

**FINAL REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON ACADEMIC  
HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

**Simon Fraser University**

**Released February 15, 2004**

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## SUMMARY

In March 2002, the Vice-President Academic formed the Task Force on Academic Honesty and Integrity. Its tasks included consulting widely within the University community regarding current practices for informing students of the significance and importance of academic integrity and of the consequences for acts of academic dishonesty. The Task Force also examined processes and practices for ensuring that examinations are conducted and assignments completed in ways that uphold the principles of academic integrity and that a shared sense of the value of academic honesty is promoted among members of the University community. As a result of its consultations, the Task Force offers twenty-one recommendations for strengthening and enhancing practices, procedures, and policies to create a more dynamic culture of academic integrity at SFU.

The Task Force began its work with two questions: How much academic dishonesty was taking place? What was being done to deter, detect, and deal with it? In response, the Task Force arranged for academic integrity surveys of students, teaching assistants, and faculty to be conducted in the Fall 2002 and Spring 2003 semesters and met with many members of the University community from May 2002 until October 2003. The surveys and consultations indicate that academic dishonesty is a serious issue for SFU and that the university can do more to deter, detect, and discipline offenders and to promote academic honesty and integrity through education. Data from surveys at other Canadian and U.S. universities indicate that the problems at SFU are similar to those at other institutions. The responses to these problems, however, are specific to SFU.

Through a broad and lengthy consultation process, the Task Force has identified a general consensus that integrates as far as possible the diversity of views and understandings within the University community. We hope that all who gave their time to help the Task Force with its work will find their concerns and ideas reflected in the final report, even if their suggestions are not presented as recommendations.

In developing the specific recommendations for this report, the Task Force was guided by two closely related principles: the need for both education and discipline and the need for a level playing field. The need for education to promote academic honesty and for discipline to discourage academic dishonesty must be balanced. Students must know how to do honest academic work and why academic integrity is important. Some, but not all students, come to university with this understanding. Those who lack this understanding need the opportunity to develop it. Part of the learning required can be achieved through education while the rest can be promoted by studying in an environment in which those who engage in academic dishonesty are consistently caught and disciplined in ways that involve clear rules, procedures, and due process. Students also need a level playing field so that an honest effort will be fairly evaluated. Leveling the playing field requires providing education about academic honesty, creating equal access to resources, and ensuring consistent treatment of violations throughout the University.

A third principle is that everyone in the University community has a role to play in promoting and maintaining a strong culture of academic honesty and integrity at SFU. As evidenced through surveys and consultations, academic honesty is a shared responsibility. Students have a responsibility to themselves to learn honestly. Instructors have a responsibility to teach and model how to commit to thoughtful and honest academic endeavours. When, however, students fail to conduct themselves with academic integrity, professors, lecturers, and sessional instructors have an additional responsibility to detect and follow through on suspected cases of academic dishonesty. The University also has a responsibility to create additional ways and means to promote integrity and to detect and diligently pursue acts of academic dishonesty. A sound framework for academic integrity exists, but further resources are required so that students and faculty can live up to their respective responsibilities with greater clarity and renewed diligence.

The Task Force is convinced that these principles cannot be met by having people who are already working full-time take on extra tasks and is thus recommending two new positions and one new unit. The Academic Honesty and Integrity position (Recommendation 1) would be involved primarily with educational issues and with promoting academic honesty and integrity throughout the University. The Academic Conduct Resource position (Recommendation 4) would be involved primarily with issues of ensuring consistent processes for dealing with cases of academic dishonesty, ensuring due process is followed in all cases, and ensuring confirmed cases of academic dishonesty are treated consistently across the University. The Task Force feels strongly that these positions should be separate. There are different skills involved in both of these tasks, skills that are rarely found in one person. Furthermore, these are both full-time jobs. The Academic Learning Centre (Recommendation 10) would be central to the education process the Task Force envisions and important in establishing a level playing field for all students.

The remaining 18 recommendations are all important for creating a level playing field for students, for providing adequate educational resources, and for ensuring due process and consistent treatment for anyone accused of academic dishonesty. Recommendation 5 addresses needed revisions in SFU Policies T10.02 (Code of Academic Honesty) and T10.03 (Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct Procedures) that would ensure more consistent treatment of suspected cases of academic dishonesty. The recommendations concerning exams and assignments (Recommendations 6-12) would both help educate students about academic honesty and ensure that some students do not have an unfair advantage in exams and on assignments. Recommendation 3 could also help by ensuring that all course outlines include statements about academic honesty. Recommendations 16-18 address plagiarism detection and the use of Turnitin.com. Graduate student issues, in particular issues around publication of joint faculty-student research projects, are addressed in Recommendations 13-15. Recommendations 19-21 address faculty issues such as class size, the Faculty Code of Ethics, and balancing rewards for teaching and research.

The recommendations are as follows:

1. Assign someone the full-time task of promoting academic honesty and integrity at SFU.
2. Establish a committee to oversee the promotion of academic honesty and integrity at SFU.
3. Require that all course outlines include an academic honesty statement that includes guidelines for assignments.
4. Assign someone full-time as an Academic Conduct resource person who would also be responsible for handling suspected cases of academic dishonesty in order to ensure they are handled consistently, fairly, and in a timely manner.
5. Append an incident-report form to policy T10.03 (Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct Procedures) that would be completed for all substantiated cases of academic dishonesty – even those involving nothing more than a warning to the student –with a copy forwarded to the Dean of Student Services. When the Dean’s office receives more than one incident report form for a student, the reports would be forwarded to the University Board on Student Discipline for review.

