AY21-25-B

Faculty Senate Issue Log Form

Date-Submitted: 12/16/21
Title-of-Issue: Review of ODU Policies on Academic Dishonesty
Description: I believe that our present system of dealing with academic dishonesty (cheating and plagiarism) by students is unworkable and broken. By making it on the one hand very hard for the professor to sanction a student who cheated (e.g., by simply giving zero points for an assignment), while raising the stakes for the student sky-high if they agree even to a such a minor sanction (report to OSCAI, permanent academic record, etc.), the end result is that faculty will be reluctant to address any kind of dishonesty short of the most blatant and severe cases, and students have NO incentive to acknowledge their transgression and come to a quick solution.
I propose that we reinstate a system where minor, first-time transgression can be dealt with by the faculty member (by giving 0 points for partial or complete assignments, e.g.) and the student without involving OSCAI, and only serious or repeated cheating will lead to a referral.

(See <https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/student-conduct-academic-integrity/docs/acad-integrity-report-form-19-20.pdf> for the present rules, which I doubt many faculty are even aware of).
Rationale: The present system is akin to making it a felony to go 5 mph over the speed limit - there will still be ample people who go too fast, but the consequences will be born by just an unlucky few who get caught. If we trust faculty members with the authority to determine grades for submitted work in general, we should also trust them to recognize and properly deal with academic dishonesty - the students can always appeal a grade that they believe has been given unfairly.
The present system leads to faculty to "close their eyes" to cheating, both to avoid the immense hassle of following the present policies and to avoid major damage to a student's prospects for a "youthful mistake".
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