishment of a tracking system for cases of academic dishonesty with increasingly severe consequences for repeat offenders

can be considered polar opposites on a continuum of possible institutional responses to cases of academic dishonesty. The committee explored positions of "middle ground" on this continuum, but rejected them on the basis that middle ground positions seemed to result uniformly in a necessity to consider "special cases." The committee felt strongly that while some flexibility for administrators is always desirable, the position of MSU on academic dishonesty should be clear cut, and most importantly, the entire community should be aware of MSU taking a strong position on academic dishonesty and of very sure consequences for students participating in academic dishonesty.

The above solution is both fair and just. Should a student make only one bad choice then they should not have to worry about being on probation because they will not cheat again. Should they be caught twice, they should be punished more severely. Students who repeat three times are an affront to the core values of any university, and by their actions, they demean honest degrees of the vast majority of MSU students. Such "three-peat" offenders deserve and should be removed from our University.

Conclusion

The subcommittee asks that the preceding proposal be considered by the University Committee on Academic Policy, approved, and passed on to Academic Council for adoption as a policy of MSU.

Appendix A

From the Office of the Ombudsman

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/RegsOrdsPolicies.html>

**MSU Regulations, Ordinances and Policies Regarding
Academic Honesty and Integrity**

1. GENERAL STUDENT REGULATIONS

• **1.00 PROTECTION OF SCHOLARSHIP AND GRADES**

- The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:
- **1.01** claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.
- **1.02** procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.
- **1.03** complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.
- **1.04** allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.
- **1.05** alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.
- **1.06** fabricate or falsify data or results.

2. MSU ORDINANCE

• **17.00 EXAMINATIONS**

- **17.01** Unauthorized attainment of
- **17.02** Unauthorized transfer of
- **17.03** Prima facie evidence
- **.01** No person shall procure in any unauthorized manner any examination question or answer related to any course of study offered at Michigan State University, regardless of the form or format in which such question or answer may originally have been maintained.
- **.02** No person shall furnish to any unauthorized person any examination question or answer related to any course of study offered at Michigan State University, regardless of the form or format in which such question or answer may originally have been maintained.
- **.03** The unauthorized possession of any of the aforesaid examination documents shall be considered prima facie evidence of an attempt to violate the provisions of this section.

3. ALL-UNIVERSITY POLICY: INTEGRITY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND GRADES

The following statement of University policy was approved by the Academic Council and the Academic Senate, and serves as the definitive statement of principle and procedure to be used in instances of academic dishonesty.

1. The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor these principles and in so doing protect the validity of University grades. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. (See General Student Regulation 1.00, Scholarship and Grades, for specific regulations.) Instructors, for their part, will exercise care in the planning and supervision of academic work, so that honest effort will be positively encouraged.
2. If any instance of academic dishonesty is discovered by an instructor, it is his or her responsibility to take appropriate action. Depending on his or her judgment of the particular case, he or she may give a failing grade to the student on the assignment or

Appendix B

2.4 Adjudication of Undergraduate Student Grievances and Cases of Academic Dishonesty, Violations of Professional Standards, and Falsification of Admissions and Academic Records.

2.4.1 The University undertakes, within the limits of its

resources and the limits imposed by due respect for the professional rights of the faculty, to supply an appropriate remedy for legitimate student grievances. (The limits of the University's resources proceed from factors that, while subject to its influence, are not always subject to its control.)

2.4.1.1 Procedures for the adjudication of grievances

must proceed in a timely manner.

2.4.2 If problems arise in the relationship between instructor and student, both should attempt to resolve them in informal, direct discussions. If the problem remains unresolved, then the chief administrator of the unit and/or the Ombudsman should be consulted. If still aggrieved, a student may then submit a formal, written grievance for consideration by an appropriate hearing board.

The formal grievance alleging violations of academic rights must include a proposed remedy, which could be implemented by a responsible administrator.

2.4.2.1 Grievances must normally be initiated no later than mid-term of the semester following the one wherein the alleged violation occurred. If the involved instructor or student is absent from the University during the semester, or if other appropriate reasons exist, an exception to this provision shall be granted by the unit. If the involved instructor is no longer employed by the University before the formal grievance procedure is completed, the grievance process may proceed.

2.4.2.2 Student grievances must be initiated at the lowest administrative level feasible: normally, the department/school. With the approval of the college dean, small departments/schools may waive jurisdiction and

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refer grievances to the college hearing board.

2.4.2.3 Administrators shall transmit written grievances promptly to the unit hearing

board and to the instructor or other persons party to the matter.

2.4.3 For the purpose of constituting a department/school or college hearing board, undergraduate students shall be represented on the hearing board.