Note that policies T10.02 and T10.03 will need to be revised to accommodate recommendations 4 and 5. The Task Force recommends that those revising these policies not only account for the role the Academic Conduct resource person, include the incident report form, and explain the process for reporting confirmed cases, but also accomplish the following:

- Ensure the language used in the policies is as clear as possible
  - Address the nature of adequate evidence and provide guidelines for gathering, assessing, and presenting evidence
  - Include guidelines for the appropriate use of tutors
  - Review the length of time disciplinary notations remain on students’ records and how they are removed
  - Consider extending the range of possible remedies to include creative sanctions such as restorative justice and ameliorative measures such as an option for education in lieu of punishment
6. Establish an on-line bank of past exams as one of the services provided by the Library.
  7. Create a policy that establishes standards and procedures for examinations.

The Task Force recommends that this exam policy include the following:

- Guidelines for adequate invigilation
- A description of circumstances in which identification should be checked

- Restrictions on the items students may have with them while writing an exam
  - A ban on using the same exam for different sections of a course unless the exams are scheduled for the same time
  - Supervised bathroom visits
  - Procedures for collecting exams
  - Recommended tactics for reducing opportunities for cheating in over crowded classrooms, including those with tiered seating
8. Expand policy T10.03 to include a process for dealing with suspected cheating *during* exams, including guidelines for establishing evidence and ensuring due process.
  9. Ensure, as far as possible, the facilities available for writing exams are allocated in ways that promote academic honesty.
  10. Establish an Academic Learning Centre for the Burnaby campus and accommodate the needs of students at Harbour Centre and Surrey campuses.
  11. Create an online module on plagiarism that includes a self test and is readily accessible to students.
  12. Introduce writing-intensive courses within disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts at the first-year level designed to help students develop academic literacy while engaging with intellectually challenging texts.
  13. At the graduate level, review supervisory practices to ensure graduate students have effective access to their supervisors and the SFU guidelines for supervisor/graduate relations are discussed early in a student's graduate program.
  14. Revise the Sample Template for Agreement between Graduate Students and Supervisor in the Graduate Student Handbook to expand the section on intellectual property and to specifically address issues such as authorship and confidential research.
  15. Ensure that issues of academic honesty and integrity are given sufficient attention in the International Teaching Assistant seminars and that all international graduate students are made aware that they can attend and are encouraged to do so when they first arrive at SFU.
  16. Establish a procedure whereby students sign a consent form before submitting work to Turnitin.com or any other plagiarism-detecting software.
  17. Offer a workshop for instructors on various means of detecting plagiarism.
  18. Review how well Turnitin.com has been received by faculty and students, whether its limitations are understood, whether it is being used appropriately, and whether the University should continue to support this or any other plagiarism-detecting software.

- 19.** Revise the faculty ethics policy (A30.01 Code of Faculty Ethics and Responsibilities) to address issues relevant to academic honesty and integrity (such as authorship, intellectual property, copyright, and ownership of data) and to include faculty members' responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity in teaching and research.
- 20.** Revise the faculty Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion policies for tenure-track appointments to ensure teaching is given adequate weight in tenure, promotion, and salary decisions by acknowledging forty percent research, forty percent teaching, and twenty percent service as a general norm for faculty workload. Also review departmental criteria for assessing teaching to ensure that these criteria provide effective guidelines for giving teaching appropriate weight in tenure, promotion, and salary reviews and during the appeal process.
- 21.** Review class size and teaching assistant allocations for first-year and introductory courses to ensure students have reasonable access to instructors and teaching assistants.

For a detailed discussion of these recommendations, please read sections four through nine of the full report.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Task Force on Academic Honesty and Integrity was formed by the Vice-President Academic in March 2002 in response in part to the BUEC 333 case in which more than 40 students were suspected of buying assignments from a tutor and more generally to issues faced by all academic institutions. The Task Force was given the following terms of reference:

- Consult widely within the SFU community.
- Examine current practices in the University for informing students of the significance and meaning of academic integrity, academic honesty and dishonesty, and the consequences of violating policy in this area.
- Examine processes and practices for ensuring that examinations and assignments are conducted in a fair manner that strikes an appropriate balance among security, fair play, and cost.
- Examine software and other computer-aided means for detecting plagiarism.
- Recommend ways that practice, processes, and policy with respect to enhancing academic honesty can be improved.

The composition of the Task Force is provided in Appendix A.

The Task Force began its deliberations with a question: Was the BUEC 333 case an isolated incident or evidence of a systemic problem with academic dishonesty among students at SFU? Anecdotal evidence from Task Force members and early consultations with undergraduate student representatives suggested a relatively serious problem with students cheating on assignments and exams. The next question was what was being done to deter, detect, and deal with academic dishonesty at SFU.

In May 2002, Task Force members attended a presentation by Dr. Julia Christensen Hughes on the results of academic integrity surveys conducted at Guelph University and the activities that followed. The Task Force adapted the instruments used at Guelph to survey SFU students, faculty, and teaching assistants. These surveys are part of a Canadian study of academic integrity in higher education. In fall 2002, first-year students with direct admission from high school were surveyed on their high school experience. Early in 2003, all levels of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and teaching assistants were surveyed on perceptions and behaviours relating to academic honesty at SFU. The results of these surveys are available on the Task Force web site at [www.sfu.ca/integritytaskforce](http://www.sfu.ca/integritytaskforce). The Task Force was most intrigued by the insight the surveys provided into the reasons why students engaged in academic dishonesty. Responses on the surveys underscored the need to detect and punish offenders but also emphasized the importance of promoting academic integrity through education.

