

April 14, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

To: E. James Potchen, ECAC Chair

Cc: Douglas Estry, APUE  
Karen Klomparens, Dean, Graduate School  
John Powell, UCFA Chair  
Roger Ludy, UCSA Chair  
Mary Noel, UGC Chair  
Payal Ravani, ASMSU  
Connie Zheng, COGS  
Jackie Wright, AGO

From: R. Sekhar Chivukula, UCAP Chair

**RE: Revision of Policy on the Integrity of Scholarships and Grades**

UCAP respectfully submits the attached revision to the *All-University Policy: Integrity of Scholarships and Grades* for consideration by academic governance. This action constitutes UCAP's response to ASMSU Bill 14-24 (Academic Governance Pending Log 07-08:3, received 11/05), recommending that UCAP re-examine University Academic Integrity Policy.

UCAP recommends that this draft policy be examined by all relevant committees of academic governance, especially UCSA, UGC, UCFA, ASMSU, and COGS and, requests that it be forwarded to Faculty and Academic Council after any necessary modifications are made. The committee stands ready to assist in this process, if requested.

In addition to the draft policy, UCAP is providing a brief description of the rationale for the revision and a summary of the issues raised during our discussions of Academic Integrity Policy at MSU.

Finally, based on UCAP's review of University Academic Integrity policies and procedures at MSU, UCAP strongly recommends that UCSA consider revisions to *Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University* (the AFR) to streamline the current cumbersome and opaque process for the adjudication of instances of academic dishonesty. In particular, in the view of the majority of UCAP members, providing a centralized authority at the University level (an administrator and hearing body, presumably coordinated by the Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Dean of the Graduate School), as opposed to beginning appeals at "the lowest administrative level feasible: normally the department/school" (as described in 2.4.2.2 of the AFR), would help to insure consistency in the process and cut-out some of the multiple levels of appeal. UCAP stands ready to assist UCSA in this process, if requested, and to propose the necessary modifications to the integrity of scholarships and grades policy after receiving input from UCSA.

## Summary of UCAP Consideration of Academic Integrity Policy

April 14, 2008

UCAP has examined the *All-University Policy: Integrity of Scholarships and Grades* that specifies University policy in regard to dealing with instances of academic dishonesty. In its examination of this policy, UCAP noted several troubling shortcomings:

1. The mandated "threshold" for an instance of academic dishonesty being brought to the attention of that student's Dean, who might be in a position to know of instances of previous violations of academic integrity policy and who would be in a position to track these offenses, is currently the assignment of a failing grade in the course. The committee feels that any violation of academic integrity serious enough to warrant the reduction of a score on an individual assignment or test should be brought to the attention of the student's Dean.
2. There is currently no centralized mechanism for "record keeping". The committee is troubled that a student can cheat multiple times in different courses and, particularly if none of the instructors involved chooses to assign a failing grade, no one can track multiple offenses and apply the appropriate penalty. The committee proposes that a new field in the "Electronic Student Folder" be developed, to allow for the recording of instances in which a student is found guilty of academic dishonesty. UCAP recommends that this new field created to track instances of academic dishonesty be accessible only to College-level (in the student's Dean's office) or University-level administrators (most appropriately in the offices of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education or the Dean of the Graduate School), and not be accessible to individual faculty or Departments.
3. The current policy focuses on penalizing the student, to the exclusion of "education". The committee believes that in the case of a first-time offender (whose offense is not so egregious to warrant expulsion) it is crucial that the University institute an program to educate the student about academic dishonesty and thereby help to insure that the student will not commit an act of academic dishonesty in the future.

The changes proposed by UCAP are designed to address each of these issues. We anticipate that the changes required by items 1 and 2 are straightforward to implement; item 3, the creation of an educational program on academic dishonesty for first-time offenders, will require a commitment of resources from the University to create. Such an investment would, in the opinion of the committee, be of great academic benefit.

It is important to note that, procedurally, this policy on the integrity of scholarships and grades is complete only in conjunction with the report *Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University* (the AFR) which specifies the relevant judiciaries, hearing procedures, and appeals processes to be used in the adjudication of the offenses. The AFR is currently under review by the University Committee on Student Affairs. UCAP considered some of the procedural issues involved and identified two shortcomings in the current procedures:

- A. The current Department/College-based system (see section 2.4.2.2 of the AFR) does not insure "consistency" in the treatment of instances of Academic Dishonesty. In the most extreme example, it

is possible that two students from different colleges who otherwise have identical records, who commit the same act of academic dishonesty, and who receive the same sanction from the course instructor could, upon appeal of the penalty of the instructor to their respective departments or colleges, receive different sanctions.

B. The current system is "cumbersome" in that a student appeal could, in principle, be heard multiple times, first at Departmental level, then the College level, then the University level, and then by the Provost, and possibly further through a Grievance proceeding. There is anecdotal evidence that this cumbersome and opaque process is itself a deterrent to instructors reporting instances of academic dishonesty. The committee feels that a more streamlined and transparent process is urgently needed.