2.4.4 Parties to a grievance shall have an opportunity to state their cases, present evidence, designate witnesses, ask questions, and present a rebuttal.

2.4.4.1 Units shall constitute their hearing boards and establish their own procedures in a manner consistent with this document. A copy of procedures adopted by each unit shall be filed with the Office of the Ombudsman and with other appropriate offices.

2.4.4.2 Unit hearing boards shall ensure that a collegial atmosphere prevails in grievance hearings. Involvement of counsel should normally not be required. When present, counsel shall be limited to a member of the student body, faculty, or staff of the University. No member of the University's legal department shall serve as counsel under these provisions.

2.4.5 The hearing board shall prepare a written report

of findings, and forward copies to the parties involved and to the Ombudsman. All recipients are expected to respect the confidentiality of this report. When a hearing committee finds that a violation of academic rights has occurred and that redress is possible, it shall direct that redress be provided. The responsible administrator, with the advice of the hearing board, shall implement an appropriate remedy.

2.4.6 The appropriate initial judiciary for cases involving alleged violations of regulations prohibiting academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, or falsification of admission or academic records by undergraduate students which are referred for disciplinary action shall be the hearing board of the college within which the violation is alleged to have occurred.

2.4.6.1 In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction, the appropriate judiciary will be randomly selected by the Assistant Provost for Undergraduate Education from the hearing boards for the Colleges of Arts and Letters, Natural Science, and Social Science.

2.4.6.2 In cases of academic dishonesty, violations

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of professional standards, or falsification of admission or academic records by undergraduate students which are referred for disciplinary action, the college level hearing boards shall have available to them the full range of decisions provided to a judiciary for disciplinary cases through this document. The dean of the student's college may implement the finding, request the hearing board to reconsider its decision, or forward the finding and a conflicting recommendation to the Office of the Provost for final resolution.

2.4.7 Either party to a grievance may appeal the decision of the department/school hearing board to the college hearing board. All appeals must be in writing. When a college hearing board finds that a violation of academic rights has occurred and that redress is possible, it shall direct that redress be provided. The responsible administrator, with the advice of the board, shall implement an appropriate remedy.

2.4.7.1 Either party to a grievance may appeal the decision of the college hearing board to the University Academic Integrity Review Board only in cases of a penalty grade for academic dishonesty; cases involving alleged violations of regulations prohibiting academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifications of admission and academic records by undergraduate students which are referred for disciplinary action; or other grievances heard only at the college level. All grievances must be in writing. When the University Academic Integrity Review Board finds that such a violation of academic rights has occurred and that redress is possible, it shall direct that redress be provided. The responsible administrator, with the advice of the board, shall implement an appropriate remedy.

2.4.7.1.1 All appeals to the University Academic Integrity Review Board in cases of a penalty grade for academic dishonesty must specify the alleged defects in the substance and/or procedures of the previous adjudication(s) in sufficient particularity to justify further proceedings.

2.4.7.1.2 All appeals to the University Academic Integrity Review Board in cases of alleged violations of regulations prohibiting academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, or falsification of

admission and academic records which are referred for disciplinary action must specify the alleged defects in the substance and/or procedures of the previous adjudication in sufficient particularity to justify further proceedings.

2.4.7.2 Appeals may challenge the substance of a decision and/or the procedures employed in the adjudication. (Presentation of new evidence will normally be inappropriate at Student Handbook and Resource Guide 47 an appeal hearing.)

2.4.7.3 Appeals must be filed within ten class days following notice of a decision. The original decision shall be held in abeyance while under appeal.

2.4.8 If a student is accused of academic dishonesty and is referred for judicial action, and if a disciplinary sanction is not held to be supported by the preponderance of evidence as required in Article 4, the student may appeal a penalty grade received in the case to the department/school hearing board as indicated in 2.4.9.

2.4.9 A student who receives a penalty grade based upon a charge of academic dishonesty, even if not referred for disciplinary action, may seek a hearing according to the procedures in this Article. In such a hearing, the burden of proof shall rest upon the instructor whose prior assignment of the penalty grade will constitute a charge of academic dishonesty. The hearing board shall proceed in compliance with applicable academic legislation on the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards, and the procedural and appeal provisions of this document shall apply.

ARTICLE 3

STUDENT RECORDS AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

3.1 Achieving educational goals, providing direction to students, and extending service to society demand that the University keep records. All policies and practices concerning records shall be based on respect for the privacy of the individual student. Because of the professional and legal responsibilities involved, record keeping must be delegated only to responsible persons.

3.2 All policies and practices governing access, maintenance, and release of student records shall conform to the University's published guidelines.