To date, only a few preliminary results for the Canadian surveys have been released. According to these results, the problem at SFU is similar to that at other Canadian universities. Although long-term studies of academic honesty have not been conducted in Canada, research in the United States suggests that cheating is a common problem from elementary school through to university and that the problem has steadily increased over



the last three decades. Dr. Don McCabe of Rutgers University has been conducting research on academic integrity at U.S. colleges and universities for over a decade and is a principal investigator for the Canadian study. In a presentation at SFU in September 2003, he noted that the most surprising outcome of the Canadian study is the similarity between the U.S. and Canadian results. Academic dishonesty is endemic and a threat to all institutions of higher education.

## **2. PROMOTING ACADEMIC HONESTY / DISCOURAGING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Two aspects of academic honesty and integrity are in constant tension: the need to promote academic honesty and integrity through education and the need to catch and punish offenders to control cheating.

The need to control cheating is clear. For SFU, as for other institutions of higher learning, academic dishonesty threatens the reputation of the university and the integrity of its degrees. Academic integrity is a core value of the university and a key to maintaining public trust. As many institutions have experienced, any perceived failure of this trust results in condemnation from the media and the public. Without both a culture of academic integrity and a reputation for academic honesty, the scholarship, scientific discoveries, advances in research, knowledge, innovations, expertise of faculty, and quality of graduates would be in question. When students or other members of the university violate this core value, they must be held accountable for their actions.

The majority of SFU students are strong proponents of academic honesty. They want offenders caught and their cases pursued to protect the integrity of their degrees and to create a level playing field. From survey comments and conversations with students, the Task Force received a strong message that those who follow the rules and do their own work feel their grades are unfairly affected by those who receive unauthorized help or who otherwise cheat on exams or assignments. They want vigilance in reducing opportunities for academic dishonesty, in detecting suspected cases, and in following through to ensure appropriate disciplinary measures are taken that will deter cheating. They also want the discipline students receive for confirmed cases of academic dishonesty to be consistent across the institution and to send a clear message that cheating is a risky business and those who engage in academic dishonesty should expect to be caught and punished.

Students also point to the need to promote academic honesty and integrity through education. The SFU integrity surveys indicate that some undergraduate students do not take the need for academic honesty and integrity seriously. While a relatively small percentage admit to repeated instances of serious cheating, more admit to cheating when under pressure. Students admit to cheating for a number of reasons including pressure to attain high grades, too much course work, a lack of motivation to do the work, a conviction that the potential benefits outweigh the risk or consequences of being caught, and a perception that everyone else is doing it.

Students face numerous pressures to succeed at university. The Simon Fraser Student Society has also expressed concern that increasing tuitions put students under additional pressure. Although understanding what motivates students to cheat is useful, it does not address the issue of what motivates students to maintain academic integrity. Comments on the surveys suggest that many who succumb to the temptation to cheat do not recognize the impact their actions have on their future, on their peers, and on the rest of the University community. Ensuring students are provided with sufficient opportunities to explore the value and benefits of academic integrity is essential to ensuring an academic culture that promotes academic integrity. Students must be convinced not only that their actions have consequences, but that they will benefit most by acting with integrity.

Discouraging academic dishonesty through deterrence, detection, and discipline are only part of what is needed. As the Task Force was told on many occasions, while the University must be vigilant in deterring and detecting academic dishonesty and in disciplining offenders, it must also actively promote academic honesty and integrity through education. Faculty, staff, and administrators all have roles to play in ensuring that students are aware of their obligations, understand the value of academic integrity, and have access to the educational and support services necessary to achieve the high standards to which they are held. While students are individually responsible for maintaining academic honesty, those who support and enable teaching and learning are collectively responsible for strengthening the institutional culture of academic integrity and helping students fill gaps in their skill sets, boost confidence, and moderate the factors that tempt some students to resort to academic dishonesty.

These issues will be addressed in more detail in later sections, with major recommendations for promoting academic integrity and for discouraging academic dishonesty presented in context and expanded upon in subsequent discussions.

### **3. CONSULTATION PROCESS**

As indicated in Appendix B, the Task Force consulted widely within the SFU community, meeting with undergraduate and graduate students, teaching assistants, sessional instructors, faculty, staff, and administrators. As well as the integrity surveys and numerous consultations with individuals and groups, the Task Force held a number of events in which all members of the university community were welcome to participate.

A major event during the first round of consultation was a community conversation in which 40 staff, students, teaching assistants, sessional instructors, and faculty participated. A summary of this event is available on the Task Force web site ([www.sfu.ca/integritytaskforce](http://www.sfu.ca/integritytaskforce)). This event, the results of the integrity surveys, individual and group consultations, and a number of e-mail responses provided members of the Task Force with insight into the range of issues concerning academic honesty and integrity at SFU. These consultations and surveys provided greater appreciation for the complexity of the issues involved, with suggestions for addressing issues, and with a

sense of both differences of opinion and areas of substantial agreement among members of the university community.

Following the release of the draft report in early June 2003, members of the Task Force met with the Curriculum Implementation Task Force, solicited written responses from members of the university community, and followed up with open meetings at all three campuses. The second round of consultations ended on October 9, 2003.

As indicated in Appendix C, members of the Task Force have also participated in conferences and events involving individuals from other institutions. Discussions with students, faculty and staff from across the Lower Mainland, Canada, and the United States give the Task Force confidence that the consultation process within SFU has raised key issues and concerns that are being addressed by other post-secondary institutions. While the basic concerns are shared, the solutions are specific to SFU.

