INTRODUCTION

Academic dishonesty is prevalent in classrooms across the country. A plethora of evidence from the literature exists to substantiate this bold claim. The explosion of online programs on college campuses over the past decade without specific academic dishonesty prevention techniques provides fertile ground to exacerbate the prevalence of academic dishonesty. In addition, the availability of textbook solutions manuals and test banks available for purchase via the internet further intensifies the academic integrity issue. Most recently, it was reported that students are cheating with tiny listening devices that link to MP3 players or telephones (Moore 2017). Now is the time for all faculty members, administrators, and governing bodies to take the steps necessary to preserve the academy by attacking academic dishonesty and producing graduates with integrity.

The purpose of this paper is to draw on the literature to provide a comprehensive view of academic dishonesty within a framework in which to build an attack on academic dishonesty and encourage dialogue about an epidemic that affects nearly all higher education programs. Prior to the framework, a case for a framework and dialogue among academicians is made.

A CASE FOR AN ATTACK ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY FRAMEWORK

In addition to producing college graduates with integrity, the merits for dialogue about and a framework to attack academic dishonesty include the lack of a clear definition of academic honesty, evidence from the literature of the existence of academic dishonesty, and the inability to pinpoint students prone to academic dishonesty based on individual characteristics. The inability to pinpoint specific individual characteristics parallels the corporate fraud literature, that states the motivations of perpetrators provide a better indication of those prone to commit fraud. These motivations are commonly depicted by the fraud triangle.

Academic Dishonesty: Defined or Not

The specific definition of academic dishonesty appears to differ from institution to institution and from country to country. Differences may also exist between faculty within the same institution. For example, one faculty teaching an online course may believe cheating occurs when resources are used while completing an online exam, while another professor might assume students will use resources while completing online exams.
Professors might take for granted that students know what constitutes cheating. However, a study that requested students to identify whether they had cheated, both before and after receiving a definition of cheating, reported more cheating behaviors after receiving a definition (Burrus et al. 2007) of academic dishonesty. The definition provided to students was the definition from one of the author's institutions. Elements of the definition included “giving or receiving of illegal aid from other persons or materials,” “use of prior knowledge of contents of the test or quiz without authorization from the instructor,” and discussions with others that had already completed a test (Burrus et al. 2007, p. 4). Another study that highlights the differences in definition of academic dishonesty occurred when graduate-level students received the answer to a difficult quiz question “inadvertently” by a visiting scholar (Woodbine and Amirthalingam 2013). The information was “inadvertent” because the researchers had intentionally provided the information to one section of a course in order to determine whether the students would use the information to their benefit. Students used the information to correctly respond to the quiz question and when debriefed, indicated they did not believe it was cheating. However, students in a control section of the course that did not receive the information viewed it quite differently.

The evidence in the literature also suggests differences in academic dishonesty definitions across geographical boundaries and academic majors. Ukrainian students define academic dishonesty differently than U.S. students (Yukhymenko-Iescroart, 2014). Business students in Iran have a different perspective on serious academic ethical misconduct than do business students from the United Arab Emirates (Mirshenkar and Lawrence 2009). U.S. business students view various forms of dishonesty as being more serious than do business students from the United Arab Emirates (Williams et al. 2014), yet U.K. accounting students are more likely to cheat than U.K. accounting students (Salter et al. 2011).

It is clear that the lack of a universally-accepted definition of academic dishonesty exists among faculty and across institutions of higher education, academic majors, and across geographical boundaries. Restonerrerection (2012), through factor analysis, produced two overriding constructs to define academic dishonest. These two constructs are those “committed inside” [the classroom] and those committed “outside the classroom.” However, online instruction and blended (online homework and/or one academic major. Academic dishonesty is per- vasive and needs attention. Multiple studies appear in the literature with a focus on developing a profile of student characteristics that are prone to cheating.

