The University Senate
FACULTY · STUDENT · P&A · CIVIL SERVICE

Student Academic Integrity Committee (SAIC)
February 7, 2024
Minutes of the Meeting

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration, or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Faculty Attitudes About Reporting Cheating; McCabe Survey]

PRESENT: Kenneth Leopold (chair), Zornitsa Keremidchieva, Susan O'Conner-Von, Bibhu Panda, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Janie Salmon, Donald Riley, Luke Cheman, Tina Jeon, Chloe Skerik, Ilene Alexander, Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn, Kevin Wendt, Sierra Pickett, Sharon Dzik

OTHERS: Katie Koopmeiners, associate director, Office for Community Standards

1. Faculty Attitudes About Reporting Cheating

Professor Ken Leopold, chair, called the meeting to order and introduced Katie Koopmeiners, associate director, Office for Community Standards, who was present to update the committee on faculty attitudes about reporting cheating. Koopmeiners' presentation, informed by her literature review on faculty responses to academic dishonesty, focused on why faculty often do not report academic misconduct, despite its prevalence, with 60% of students admitting to engaging in some form of misconduct. This issue has been exacerbated by the shift to online learning and the rise of tools like AI and cheating websites. While faculty overwhelmingly agree on the importance of academic integrity, studies suggest that up to 50% of faculty may ignore known instances of cheating. This low reporting rate often impacts marginalized groups, particularly international students.

Koopmeiners reviewed existing literature on the subject, noting that it typically centers on student behavior rather than faculty responses. She identified the following reasons that faculty may not report academic dishonesty:

- Stress about dealing with misconduct, and differing opinions on how to handle such cases. Negative prior experiences make people less likely to report future incidents.
- Concerns about legal repercussions, professional reputation, or the impact on students, as well as feelings of guilt and shame
- Difficulty of defining plagiarism
- Lack of clear institutional policies and support, with faculty often expressing frustration when their institutions do not effectively back them in enforcing academic standards

- Faculty identity, including differences between full-time and adjunct staff: Full-time faculty are more likely to report incidents and educate students about academic integrity, while adjunct faculty often perceive less academic dishonesty and may show more leniency.
- Course delivery method of courses (online vs. in-person) may influence how faculty view and handle misconduct, with in-person faculty more likely to take action.
- Perceived lack of evidence or time
- Concerns over the judicial process

Koopmeiners then opened the floor for questions and comment, and the following discussion ensued:

- Kevin Wendt highlighted the fact that adjuncts may hesitate to report incidents out of concern for student welfare or fear of losing their position, particularly when they are unsure of their job security or lack support from their institution. Koopmeiners agreed, pointing out the ambiguity in policies and how faculty may fear the repercussions of their decisions, especially in cases where misconduct is not entirely clear-cut.
- Sharon Dzik added an anecdotal perspective, emphasizing the fear of negative consequences, like poor reviews or not being rehired, that adjuncts experience. She also mentioned how some faculty avoid reporting due to unclear or difficult-to-interpret policies, opting for informal resolutions instead. Leopold raised concerns about the difficulty of navigating ambiguous cases of misconduct and prefers to handle such situations informally.
- The conversation then shifted to the challenges in understanding the standard of evidence for academic misconduct, with Susan O'Conner-Von noting that the University of Minnesota uses a "preponderance of the evidence" standard, similar to civil court cases, which makes it easier to find responsibility in cases with circumstantial evidence. She also praised the University's emphasis on restorative justice, which aims to help students learn from their mistakes rather than just penalizing them.
- Zornitsa Keremidchieva raised a concern about the McCabe Survey, noting that its section on faculty does not address these important factors. She questioned how the committee plans to incorporate these insights into their work, as the context provided by the presentation uncovers aspects of faculty experiences that may not be fully captured by existing data.

Leopold thanked Koopmeiners for the presentation and noted that Keremidchieva's question related directly to the next agenda topic, to which he turned the committee's attention at that time.

2. McCabe Survey

Leopold noted difficulty in knowing how to proceed with the draft report but opened the discussion to questions and comments.