#### **4. CURRENT PRACTICES FOR INFORMING STUDENTS**

The integrity surveys were useful for gaining insight into current practices for informing students of the significance and meaning of academic integrity and honesty and the consequences of academic dishonesty. The results suggest much room for improvement:

- Twenty-six percent of students, forty-seven percent of TAs, and fifty-nine percent of faculty rated students' understanding of academic conduct policies as low or very low.
- Twenty-five percent of students, forty percent of TAs, and forty-seven percent of faculty rated the effectiveness of these policies as low or very low.
- Sixty-three percent of faculty reported ignoring a suspected incident of cheating with the most frequent reasons being lack of evidence (54%), lack of time (20%), and not wanting to deal with the bureaucracy (17%).

(Note that only six percent of the students participating in the survey of SFU students were in first year. Many of the first-year students who participated completed only the survey specifically targeting new students.)

##### **4.1 Community Response and Suggestions**

Many of the concerns raised in the comments of survey participants were also raised during other forms of consultation. Recurring suggestions for improving current practices for informing students of the significance and meaning of academic integrity and honesty include the following:

- An academic integrity pamphlet or handbook sent to students once they are accepted to SFU followed up by an interactive session on academic integrity as part of the orientation program for new students
- An annual SFU Academic Integrity Week
- An academic integrity course or seminar involving specific information about assignments, labs, collaboration, use of tutors, and plagiarism. Some think a credit academic integrity course should be mandatory for all new undergraduate

- students. Others think students would benefit most from a shorter, frequently-offered workshop that students could take when they feel the need for it.
- Department-specific guidelines for academic honesty including examples of what would be considered academic dishonesty
  - A policy that all course outlines must include an academic integrity statement and provide clear guidelines for use of tutors, collaboration on assignments, acceptable referencing conventions, etc.
  - Support for international graduate students who lack sufficient knowledge of the cultural norms informing academic honesty and integrity at SFU

The Task Force is confident that increasing numbers of faculty are acting upon another suggestion for more in-class attention to academic integrity issues. This attention is particularly important in first-year and introductory courses but remains worthwhile throughout the curriculum.

One significant finding from the survey of first-year students was that these students reported more positive expectations than students from other years:

- Seventy-eight percent agreed that instructors at SFU try hard to discourage cheating.
- Fifty percent agreed that students who cheat at SFU are likely to be caught.
- Ninety percent agreed that students at SFU who are caught cheating will be given significant penalties.

These results reflect the general expectation among new students that university will be different from high school and that they will be held to a higher standard. This finding underlines the importance of promoting academic honesty and integrity to students when they are most receptive: when accepted for admission, during orientations for new students, in special events conducted early in the fall semester, and in first-year courses.

Comments on the first-year surveys pointed to a number of areas of concern to address in orientations, on the honesty and integrity web site, and in relevant courses:

- *Plagiarism.* Many students arrive at university uncertain what plagiarism is, why it is a serious issue, and what they should do to avoid it.
- *Fabricating or falsifying lab data.* Many students seem unaware of the purpose of laboratory assignments and the reasons why they should present their own experimental results.
- *Unauthorized group work.* Seventy-one percent of first-year students considered receiving unauthorized help on an assignment either not cheating (29%) or only trivial cheating (42%). Only four percent considered it to be serious cheating. Comments suggest that group work is generally encouraged in high school, and students view it as a good way to learn from friends; therefore, when restrictions are placed on collaboration, they tend to ignore them.
- *Finding out what is on an exam.* Seventy-five percent of first-year students reported getting the questions/answers from someone who had previously taken a test.

- *Copying assignments.* This issue is a particular concern in courses with regular homework assignments, such as problem sets. The main reason given for handing in work done by someone else was not wanting to lose marks.

An issue evident in the responses to all the integrity surveys and one raised during consultations is that some students are motivated more by grades than by learning. The challenge is, as one student commented, to replace the competition for grades with an environment “where knowledge can truly be LEARNED and promoted rather than memorized and forgotten.” Establishing a strong culture of academic honesty and integrity requires rekindling an appreciation for learning in those students who focus on grades as the only significant measure of their success.

In the words of a teaching assistant, “We should lead first by example. Secondly, we need to foster more non-competitive learning practices and encourage our students to be excited about the material for its own sake, rather than for instrumental concerns.”

## **4.2 Recommendations**

The Task Force has concluded that simply informing students of the significance and meaning of academic integrity and honesty and the consequences of academic dishonesty is not enough. Like a growing number of Canadian Universities, SFU must actively promote academic integrity. Effective promotion is more than good public relations, it involves proactive measures to encourage academic integrity at all levels, to demonstrate the administration’s commitment to creating a culture of academic integrity, and to make that commitment evident to the university community and the public. Most importantly, the University must actively promote academic honesty and integrity as an integral part of its educational mission.

Members of the Task Force propose the following recommendations to improve current practices for informing students of the significance and meaning of academic integrity, academic honesty and dishonesty, and the consequences of violating policy in this area.

### **Recommendation 1:**

**Assign someone the full-time task of promoting academic honesty and integrity at SFU.**

This Academic Honesty and Integrity person would be responsible for ensuring that academic honesty and integrity are actively promoted throughout SFU and that educational programs are developed and maintained. The Task Force recommends that this person report to the Vice-President Academic.