Student Characteristics and Motivations

Many studies appear in the literature that attempt to identify characteristics of those inclined to commit acts of academic dishonesty. Similar to the fraud literature, personal characteristics provide little promise for the identification of those that commit acts of academic dishonesty. Gender was not significant on one study (Kerkvliet and Sigmund 1999) where others found females to be less tolerant of unethical practices (Mirshene and Lawrence 2009) and more likely to report cheating (Smith and Shen 2013). Another study found males to be more likely to assist in cheating and that males believe cheating to be more socially acceptable (Smyth and Davis 2003). However, the same study found females less likely to admit to cheating (Smyth and Davis 2003). Academic major, social acceptance, and average hours a week working was not significantly correlated to cheating (Kerkvliet and Sigmund 1999). The lack of academic major in Kerkvliet and Sigmund (1999) is in contrast to earlier mentioned studies where differences were found among academic majors (Teixeira and Rocha 2009).

Academics could learn from those that fight corporate fraud, by moving away from the characteristics of the offender and to the motivations behind the dishonest act. The fraud literature reveals that the attack on fraud begins with the identification of the elements that appear in the three-pronged fraud triangle: (1) pressure (incentive), (2) opportunity, and (3) rationalization (Cressey 1973). Becker et al. (2006) research on student cheating resulted in Cressey’s fraud triangle to explain cheating. They found a positive relationship between the three elements of the fraud triangle and academic dishonesty. Students completed a Likert-type survey with responses subsequently factor analyzed to identify common constructs (Becker et al. 2006). The resulting constructs were labeled pressure, opportunity, and rationalization; the three points of the fraud triangle (see Figure 1).

The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE, The Fraud Triangle) describes a chronology of the three points on the triangle. First, pressure needs to exist. From the perspective of academic dishonesty, this pressure might come from the desire to obtain specific grade within the time frame available for earning that grade (Becker et al. 2006, Kerkvliet and Sigmund 1999). After the pressure appears, the perpetrator identifies an opportunity to commit the dishonest act without getting caught (ACFE, The Fraud Triangle). This opportunity might arise from a lack of proctors, too few exam proctors, graduate assistants proctoring exams (Kerkvliet and Sigmund 1999), other...
students providing answers to exam questions (Becker et al. 2006), faculty's lack of action to deter academic dishonesty (Becker et al. 2006). Finally, the perpetrator must be able to rationalize, or make the action acceptable to oneself (ACFE, The Fraud Triangle). Rationalizations that appear in Becker et al. (2006) includes, among oth-

ers, "If a professor does not explain what he/she consid-
ers cheating, the professor can't say I cheated" and "The penalties for academic dishonesty at our school are not se-
vere." Additional rationalizations might include "it's only college," "it's only a course," "everybody does it," and/or "it's only required for my major but I'll never need it."

The evidence presented thus far clearly suggests that aca-
demic dishonesty is a problem in institutions of higher ed-
ucation. Lacking a clear definition of academic dishonesty as an issue appears with students rationalizing cheating behavior with "faculty not explaining what he/she consid-
ers cheating" (Booker et al. 2006). Additional evidence of the problem appears with the limited evidence presented of studies on academic dishonesty and research attempt-
ing to identify characteristics of those who cheat.

FRAMEWORK: ATTACK ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The proposed framework draws on the corporate fraud lit-

erature that describes method to attach corporate fraud.

More specifically, the proposal offers a four-pronged at-
tack on academic dishonesty that includes prevention, de-
tection, investigation, and follow-up (see Figure 2).

Prevention (Deterrence)

The academic community, in many cases, follows the ap-

proach found in the corporate world to prevent fraud. That is, prevention efforts predominantly appear in the form of removing opportunities, mainly by implement-
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and/or institutions.

easily be implemented in higher education classrooms

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ing should extend beyond the basic “rules” of conduct, as Go and Necheam (2014) reveal that rules-based training without self-reflection does little to internalize, and thus enhance, ethical decision-making (academic honesty). In addition, faculty and administrators, as well as students, should be involved with the training.

Academic honesty/dishtonesty training, on a semester-by-semester basis, highlights the importance the university, college, and faculty place on integrity. A beginning of the semester training aligned with a professional organization such as The Center for the Public Trust (multi-disciplinary student and professional organizations with a focus on ethical leadership), Beta Alpha Psi (accounting) local Chamber of Commerce, or DECA (marketing and other business majors) might prove beneficial. The training might be required for all students with the training culminating with a ceremony and signing of a “pledge to integrity” (academic honesty). The training and pledge would serve as a constant reminder of the importance of integrity as a student. Training might address the typical pressures and rationalizations faced/used by students to cheat. Appropriate academic honesty behaviors might also prove beneficial in the training.