Keremidchieva highlighted a specific point in the survey report about students being blamed for cheating, suggesting a potential misunderstanding or oversimplification of the issue. She also raised concerns about the perception of cheating as a serious problem and the broader implications on the purpose of education, such as character development and social responsibility.

Wendt suggested an update to the terminology in the report, noting that the student government mentioned was now called the Undergraduate Student Government (USG). He also questioned whether paying students to advocate against cheating might lead to perceptions that they were merely tools of the administration. He raised concerns about the effectiveness of a tutorial training program and its validation.

Tina Jeon suggested discussing the types of cheating and misconduct in more detail, particularly how they might differ across departments and for international students, who might experience or perceive academic integrity differently. She suggested that this could be addressed in orientation or training programs.

Leopold and others discussed whether orientation and transition experiences for students and faculty could be expanded, with some expressing concerns about how much could be covered in such programs without overwhelming participants. They also addressed the need for more inclusive programming for adjunct faculty and full-time instructors, particularly regarding academic integrity. Ilene Alexander added that existing faculty programs were offered more broadly through teaching support, and that a more generalized program could be used for all instructors.

Keremidchieva discussed two points. First, she suggested embedding an academic integrity unit within the University-wide first-year course, which is part of a program designed for all incoming students. While transfer students may not always have access to the first-year course, she noted that some colleges offer alternative resources. Second, she inquired about the timeline for the report, seeking clarity on when it should be finalized. Leopold mentioned that the brainstorming was still ongoing, but they aimed to complete the report by March or April.

Stacy Doepner-Hove proposed involving student advocates in academic integrity discussions, suggesting that students who had gone through the process could share their experiences with faculty, potentially easing their concerns about referring students for violations. She recommended incorporating testimonials, possibly anonymized, in a Canvas course or other materials, as faculty might respond better to hearing directly from students.

Sharon Dzik shared her past experience with a student advocacy program, which ran successfully in the mid-2000s with around 12 trained students. These student advocates gave presentations on academic integrity in classrooms, and the program was well-received, with 200 presentations in one year. She expressed uncertainty about how to fund such a program now, but suggested hiring a graduate student to manage it if possible.

Leopold sought input from the committee about whether they should request funding for a program, emphasizing that this would be the only funding request. Wendt supported the idea, explaining that funding was needed to run the program but without paying students, to avoid influencing their opinions during the process. O'Conner-Von also endorsed the idea, highlighting the power of student-led discussions compared to instructor-led ones, especially when they come from student leaders in the relevant discipline.

Leopold then addressed the faculty-related section on page 4 of the document. Wendt pointed out that faculty needed more consistent guidance about the AIM program, as many were unaware of its existence and the specific processes students were following. He suggested moving this point to the top of the list for better clarity.

Dzik suggested that faculty would benefit from knowing where their department heads or deans stood on the issue of reporting academic dishonesty. She recommended that deans periodically assure faculty that reporting was encouraged and would not result in negative consequences for their reputation. Koopmeiners also added that adjuncts, in particular, may not be aware of where their department leaders stood, so communication from their direct supervisors would be valuable.

In response, Leopold agreed that this approach could be beneficial, emphasizing the importance of clear communication from department heads and deans. Dzik also raised the point that it should be made clear that students could report academic dishonesty as well, as this occasionally occurred but was not frequent.

Wendt shifted to a concern about the clarity of data on page 61 of the appendix. He pointed out that some instructions and survey questions were difficult to read and that some questions seemed to be validation questions to ensure participants were engaging thoughtfully. He asked how to handle responses from individuals who answered incorrectly, as they might have been disregarding the instructions.

Keremidchieva raised concerns about the effectiveness of teaching awards in improving teaching quality, questioning whether they were directly linked to better teaching outcomes. She argued that the report could benefit from addressing broader issues, such as labor context, workloads, and faculty fears, which impacted academic integrity and reporting practices. She suggested that the committee's goal should be to increase academic integrity rather than merely boosting reporting rates. She also proposed separating issues related to reporting from the broader academic integrity context, allowing for more targeted recommendations.

Leopold agreed with her suggestion, and they discussed how to phrase recommendations to address both faculty reluctance to report and the need to foster an environment where academic integrity is prioritized. They concluded that adding a point specifically focused on increasing academic integrity would be beneficial.

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