The responsibilities of this position would include working with appropriate units and individuals to create resources for teaching and learning on this topic, organizing special events, and assessing the University’s progress in creating a strong culture of academic honesty and integrity. The person in this position should be familiar with the research and scholarship in this area. He or she should also work closely with individuals who seek

and act upon opportunities to present seminars or lead discussions on academic honesty and integrity at orientations, symposia, workshops, and events at all three SFU campuses.

Part of the educational mission of this position would include ensuring that resources for teaching are readily available. These resources would include advice for reducing opportunities for cheating on exams and as well as providing materials instructors could use to encourage academic honesty among students. These resources should be accessible on a web site and also include a generic academic honesty statement that can be adapted for use in specific courses, discussions of prepared cases, an evolving Q&A section, tips for what to do in various situations, issues relating to teaching large classes, a bibliography, information on web-based and face-to-face workshops and courses, and links to other sites and resources.

The Academic Honesty and Integrity person would also work closely with those responsible for orientations for students – including international students – and for teaching assistants, tutor markers, faculty, and Chairs and Directors to ensure that all include an appropriate session on academic honesty and integrity. He or she should also ensure that relevant information is available for others, including departmental assistants, student advisors, and undergraduate and graduate secretaries.

An advisory committee is also recommended:

**Recommendation 2:**

**Establish a committee to oversee the promotion of academic honesty and integrity at SFU.**

This could be a Senate committee with the person responsible for promoting academic integrity included as an ex officio, voting member. As well as student and faculty representatives – including faculty with experience teaching large classes – the Task Force recommends that the committee include a representative from the Library and the Director of Student Planning and Development. The Library plays a significant role in promoting academic honesty and integrity while Student Programming and Development is well placed to promote academic honesty and integrity among students new to the University.

This committee could oversee periodic reviews of the University's success in creating and maintaining a strong culture of academic integrity, provide advice and guidance on matters relating to academic integrity and on the programs developed to promote academic honesty, and review and comment on annual reports produced by the person promoting Academic Honesty and Integrity.

**Recommendation 3:**

**Require that all course outlines include an academic honesty statement that includes guidelines for assignments.**

The person responsible for promoting academic honesty and integrity could make available a model academic honesty statement. Instructors could modify this statement to indicate their course-specific expectations relating to individual and group work, appropriate use of tutors, acknowledgments for help received (if allowed), and accepted referencing conventions and to clarify the grading practices for that course.

## **5. ACADEMIC CONDUCT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The issue of how well informed students are concerning the consequences of academic dishonesty is intertwined with concerns about a lack of consistency in the application of academic conduct policies (T10.02 and T10.03). Comments on the integrity surveys and concerns raised during consultations suggest a troubling lack of consistency across the university in the response to academic misconduct. A coordinated effort is required to ensure not only that the treatment of students who are accused of academic dishonesty and the penalties they receive are consistent, but that suspected cases are consistently pursued, and that due process is followed.

### **5.1 Community Response and Suggestions**

The Task Force has heard that suspicious behavior during exams and suspected cases of academic dishonesty involving written assignments have been ignored. We have heard that some faculty fail to follow up on cases reported by their teaching assistants, that some Chairs and other administrators fail to support faculty members who bring cases to their attention, and that cases are dropped part way through the disciplinary process. A number of faculty members, Chairs, and Directors have expressed frustration with the time and effort required to prepare a case for hearing by the University Board of Student Discipline. Other members of the university community are uncertain what sort of disciplinary measures students should receive for confirmed cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Another concern is that a faculty member, Chair or Director may have no way of knowing if a student has committed a similar offence in another course or department.

Some of these problems could be addressed by better communication to ensure that everyone understands the policies and procedures concerning academic. But ensuring consistency also requires that all suspected cases of academic dishonesty are pursued and receive equivalent treatment. Achieving this consistency seems unlikely as long as pursuing cases adds significantly to faculty workloads.

Suggestions for addressing this and other issues related to informing students about the consequences of academic dishonesty and dealing with offenders follow:

- A streamlined, consistent disciplinary process and more consistent application of existing academic conduct policies to address the current situation in which some cases are pursued while others are ignored or dropped part way through the process.

- Assigning someone the task of handling cases of academic dishonesty for faculty and Chairs/Directors.
- A central record of all confirmed cases of academic dishonesty, including first offences, even if the student received no more than a warning.
- Clearly defined standards for what sort of academic dishonesty deserves what range of penalty. Also routinely published, easily accessible summary results of decisions made by the University Board on Student Discipline and Senate Committee on Disciplinary Appeals
- Education and support for faculty dealing with cases of academic dishonesty to help ensure all suspected cases are appropriately investigated, due process is followed, and appropriate disciplinary measures are taken when cheating is proven
- More recognition for the value of teaching and of teaching-related workload to address the issue of some faculty not having the time or support to follow through on cases of suspected academic dishonesty
- More protection for teaching assistants, tutor markers, sessional instructors, and faculty who deal with suspected cases of academic dishonesty and who feel that raising such issues may jeopardize their safety or employment

## 5.2 Recommendations

The Task Force is convinced that the best, and perhaps only way, to ensure consistency across the university in the handling of suspected cases of academic dishonesty is to assign someone responsibility for handling cases up to and including the disciplinary hearing. Faculty, sessional instructors, teaching assistants, and tutor markers, would remain responsible for identifying suspected cases of academic dishonesty. Faculty and sessional instructors would remain responsible for the initial investigation. But completing time-consuming investigations, preparing cases for the University Board of Student Discipline, and attending hearings would become the responsibility of the assigned person who would have training and experience with due process, administrative fairness, and investigative procedures in an academic setting to ensure consistent treatment of suspected offenders. This person would take responsibility for a number of tasks currently performed by faculty and Chairs/Directors including recommending disciplinary measures. These tasks should not be managed off the corner of someone's desk; a dedicated resource person is required to ensure that cases are investigated and prepared with minimal delay.