Equally important to other elements of training, a clear definition of academic integrity should appear in the training. Understanding the role playing scenarios could be used to highlight what constitutes appropriate behavior. It is also equally important that consequences of academic integrity be an integral portion of the training.

Detection (red flags)

Detection simply means the identification of suspicious activity, versus a verdict of guilty. Albrecht et al. (2009) states that fraud detection begins with the identification of suspicious activity (red flags, indicators, or symptoms), but also states that the suspicious activity might not actually be (p. 82). They identify methods of detection include chance, reports by others (e.g. hotlines or whistleblower systems), and examining data to identify anomalies (Albrecht et al. 2009). There are red flags that apply in the academic; however, faculty and administrators must be willing to acknowledge that cheating occurs. As noted earlier, many faculty prefer not to face the existence of cheating (Keith-Spiegel et al. 1998) and business deans underestimate the amount of cheating that occurs (Volpe et al. 2008).

It is acknowledged that administrators may not support faculty pursuing acts of cheating, and that leaving red flags unnoticed is easier. It is also acknowledged that the red flags may not be cheating or strong evidence of cheating. However, faculty must pursue red flags to build an environment with high academic integrity.

Drawing on the work of Dorminey et al. (2012), detection or the identification of red flags requires professional skepticism and risk assessment. Professional skepticism might suggest that educators pursue that which appears out of the ordinary. For example, a student that earns a “D” two times, in the same course when completed in face-to-face environment but makes an “A” when enrolled in the same course in the online environment would certainly appear to be out of the ordinary and worth pursuing.

Risk assessment involves evaluating the environment in which the dishonest act occurred, including the opportunity, the likelihood and magnitude of the act (Dorminey et al. 2012). From an academic perspective, the environments include inside the physical classroom, students’ study places, and online course delivery. The literature indicates that students are less likely to cheat when they believe they are being watched (Chen et al. 2014). However, many faculty acknowledge students might attempt to cheat right under the professor’s nose (e.g. water bottles with material printed and affixed inside of the bottle, cheat sheets attached to the inside of ball caps, and now ... small listening device attached to a paper clip on the table). Despite the brave that chance in-class cheating activities, online students typically are not being watched. In addition, online homework completed by both face-to-face and online students typically is not “watched.”

The magnitude of cheating should be considered in light of the impact on education programs, the academy, the respective professions, and society as a whole. A long-term impact exists with the frauds of the late 1990’s that rocked corporate America. The like of the Enron, MCI WorldCom, and HealthSouth frauds resulted in major corporate legislation. Corporate Boards of Directors, CEOs, and CFOs, as well as publicly-traded companies saw additional restrictions and costly documentation procedures, and as well as additional responsibilities for financial reporting.

Ignoring red flags (documented by the whistleblower in the Enron case) were overlooked and caused devastation to the organizations and their creditors, employees, and retirees of those organizations. As the producers of individual students that eventually work in corporate America, red flags in the academic environment should not be ignored. All red flags should be investigated.

Investigation

Red flags should be carefully investigated with professional skepticism and objectivity. Faculty should avoid jumping to the conclusion that cheating occurred without properly investigating the red flag. For example, an investigation of two students submitting work from the same IP address (red flag) may indicate they are roommates. Elements provided by Albrecht et al. (2009, p 85). First, investigators follow the identification of red flags. Second, faculty objectivity is critical. Faculty should avoid personalizing students, cheating. Typically, students are cheating for a better grade, versus “got the teacher.” Investigations in test “look for” evidence or “to get them” is not objective. Extending the example of the two online students submitting work from the same IP address, might reveal they completed all work at the same time of the day/night. Although somewhat condemning, further investigation might reveal they work and attend school during the same hours, leaving the same hours in which to complete assignments.

Third, a critically important component of the investigation is the support of supervisors or administrators in the academic chain of command or others in the institutional environment responsible for academic honesty violations. Fourth, faculty should present evidence objectively and with openness to questions from institution personnel. Above all else, adherence to the institution’s written policies and process for investigating acts of academic dishonesty is critical.

