

# **Creating a Climate of Academic Integrity: Tips to Prevent Cheating**

## **Promoting Academic Integrity**

- Stress the importance of integrity to the learning process.
- Stress that honest work builds self-esteem, knowledge, and skills. Cheating undermines the quality of the education South Texas College provides, and devalues the reputation and the degrees that are awarded.
- Highlight the Code of Conduct and the importance of honesty (e.g., in class and in your syllabus); remind students of the Code before exams. Encourage students to tell you immediately if they see cheating.
- Set clear standards for assignments and grading; stress rules for proper citation. Tell students if they may collaborate and, if so, how much.
- Enlist students' help in creating a climate of integrity in your class. Tell them you know that most students don't cheat, and that you appreciate honest students who want to learn.
- Discuss ethical standards for your class/subject, especially those relevant to the course and to students' future careers. Give criteria for the "hard choices" in your field, with examples of how ethical issues can and should be resolved.
- Inspire, encourage, and model integrity. You don't have to threaten or scold. Positive reinforcement works better than scare tactics, and internal constraints (morals, ethics, character) are the most effective. As educators, faculty influence students' attitudes and development and reinforce student integrity by helping them to make the right choices.

## **General Preventative Steps**

- Monitor exams to help students maintain academic integrity, and promptly confront any suspicious conduct.
- Prohibit talking or other communication during exams. If there are questions about the test, have them talk to you.
- Require students to turn off cell phones and put away notes, books, and all electronic devices inside their backpacks.
- Number exams (on front and on each page); use sign-in sheets for each row, by exam numbers, to record where students sit.
- Have students sign each page of the exam in ink and/or complete the entire exam in ink.
- Tell students to cover their work, and encourage them to sit apart from friends or study partners during exams.
- Require & check written excuses for make-ups and extensions.
- Don't allow students to leave exam room without permission.

### **How to deter copying and collaborating during exams**

- Use test formats requiring short-answers, essays, or problemsolving. These are difficult to copy and require analysis and thought to derive the correct answer – guessing won't work.
- Use two or more exam versions, scrambling the order of questions or answers, or changing key variables or terms; use different colored paper for each version, so you can see whether adjacent students have the same test.
- Give no credit for correct answers unless all work is shown, and the work leads to the answer.
- Use alternate seating.
- Put multiple choice or true-false sections at bottom of page (harder to copy); have students turn in Scantrons AND tests.
- Have students remove and put away hats/dark glasses.

### **How to deter use of unauthorized notes or devices**

- Give clear oral and written instructions regarding what materials can or cannot be used on the test.
- Before distributing test, remind students put away books, notes, and other study materials & store them out of sight.
- Instruct students to turn off and put away all electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, iPods, headphones, calculators, computers) during exams; inform students that unauthorized equipment found on or out during exams may result in a zero.
- Change exam questions often, ideally every quarter/section.
- If you provide sample questions or study sheets, do not use the exact same questions on the exam.
- Have students turn in blank blue books to you at the class period before the test, mark to indicate you've seen them, and redistribute at random, or have students exchange blank blue books (e.g., pass down a row and to the left).
- Tell students to begin writing on a certain page, to turn bluebook upside down, or to leave specified pages blank.

### **How to prevent fraudulent requests for re-grading**

- Mark wrong answers/blank space with an "X" or slash mark; Circle wrong, empty and/or correct answers on Scantrons. Draw a red line connecting each Scantron answer selected by a student to the next answer ("connect the dots").
- Photocopy graded tests/Scantrons before returning to students.
- If you accept tests for re-grading, require original exams to be submitted by the end of the class period in which the tests are returned with a written statement of which questions they want re-graded and why they think there has been a grading error. Make a list of all students who submit exams for re-grading.
- If you keep electronic copies, let students review on-line copies using class website and password-protected access rather than returning originals of exams. This prevents theft or unauthorized access to exams, & alterations to graded exams.
- Don't return tests--allow students to see exams during office hours only. Or return test papers but not Scantrons (tell students to keep track of their answers on their test papers as well as marking their Scantrons).
- If you re-grade an exam, keep a record of the original score in gradebook & database, including page totals, problem scores, and total exam score.
- Have one person review all re-grade requests and grade changes.

### **How to prevent loss/theft of tests**

- Count the # of exams distributed, the # of students taking the test, and the # of exams turned in – before you leave the exam room; make sure the numbers match; use numbered exams and sign-in sheets.
- Collect exams from students while they are still seated rather than have a chaotic rush to the front.
- Have a consistent, secure method of transporting tests between class, office, and home; ensure security of computers & copy facilities; keep office & desk locked when you are out.

### **How to keep a "ringer" from taking a test for another**

- Take periodic attendance during the quarter so that you recognize who is in your class and who is not.
- Make sure you collect an exam from everyone; require students to turn in tests.
- Require students to have their South Texas College ID on their desks during exams and to show ID as they turn in their exams.