### **Recommendation 4:**

**Assign someone full-time as an Academic Conduct resource person who would also be responsible for handling suspected cases of academic dishonesty in order to ensure they are handled consistently, fairly, and in a timely manner.**

The Task Force recommends that this person report to the Associate Vice President Policy, Equity, and Legal. This Academic Conduct person would engage in educational and monitoring activities and could participate in creating a handbook or fact sheet on



disciplinary procedures to supplement policies T10.02, and T10.03 that details the step-by-step process for charging students with academic misconduct. This document would provide a resource for faculty, teaching assistants, tutor markers, and sessional instructors, detailing responsibilities, due process, and the order of responsibility throughout the disciplinary process. The person in this position could also become a resource person for plagiarism detection, providing resources and training for faculty and sessional instructors on the uses and limitations of various means of detecting plagiarism.

Establishing this position would also go some way toward addressing safety concerns by reducing an instructor's role in the disciplinary process. Clarifying the process and making it less arduous for faculty should also help ensure that teaching assistants and tutor markers are not dealing with academic dishonesty cases beyond the initial stage of identifying a suspected case.

The Task Force is aware that Recommendations 1 and 4 may raise financial concerns. One response to the draft report was that the two sets of duties could be performed by one person. After due consideration, the Task Force reaffirmed its recommendations for two distinct full-time positions: one to promote academic honesty and integrity and one to deal with issues of academic conduct. Beside the difficulty of finding one person with the appropriate experience and abilities to perform both functions well, conflicts of interest could arise and the dual role could lead to difficult situations. It seems inherently contradictory to be responsible for the promotion of and education about academic integrity and to provide a positive response to these issues while at the same time acting in a prosecutorial role. Given the immediate need for both sets of activities, the Task Force urges that every effort be made to support both positions to the highest degree possible. Faculty secondment and creative alternative appointments could be considered.

Another proposed change in academic conduct procedures is to require that all confirmed cases of academic dishonesty – even those resulting in nothing more than a warning – be recorded in the Office of the Dean of Student Services.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

**Append an incident-report form to policy T10.03 that would be completed for all substantiated cases of academic dishonesty – even those involving nothing more than a warning to the student –with a copy forwarded to the Dean of Student Services. When the Dean's office receives more than one incident report form for a student, the reports would be forwarded to the University Board on Student Discipline for review.**

The previous recommendations and a number of other issues raised during consultations must be reflected in the academic conduct policies. **The Task Force recommends that those revising policies T10.02 and T10.03**

- **account for the role of the Academic Conduct resource person (Recommendation 4)**
- **include the incident report form and explain the process for reporting confirmed cases of academic dishonesty (Recommendation 5)**

- **ensure the language used in the policies is as clear as possible**
- **address the nature of adequate evidence and provide guidelines for gathering, assessing, and presenting evidence**
- **include guidelines for the appropriate use of tutors**
- **review the length of time disciplinary notations remain on students' records and how they are removed**
- **consider extending the range of possible remedies to include creative sanctions such as restorative justice and ameliorative measures such as an option for education in lieu of punishment**

Note that Recommendation 4 addresses the conflict created in policy when a Chair or Director both advises the instructor and determines any punishment beyond that of failing an assignment.

## **6. EXAMINATIONS**

Through survey comments and consultations, the Task Force heard complaints that exam cheating is undetected or ignored. Fourteen percent of SFU students self reported serious cheating behaviours for tests and exams. While this result is below the mean percentage (19%) for the ten Canadian universities that conducted integrity surveys in the spring of 2003, the general consensus is that examination practices at SFU allow too many opportunities for cheating.

### **6.2 Community Response and Suggestions**

Students are particularly concerned about exam practices and are strong proponents of measures to reduce cheating. The issues raised by students and others during the consultation process include the following:

- Too much opportunity to view other students' papers in tiered lecture halls and in other rooms with inadequate space for students to spread out
- Opportunities for students to have other people write examinations for them when identification is not checked and invigilators do not know everyone in the course
- Too many opportunities for cheating when students are allowed to keep nonessential personal possessions with them, take unescorted bathroom breaks, or crowd the front of the room while handing in their work at the end of an exam
- Not enough invigilators and/or invigilators who pay too little attention to what students are doing during exams
- Difficulty proving that someone cheated on an exam and the lack of a process for dealing with suspected cheating during exams
- Recycling of old exams or use of the same exam for more than one section of a course
- Instances of students altering returned exams to gain additional marks
- Unauthorized copies of old exams available to some students through club membership or other means

Suggestions for reducing exam cheating include the following:

