



CAMPUS
ASSESSMENT
WORKING GROUP

Juniors and Seniors' Perceptions of Academic Integrity, Before the Pandemic
December 2021

This report was written by the Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG), Assessing Campus Experiences (ACES) subcommittee. The 2020 University of Maryland Student Survey (UMSS 20) was administered in class from March 2 - March 9, 2020, to juniors and seniors enrolled in Professional Writing courses. However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and paper administration of the survey, this report was delayed until now. This report summarizes initial findings on students' perceptions of academic integrity.

In March 2020, 1,298 students completed the paper survey (34% of all students enrolled in these courses).¹ The [University of Maryland Code of Academic Integrity](#) was amended effective April 1, 2020 to make scholarly misconduct grounds for rescinding a degree. These data were collected prior to the policy change, therefore it is unlikely that the amendment impacted survey responses.

Respondents' self-reported knowledge about the Code is high, but differences in the distribution of responses raise more questions than answers.

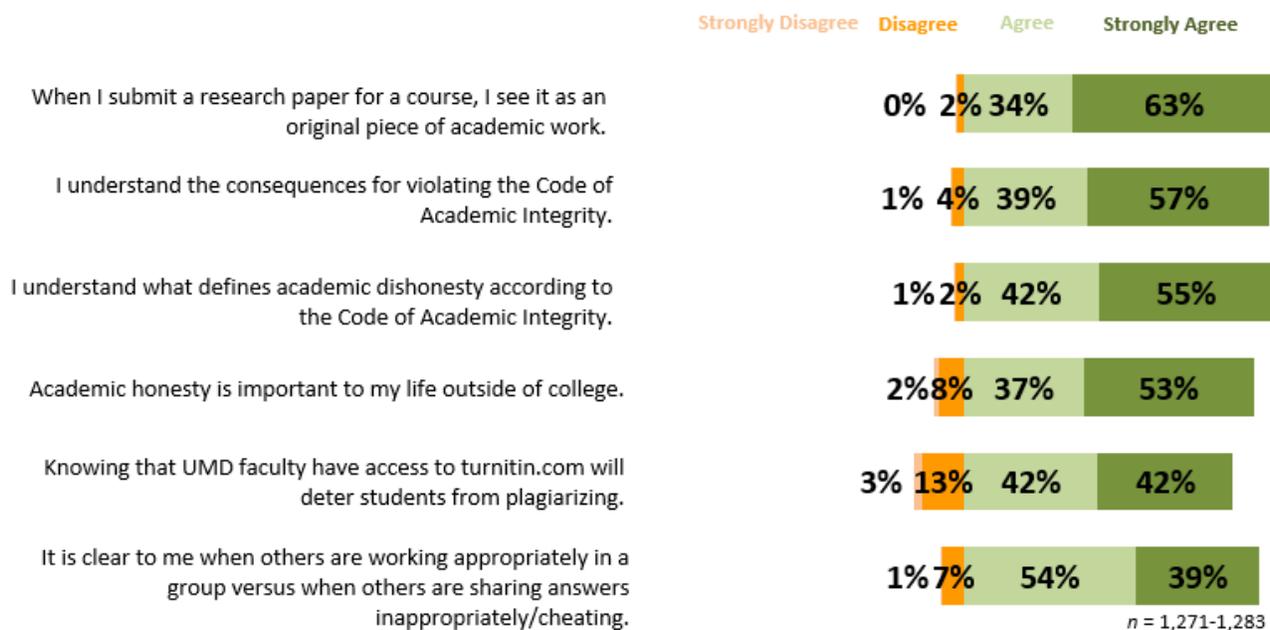


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents' agreement about code of academic integrity, 2020. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

- Ten percent of respondents disagreed/strongly disagreed that academic integrity is important to their life outside of college, and 16% disagreed/strongly disagreed that professors using Turnitin would deter cheating (see Figure 1).

¹ The distribution of respondents by race/ethnicity and gender was similar to that of the UMD population. The university records reflect current reporting federal guidelines and only include male and female as options.

Questions to Consider

- How should UMD reach students who disagree that academic integrity is important outside of college?
- Eighty-four percent agreed/strongly agreed that Turnitin deters plagiarism. What would deter the remaining 16%?
- UMD will collaborate with Chegg, a website that offers on-demand answers to assignments, to identify students who use the platform to cheat. Will students view this as a deterrent?
- Survey respondents indicated that academic honesty is important to their life outside of college. However, in 2021 academic misconduct referrals to the Office of Student Conduct doubled, seen in the [annual report](#). Is there a disconnect among students' understanding of academic dishonesty when the medium of learning changes?
- How are students interpreting appropriate group work versus sharing answers as cheating in a group?
- Different programs encourage different levels of academic collaboration. What impact might this have on the results?

