

Minutes for Meeting on Oct 27, 2015 Academic Integrity Committee (AIC) 2015-2016

Members:

Peter Paquette – Director OSI
Anil Shetty – OSI
Bonnie Weston – OSI
Lori Critz – Library
Jeff Davis – ECE (Chair)
Jake Soper – Chem & BioChem

Joel Sokol – IsyE
Mary Elizabeth Herndon – U.Student
Adam Greenstein – U.Student
James Hite – G.Student
Paul Foster – FEB Liaison

Room: Klaus 3100

Discussion Items:

I. What is the impact of the “new” sanction model? (OSI)

Overall, OSI feels that the new sanction model is working as expected. The number of suspensions is starting to increase, but it is not an overwhelming number.

It was commented by the Honor Advisory Council that students in general like the new model because it is much clearer. After the first offense, the students are made aware of the more severe penalty of suspension. However, there was some concern raised by the Student Honor Committee that some of the educational components might not be working. This is especially true with a complex issue like plagiarism. Educating the students on “What exactly is plagiarism?” should be a key component to the educational process.

II. Is only a small fraction of cheating getting caught? (Prof. Sokol)

Prof. Sokol brought up that some experiments in ISYE suggest that around 30% of students have cheated on an exam. Though not an official number, it does beg the question as to how much cheating occurs here at Georgia Tech. Should we be doing more to reduce cheating?

It is the feeling of some of the members that we need a change in culture so that students follow ethical behavior on tests and assignments. We understand that in a stressful environment that the tendency to cheat could rise, but we would hope that our students LEARN to be ethical despite the external pressures. In fact, this should be the culture that we support at Georgia Tech.

It was mentioned that students feel the need to cheat because of the overwhelming emphasis on the GPA. In fact, companies many times have a minimum GPA before they will talk to students. This stress and inability to get a foot in the door is what

drives students to cheat. It was voiced that our peer institutions have higher GPAs which is not fair to our students in the job market.

It was suggested that GT should tell companies they cannot have a minimum GPA (or lower their GPA requirements for GT students) which might help relieve the stress.

This is a difficult problem to solve. As a long term direction for college education, perhaps a mastery learning approach to education might help this situation and change the culture. With this paradigm, students don't move to new topics until they have mastered material (i.e. 95-100% success on examinations). GPA's become irrelevant at this point, and is a function of how long it takes students to get through all topics in their degree. Such a system of learning demands more of our students and our faculty, but the idea is that it does not leave holes in their educational background. Personalizing education in this way requires technology and new ways of teaching, but perhaps this is the direction that Georgia Tech should lead. This would be infused with a cultural ethic that cheating is not tolerated, and if a student is given multiple times to master a topic without penalty then PERHAPS the pressure to cheat would be lessened.

III. How should GT handle the use of plagiarism detection programs? (OSI)

A. BOR legal affairs recommendation

The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia Office of Legal Affairs recommends notifying students of potential plagiarism prevention technology (such as Turnitin, MyDropBox, etc.) in a course section and providing students a choice, prior to registration, among course sections with or without the use of the technology. A notice should include an explanation of how the technology works, such as the following:

"This section may use plagiarism prevention technology. Students may have the option of submitting papers online through a plagiarism prevention service or of allowing the instructor to submit hard copies of their papers. The papers may be retained by the service for the sole purpose of checking for plagiarized content in future student submissions."

Student comments on this software were focused on that it creates undue stress on the student as they wait for a grade on the subject. If they have accidentally plagiarized and a computer program catches them on this --- students fear automatic failure.

It is proposed that if we have this software, then students need to be able to run their papers though it BEFORE they turn it in. This way they don't have this stress and latent fear that they will get a failing grade because of the software. The committee felt that giving students access to the program could

also teach them about plagiarism as well. In fact, we hope that the software systems have tutorials that help to train students in this area.

We would support a campus-wide license to a system that could be used in this way for both students and faculty. This would give students prior knowledge about the program that is used, and hopefully they would be comfortable with it.

Some concerns were raised as to why we have to warn students that we will check them in this way. In fact, if the students don't know that these systems are being used this could be less stress on them.

It was raised that perhaps this tool could be integrated into t-square as well. There must be some operational budget associated with the t-square software maintenance that could be tapped into.

The library has used "Authenticate" more than "Turnitin." On a case by case basis, this tool can be \$100 per paper. A site licenses for GT may be 30K per year. It is unclear what other institutions do in this regards.

There may be issues because Turnitin archives all work that is sent to it.

In addition, there may be different standards of plagiarism in different schools.

B. Should GT have a common style guide to clarify plagiarism issues? (Shetty)

Having a common style guide to define plagiarism at the SCHOOL level seems to be a reasonable request. Students in the department can use this for all of their papers and code. Students would also understand what the school considers plagiarism as well.

IV. What is the impact for students/alumni who misrepresent their GPAs? (OSI)

It is unclear what can be done about this. Perhaps it should be explicitly stated in the honor code. Perhaps this can be incorporated into the GT1000. The library will come in at the request of the GT1000 to discuss this issues.

There were many questions without resolution on this topic. The question is what is the penalty if they get caught? Do employers check this? Should GT certify resumes?