- Overcome the limitations of the physical plant by
  - creating exams that are not conducive to copying
  - using gymnasiums for sittings of multiple exams
  - having more than one course write an exam in the same room with exams distributed to minimize opportunities for cheating
  - where possible, allocating larger rooms or rooms without tiered seating
  - in problematic spaces, providing more than one version of an exam and distributing the copies of each version to minimize opportunities for cheating
- Deter cheating during exams by
  - checking identification
  - assigning seats to deter cheating among friends
  - numbering exams to allow comparison of the exams of students sitting in close proximity to one another
  - insisting all possessions not required to write an exam be placed at the side or back of the room, including electronic devices, hats, transparent water bottles with labels, candy, gum, and food
  - controlling bathroom breaks
- Improve invigilation by
  - including exam supervision in teaching assistants' workload
  - establishing guidelines for the number of invigilators needed to adequately supervise various class sizes and room configurations
  - establishing guidelines for handing in papers that reduce last-minute opportunities for cheating
  - establishing a process for dealing with suspected cases of cheating during exams
- Deter cheating and promote a level playing field by ensuring that different sections of a course do not write the same exam unless students all write it at the same time.
- Deter cheating after the fact by requiring that all exams be written in non-erasable ink (other suggestions, such as photocopying exams, may be impractical as a general procedure)
- Level the playing field by establishing a web-based data bank of old exams and requesting that instructors provide copies of their exams

Some faculty opposed this last suggestion. The most common concerns are that students will study only those questions asked on previous tests and, conversely, that there are only so many questions that can be asked and those questions will appear on old exams.

Others argue that old exams are valuable study guides. The concern about questions being repeated from old exams is countered by a conviction that if the questions are important enough to regularly appear on exams, then faculty should encourage students to learn the material in whatever way works for them. They point out that well-structured exams test students' understanding of concepts and that if students develop their understanding of concepts by studying old exams, this activity should be encouraged.

Another argument in favour of an exam bank is that students have only one chance to perform well on an exam and should therefore be given opportunities to practice that performance skill. The more practice they have writing exams, the more likely their performance will reflect how well they understand a subject.

Another concern raised was that if faculty members obtain questions for their exams from published test question banks, then the University would be in violation of copyright if it published exams containing these questions. But students also have access to test bank questions and some are likely aware of the sources a faculty member uses in compiling exams, creating an unfair advantage over other students.

An argument in favour of using test bank questions is that in some disciplines question banks are valuable for creating good exams, especially for new faculty and those hired on contract. To ensure genuine assessment of learning, an instructor teaching a large class could very easily require hundreds of questions for quizzes, mid-terms, and the final exam. The number of questions required could increase dramatically if make-up exams were necessary for students who were absent for legitimate reasons. Review of exams that include questions to test understanding in multiple ways helps students learn. Without test banks, instructors could be forced to drastically reduce the number of questions, creating a situation in which the test would be more of a lottery than a genuine assessment of learning – students who correctly guessed the few questions on the exam would win. From this perspective, eliminating the use of test question banks would create an impossible situation for some faculty and could have a negative effect of both learning and assessment.

In terms of fair play, another reason to favour establishing an exam bank is that unauthorized copies of past exams are already available to some students. On the integrity surveys, students reported having access to past exams through membership in certain clubs or through their network of friends. One student reported taking digital pictures of each page of an exam so that he or she could give copies of the exam to students taking the course in later semesters. Making old exams available to all students would remove the motivation for illicit copying of exams while helping to level the playing field. Making old exams available would also discourage faculty from reusing exams and would likely increase motivation to consider more varied approaches to testing students' knowledge.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

An essential aspect of promoting academic honesty is providing a level playing field with equal treatment and opportunities for all. As long as old exams are available to only some students, this principle is violated. The Task Force could find no convincing pedagogical reason not to recommend an exam bank. Therefore, we are in favour of establishing an on-line exam bank and view the Library as well equipped to implement and maintain it. At the same time, the Task Force appreciates that instructors may have good reasons for not participating. We hope that those with no objections to having past exams available to students will participate.

**Recommendation 6:**

**Establish an on-line bank of past exams as one of the services provided by the Library.**

As noted above, ensuring a level playing field would require that all instructors submit all past exams, as is the case in at least one department. However, given the controversy over exam banks, it seems wise to first introduce the service and invite faculty to participate.

The Task Force has also concluded that the University needs an exam policy to address issues identified earlier in this section.

**Recommendation 7:**

**Create a policy that establishes standards and procedures for examinations.**

**The Task Force recommends that this policy include the following:**

- **Guidelines for adequate invigilation**
- **A description of circumstances in which identification should be checked**
- **Restrictions on the items students may have with them while writing an exam**
- **A ban on using the same exam for different sections of a course unless the exams are scheduled for the same time**
- **Supervised bathroom visits**
- **Procedures for collecting exams**
- **Recommended tactics for reducing opportunities for cheating in over crowded classrooms, including those with tiered seating**

The need for a process to deal with suspected cases of cheating during exams is best addressed in policy T10.03, Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct Procedures.

**Recommendation 8:**

**Expand policy T10.03 to include a process for dealing with suspected cheating *during* exams, including guidelines for establishing evidence and ensuring due process.**

The University may not have the resources to rectify the problem of overcrowded and inappropriately configured exam rooms, but the problem should nevertheless be addressed.

**Recommendation 9:**

**Ensure, as far as possible, the facilities available for writing exams are allocated in ways that promote academic honesty.**

Beyond that, instructors are responsible for ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to reduce opportunities for cheating during exams. To this end, a collection of best practices should be one of the resources available to faculty and sessional instructors.

## 7. ASSIGNMENTS

Thirty-nine percent of SFU students self reported that they have engaged in serious cheating on written work and forty-one percent reported that they have plagiarized. Inappropriate use of tutors by SFU students is also a concern, as evidenced by recent high-profile cases involving tutors. Another area of concern is the number of students who rely on others to provide the answers to homework assignments such as problem sets.