Follow-Up

Albrecht et al. (2009) note that perpetrators fear fraud investigations because of the damage caused to one’s reputation at work, in the community, and with their family. Similarly, Diekoff et al. (1996) reports students indicate a fear of getting caught as a deterrent to cheating. In addition to serving as a prevention method, following up on acts of academic dishonesty sends a confirming message to students that cheating will not be tolerated, consequences to cheating exist, and consequences will be enforced. Consequences of cheating should appear on the course syllabus and should be adhered to for confirming cheating incidents.

Vance and Jimenez-Anguizua (2014) indirectly imply that faculty should penalize dishonest students, indicating that failure to do such could be viewed as violating the profession’s code of Professional Conduct. Others have disenchanted with the value of the current ethics-type course suggest training that shifts the focus from codes of conduct sessions to ethical situations (Mastracchio et al. 2015).

ISSUES TO ATTACKING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Possibly one of the biggest issues to attacking academic dishonesty is the willingness of administrators to acknowledge problems exist and work to minimize the extent to which academic dishonesty exists. This issue is presented as a reality, a reality in which to resolve, not brush under the carpet. Administrator support in modeling appropriate behavior and supporting consequences are both critical. Administrators likely model appropriate behavior; however, imposing consequences may be an issue. Initial efforts to implement an instigation-wide academic honesty program (whereby offenders will face consequences) or attack on academic dishonesty may result in numerous student appeals and possibly parents visiting administration offices. Additionally, academic dishonesty in order to prevent reduced enrollments that may result from “news of academic fraud” appearing as headlines in the local newspapers.

A separate issue involves the investment of faculty and administrator time to identify the red flags, investigate, interview alleged offenders, and make the determination that academic honesty was actually breached. Follow-up time investments include written reports documenting due process afforded to students and adherence to the university-approved process.

Summary

Various pressures, opportunities, and the ability to rationalize serve as the foundation for students to commit academic fraud. This very act comes at the expense of not only the integrity of the academy, but at the expense of the student’s integrity.
This paper proposes a comprehensive framework for attacking academic fraud (cheating). Based on the corporate fraud literature, the framework consists of prevention, detection, investigation, and follow-up. As a pre-cursor to the attack on academic dishonesty, academic dishonesty must be clearly defined and the environment evaluated.

This environment includes the tone at the top, or the tone of administrators within the higher-institution environment. These administrators and faculty must walk the talk and walk the talk. They must support efforts to eradicate academic dishonesty to ensure a successful program. Policies and programs that discourage academic dishonesty (beyond a printed code of student conduct that appears somewhere on the institution’s website) should be in place.

Prevention controls, in addition to the tone at the top and specific course controls, to prevent cheating include honor codes, whistleblower hotlines, and academic training for students, faculty, and administrators. In addition, consequences should be well-known and implemented when proven acts of academic dishonesty emerge. Faculty should be mindful of detecting red flags and investigating when appropriate. The investigation should be conducted with an objective mindset and conducted in accordance with institution policy. Finally, following up on identified academic cheating incident should result in imposed consequences.

**FUTURE RESEARCH**

Several research ideas emerge from the proposed framework presented in this study. The results of a study to develop a universally-acceptable definition of academic dishonesty would prove useful as institutions implement a sound attack on academic dishonesty. Specific methods to prevent online cheating, an area more susceptible to fraud, should be explored. A longitudinal study of students that complete training programs specifically targeting academic integrity and institutions that implement such programs would add validity, or not, to the use of training programs. These studies should follow students as they graduate and enter the workforce.

A study of faculty, across institutions, perceptions of academic integrity and institutions that implement such programs would add validity, or not, to the use of training programs. These studies should follow students as they graduate and enter the workforce.

An investigation of institutions’ student conduct officers and their methods for addressing academic fraud, the percentage of the student population in which cases were reported, the consequences imposed, and whether repeat offenses were tracked and/or addressed would be of interest.

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Leisa L. Marshall & Anthony W. Varnon

**Fall 2017 (Volume 13 Issue 2)**

Journal of Academic Administration in Higher Education


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