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- 3.2.1** No record shall be made, duplicated, or retained unless there is a demonstrable need for it which is reasonably related to the basic purposes and necessities of the University.
- 3.2.2** The University shall not make, duplicate, or retain records of a student's religious or political beliefs without the student's knowledge and consent.
- 3.2.3** A student shall have the right to inspect the official transcript of his or her own academic record and shall also have the right to inspect reports and evaluations of his or her conduct.
- 3.2.4** All policies and practices dealing with the acquisition of information for records shall be formulated with due regard for the student's right of privacy.
- 3.2.5** Every record containing information about a student's character shall state when the information was acquired and the name and position of the person who gave it.
- 3.2.6** Evaluation of students shall be made only by persons who are qualified to make that evaluation.
- 3.2.7** All persons who handle confidential records shall be instructed concerning the confidential nature of such information and their responsibilities regarding it.
- 3.2.8** No one outside the faculty or administrative staff of Michigan State University, except as specified by law, may have access to the records of a student's offenses against University regulations without the express permission of the student in writing.
- 3.2.9** All policies governing the maintenance and the selective release of records and of portions of records shall be made public in an appropriate manner and shall be subject to judicial review as provided in Article 4.

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4.2.4 Decisions:

- a. **Findings:** After hearing a case, a hearing body shall decide whether an allegation has been supported by the preponderance of evidence. If the allegation is not so supported, the case is dismissed. If the allegation is supported, the judiciary may select from the following sanctions:
- b. **Sanctions in disciplinary cases:**
1. **No action.**
 2. **Warning.** An official written statement expressing disapproval of acts committed.
 3. **Warning Probation.** A probation indicating

that further violations of regulations will result in more severe disciplinary action. This probation will be imposed for a specific period of time, and the student shall be automatically removed from probation when the imposed period expires. This probation may be accompanied by a requirement that restitution be made for University property damages or losses resulting from acts committed, or other requirements or special conditions as deemed appropriate.

4. Disciplinary Probation. A period of time specified for observing and evaluating a student's conduct, with or without special conditions, including a written reprimand and indicating that (a) further violations while on probation may result in more severe disciplinary action including suspension or (b) further violation while on probation of regulations of similar or greater severity will result in suspension. This probation will be imposed for a specific period of time, and the student shall automatically be removed from probation when the imposed period expires.

Special Conditions: A special condition of disciplinary probation may include:

- (i) **Restitution:** By such date established by the appropriate judiciary or administrative officer, the student shall pay for University property damages or losses resulting from acts committed.
- (ii) **Change of Residence:** The student shall be required to move from his or her current on-campus residence, to either an off-campus location or to another location within the University Housing system that is acceptable to the Office of Student Affairs.
- (iii) **Other:** Other action deemed appropriate to a specific case.

5. Suspension. A suspension from the University may be by semester, in which case the student is eligible to apply for readmission at the end of the stated period of time; or it may be a conditional suspension, in which case the student must demonstrate that he/she has fulfilled stated conditions prior to applying for readmission. Suspension is implemented, after approval, by the Vice President for Student Affairs and Services except in the case of academic dishonesty, violation of professional standards, or falsification of admission and academic records, in which suspension is implemented, after approval, by the Provost.

c. Sanctions appropriate to student group constitutional

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questions or issues may include:

1. Censure.
2. Revocation of privileges.
3. Revocation of registration of a student organization.
4. Other action deemed appropriate to a specific case.

4.2.5 Appeals: The decision of a hearing body may be

appealed in accordance with the principles established

in Section 4.3.6 for disciplinary cases and 4.4.9 for nondisciplinary cases. Procedures for filing

and acting on appeals shall be as follows:

a. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the appropriate judiciary within three (3) class days following written notification of the original decision.

b. If a group is involved, a representative designated

by the group shall act in behalf of the group.

c. The appellate body shall request relevant information,

review the case and the procedures used, and then decide as follows:

1. There are not sufficient reasons for another hearing and the decision of the lower judiciary shall stand, or

2. The lower judiciary shall be directed to rehear the case or to reconsider or clarify its decision, or

3. The appellate body may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision, or in extraordinary circumstances,

elect to rehear the case in its entirety.

4.2.6 Reconsideration: Each hearing body shall make

provision to allow a complainant or respondent to request reconsideration of a case within sixty (60) class days if it is determined that new evidence has arisen. An exception to the time provision may be granted by the appropriate hearing body.

4.2.7 Members of a judiciary involved or possessing

other conflicts of interest in a case at issue shall be disqualified from sitting on the judiciary for that specific case.

4.3 Due Process—Disciplinary Proceedings

4.3.1 Students accused of violating a regulation or all-

University policy shall have the right to appear before a duly constituted judicial body as herein provided. No student shall be suspended from the Student Handbook and Resource Guide **49**