Respondents' tested knowledge about code of academic integrity violations reveals an improvement, but confusion around academic integrity remains.²

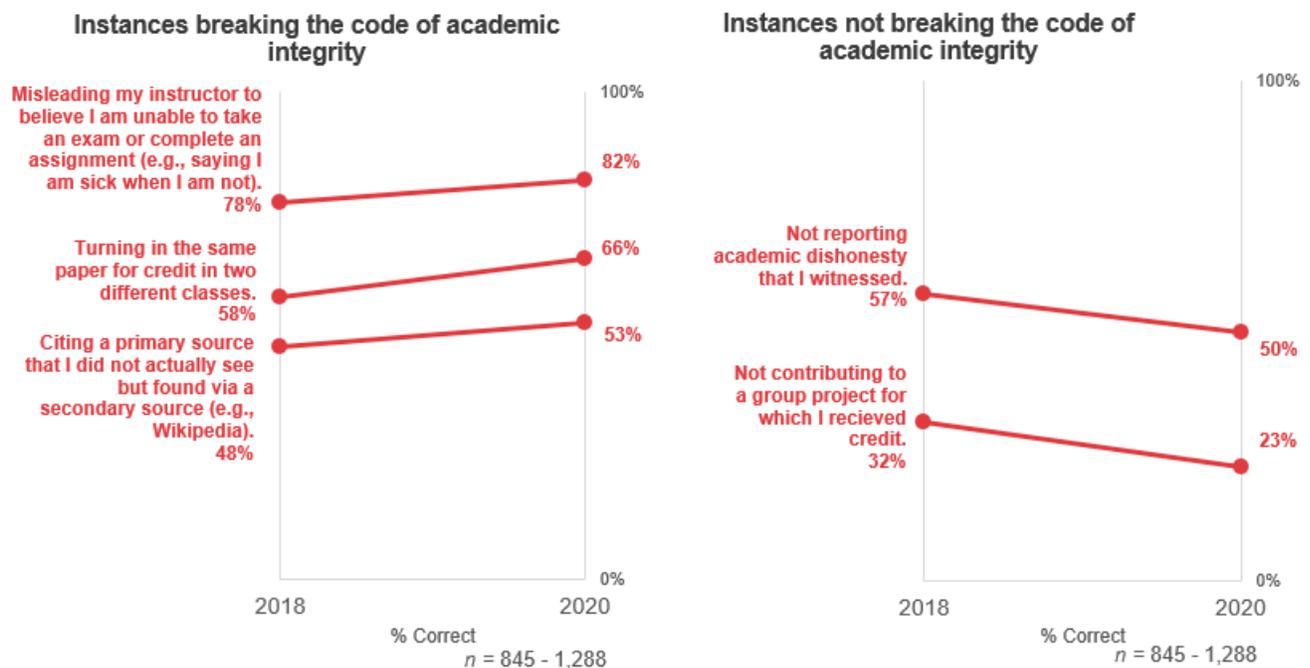


Figure 2. Percent of respondents correctly answering questions about the code of academic integrity between 2018 and 2020

² For information and examples of academic dishonesty please visit:
<https://studentconduct.umd.edu/home/current-students/academic-dishonesty>

- The percentage of respondents who correctly identified instances of academic dishonesty increased between 4-8 percentage points from Spring 2018 to Spring 2020 (see Figure 2).
 - Self-plagiarism (turning in the same paper for credit in two different classes) was added as a violation to the Code of Academic Integrity in 2019, which may help explain the increase in the percent of respondents who correctly identified it as a form of academic dishonesty in 2020.
- Respondents still struggled to identify some violations. Compared to 2018, fewer respondents correctly said the following were not academic integrity violations:
 - Not contributing to a group project for which I received credit (9 percentage point difference from 2018).
 - Not reporting academic dishonesty that I witnessed (7 percentage point decrease).

Questions to Consider

- The results show that even though students may be thinking about academic dishonesty, they may not fully understand the student code of conduct. What more can be done to increase students' understanding of the student code?
- The results may also show that students may have an increasing tendency to over-identify what counts as a violation. Is the decrease in correct responses related to students erring on the side of caution when it comes to not violating the student code, or do they have a strong idea of acceptable behavior and are conflating their beliefs about what shouldn't be done with what the student code actually lists as wrong?
- What can UMD do across and within disciplines to further enhance students' understanding of proper citation methods?

Conclusions

The data presented here represent parts of juniors' and seniors' experiences before the beginning of an extraordinary year. The Report on Academic Integrity for 2020-2021 Academic Year³ documented a sharp increase in academic misconduct and described a new initiative with Chegg with the hopes of disincentivizing students to cheat on tests using Chegg. The next few years may prove a challenge as UMD navigates these academic misconduct issues. The Office of Student Conduct and CAWG will continue to assess students' perceptions of academic integrity in future surveys. Even though this CAWG report asked more questions than it answers, we hope these questions themselves will help guide future discussions on improving students' knowledge and practice of academic integrity.

³ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1clmdNNL9_u40urQYWEEQ-O6lyjBuFPMq9/view?usp=sharing

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