



Why Academic Integrity is Important

Focusing on academic integrity as part of a college education is directly associated with several desirable outcomes for the university, faculty, students, and society. Consider how commitment to academic integrity impacts each of the following.

Maintaining Educational Standards

A college degree is only valuable if it reliably indicates that the person to whom it has been awarded has acquired the knowledge, skills, and dispositions indicated in the learning outcomes of the programs in which they were enrolled.

Promoting a culture of academic integrity ensures that grades reflect student learning, maintaining educational standards at the university, and providing assurance that degrees issued by the institution honestly and reliably indicate student knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Failure to maintain a culture of academic integrity can lead to devaluation of degrees from this institution because they cease to be reliable indicators of knowledge and skills.

Promoting Original Thinking

The highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy for the cognitive domain is Creation—the generation of new ideas, concepts, or products based on understanding, analysis, evaluation, and application of a body of current knowledge. Creation cannot occur without connection to what already exists.

Because academic integrity involves respecting the intellectual property and words of others, it forces us to find the edges of what is known and understood, propelling us toward the open spaces of original thought, finding new connections between existing ideas and developing new ideas.

Career Preparation

Several studies of students and professionals in a variety of disciplines have shown a positive association between engaging in unethical behavior in college (specifically different forms of cheating) and dishonesty/rule-bending behaviors in the workplace.

An institution-wide commitment to upholding academic integrity helps to prepare students for careers by instilling the values of courage, honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility, that are important in all work environments. It can make a university's graduates more attractive as job candidates if the institution and graduates have a reputation for having high integrity.

Institutional Reputation

There are several different factors that affect the reputation of a university. Among these are the quality of scholarship, the quality and consistency of instruction, the preparedness of graduates, the classroom and academic climate, and the supportiveness of the social environment. All of these are positively impacted when the institution commits to promoting academic integrity, and in so doing, the reputation of the university is enhanced.

Having a good institutional reputation facilitates recruitment of talented students and professionals, and improves retention of faculty and students.

Professional Reputation

Maintaining a positive rapport with students is essential to a healthy learning environment in which students respect and value their instructor and the assignments they are asked to complete. By adhering to the values of academic integrity, an instructor will develop a reputation as a consistent, fair, unbiased, and ethical mentor.

In addition, positive relationships with colleagues also rely on behaving with academic integrity. Betraying the trust of coworkers, treating others with disrespect or unfairness, being dishonest, or shunning responsibility for one's actions are sure ways to develop a negative reputation and to be held in low esteem by one's colleagues.

Promoting an Ethical Society

Ethical lapses by public figures are in the news so frequently that it seems as though nobody behaves with honesty or integrity. It is easy to succumb to thoughts that we are doomed to live in a society that glorifies the nakedly self-interested and self-absorbed, and in which the ends are justified by any means.

That's loser talk.

Nobody enjoys working with or for those who lack integrity and who exhibit questionable ethics. Nobody wants coworkers, teachers, friends, or lovers who lack integrity and whom they cannot trust.

Ethical lapses are only permissible in a society that permits them. By holding ourselves and others accountable for ethical decision-making, and by committing to the values of academic integrity, we can promote a more ethical society and culture.

References and Reading

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