In considering the two procedural issues raised above, UCAP debated proposing that the initial student appeal be heard at the University level, providing a centralized authority (administrator and hearing body, presumably coordinated by the Office of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Dean of the Graduate School) to insure consistency and to cut-out some of the multiple levels of appeal. A substantial majority of UCAP members felt that such a centralized system would be desirable, but a minority was concerned that such a system would be impractical and would not appropriately take into account differences amongst the various colleges (e.g. the existence of an "Honor Code", etc.).

Given that resolution of these last two issues involves modification of the AFR, which is expressly the concern of UCSA, UCAP is not proposing modifications of the integrity of scholarships and grades policy to address this issue at this time. Rather, we strongly encourage UCSA to take the procedural shortcomings listed above into account in revising the AFR and to consider the establishment of a centralized process for dealing with instances of academic dishonesty. UCAP stands ready to assist in this process, if requested, and to propose the necessary modifications to the integrity of scholarships and grades policy after receiving input from UCSA.

In addition, UCAP has considered and dismissed two proposals that have been debated previously:

- a. The committee believes that the use of an "Academic Dishonesty Grade Marker", to indicate on the transcript that a student was found guilty of academic dishonesty in a particular course, is inappropriate. Such an indication would be, in essence, a "Scarlet Letter" branding the student and emphasizing punishment rather than education and reform. In addition, the committee felt that use of such a grade marker undermines the integrity of MSU's grades overall.
- b. The committee believes that it is not appropriate to have a rigid schedule of sanctions, e.g. "two-strikes and your out" policy. While it is essential, as outlined in the proposed policy, that sanctions properly take into account prior offenses, the majority of the committee felt it important that the determination of sanctions be flexible to respond to the wide variety of possible offenses and circumstances.

Finally, the committee notes that the title *All-University Policy: Integrity of Scholarships and Grades* is likely a misnomer: so far as we have been able to determine, this policy has not been approved by (nor needs the approval of) the Board of Trustees. Unless Board approval is sought, the designation "All-University Policy" appears to be incorrect.

## **PROPOSED POLICY: INTEGRITY OF SCHOLARSHIP AND GRADES**

University Committee on Academic Policy

April 10, 2008

1. The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of scholars comprised of instructors and students. The University expects that both instructors and students will honor these principles and in so doing protect the validity of University education and 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, the instructor may give the student a reduced score for the assignment or a reduced grade, including a failing (0.0) grade, for the course.
3. When an instructor gives a student a reduced score for an assignment or a reduced grade, including a failing (0.0) grade, for the course due to academic dishonesty, the instructor will notify the student's Dean in writing of the details of the dishonest action. This written notification will remain in the student's file unless the incident is successfully appealed by the student. On the first offense of academic dishonesty, the student will attend an educational program provided by the University on academic integrity and academic dishonesty.
4. A student who receives a reduced score on an assignment or failing grade (0.0) for the course based on a charge of academic dishonesty may appeal a judgment made by a department, a school, or a college. Refer to Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University.
5. When in the judgment of the student's dean, action other than, or in addition to, a reduced score for an assignment or a failing grade (0.0) for a course is warranted given the dishonest academic action by the student, the dean will refer the case to the college-level hearing board, which shall have original jurisdiction. In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction, the appropriate judiciary will be randomly selected by the Assistant Provost from one of the three core colleges. Appeals from the judgment of a college hearing board may be made to the All-University Academic Integrity Review Board. Refer to Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University.
6. In instances of academic dishonesty where the instructor feels that action other than, or in addition to, a reduced score for an assignment or a failing (0.0) grade in the course is warranted, the instructor will report the case to his or her departmental or school chairperson and to the student's academic dean. The dean will then refer the case to the college-level hearing board, which shall have original jurisdiction. Refer to Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University.

### 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 for the course.
3. In instances where a failing grade in a course is given only for academic dishonesty, the instructor will notify the student's academic dean in writing of the circumstances.
4. The student who receives a failing grade based on a charge of academic dishonesty may appeal a judgment made by a department, school, or a college. Refer to Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University.
5. When in the judgment of the academic dean, action other than, or in addition to, a failing grade is warranted, the dean will refer the case to the college-level hearing board, which shall have original jurisdiction. In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction, the appropriate judiciary will be randomly selected by the Assistant Provost from one of the three core colleges. Appeals from the judgment may be made to the All-University Academic Integrity Review Board. Refer to Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University.
6. In instances of academic dishonesty where the instructor feels that action other than, or in addition to, a failing grade in the course is warranted, the instructor will report the case to his or her departmental or school chairperson and to the student's academic dean. The dean will then refer the case to the college-level hearing board, which shall have original jurisdiction. Refer to Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University.