### 7.1 Community Response and Suggestions

We heard that students collect around assignment drop boxes to find someone from whom to copy the answers to homework and that completed homework is left lying around in at least one study area for anyone to copy. We also heard from students who admit to reluctantly letting others look at their work because they fear the consequences if they refuse. Another concern is that many students are uncertain what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and why it is considered a serious offence. We also heard from teaching assistants who felt unprepared or unable to deal with suspected cases of cheating, including plagiarism, in students' written work.

Members of the university community made the following general suggestions regarding assignments:

- Provide clear instructions on what sort of help is allowed for a particular assignment and be explicit when assignments must be completed without any help
- Establish a policy that when students use a tutor, they must provide contact information for the tutor and explain the nature of the help they received on their assignments
- Whenever possible, read through assignments in one sitting so that patterns are obvious and cheating is most likely to be recognized; if more than one marker is involved, markers should meet to compare assignments before returning them
- Provide teaching assistants and tutor markers with specific guidelines on what they should do if they suspect a student has cheated on an assignment
- Ensure that faculty understand that they, rather than their teaching assistants, are responsible for dealing with cases of suspected academic dishonesty
- Provide students with advice on how to deal with requests from friends and acquaintances who ask to look at their homework or major assignments

Specific advice for homework included the following

- Create homework assignments that are not conducive to copying
- Encourage faculty to focus students' attention on homework as a way of learning the subject and of preparing for exams and to reduce incentives for students to view their answers for problem sets and similar assignments as a way to improve course grades

- Use computer programs to compare answers on homework assignments, as is already a common practice for computer programming assignments

Issues relating to plagiarism split between concerns with discouraging and detecting plagiarizers and with allowing for a difference between deliberate plagiarism and plagiarism resulting from confusion about how to reference or paraphrase sources, or about differences among academic disciplines, and from language-acquisition or cultural issues. Suggestions for deterring plagiarism include the following:

- Create assignments that cannot be completed by copying from published sources.
- Ensure assignments are sufficiently different each semester to discourage recycling of papers from previous years
- Require that students acknowledge all the help they received on an assignment, including contact information for tutors
- Use computer-aided means of detecting plagiarism

Since the early 1990's a great deal has been written about plagiarism and its causes with the majority of recent work focusing on the type of plagiarism in which a student writer relies too heavily on the language of an original source. From this perspective, plagiarism is a developmental issue requiring a pedagogical solution rather than a form of intentional academic dishonesty. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, students must be able to distinguish among the multiple sources referenced in what they are reading – that is, to distinguish between a particular author's position and those that author uses to support or refute other views on an issue. They must understand the value of multiple viewpoints and perspectives for creating knowledge and developing understanding. They must also be able to integrate multiple sources in their own writing and understand the purpose of referencing conventions within the context of academic discourse. Paraphrasing and summarizing require not only understanding what one has read, but having sufficient knowledge of the academic discipline, appropriate vocabulary, and the facility with language to restate ideas accurately in other words.

Some students arrive at university with these abilities, but many do not. This is true of both those who speak English as a first language and those who are working in a second or other language. Of course, developing the abilities necessary to avoid unintentional plagiarism can be particularly challenging for those learning an additional language and/or working from a different set of cultural assumptions, even if they are advanced learners who meet language requirements. But we can most productively view this form or cause of plagiarism not as a literacy problem *per se*, but more broadly as a problem of *academic* literacy that can be addressed if students are provided with appropriate instructional resources. The introduction of mandatory breadth and writing-intensive courses will likely increase the need for this instructional support for both first and second language students.

Suggestions for educational responses to plagiarism include the following:

- Establish an Academic Learning Centre that includes the services of a writing centre
- Bring back General Studies 101, also known as University 101.

- Offer writing-intensive courses that introduce students to the conventions of academic discourse and help build competency in academic literacy within disciplinary or interdisciplinary contexts
- Develop workshops and online resources to help students understand what plagiarism is, why it is considered a serious offence, and how to avoid it
- Include the possibility of educational remedies for students who are judged to have plagiarized because of developmental difficulties
- Include acknowledgments on all major assignments in which students identify and briefly explain the help they received in preparing the assignment

## 7.2 Recommendations

A number of the suggestions in this section are addressed elsewhere in this report, and the Library provides on-line materials on plagiarism and is planning a workshop. The request to provide advice to students on how to deal with requests from friends and acquaintances who ask to look at their homework or major assignments can be accommodated on the student-resource section of an Academic Honesty and Integrity web site and also addressed at student orientations. A dedicated web site on academic honesty and integrity with links to Library and other university resources could be one of the projects managed by the person promoting academic honesty and integrity. This web site could also include an extensive toolbox listing best practices and examples for faculty use.

Recommendations concerning the remaining suggestions from this section follow.

### **Recommendation 10:**

**Establish an Academic Learning Centre for the Burnaby campus and accommodate the needs of students at Harbour Centre and Surrey campuses.**

In terms of academic honesty, writing support for academic courses is a major concern that extends to all courses involving written assignments and is of immediate concern. The introduction of mandatory writing-intensive, quantitative, and breadth courses will intensify the existing need for academic support services, and the proposed centre should be operational when these courses become mandatory – earlier if possible.

The Task Force recommends the use of peer tutors and that tutors who help students with writing requirements be formally trained and adequately supervised while they gain experience. As well as providing opportunities for students, a peer tutoring program creates a pool of SFU-trained tutors who students can hire for private tutoring with reasonable confidence that the help they receive will support academic honesty. Another well-recognized advantage of peer tutoring programs is the benefit to the tutors who experience improvement in their abilities. A further advantage is that trained and experienced tutors strengthen the pool of teaching assistants across the university. To maximize these advantages and facilitate staffing, tutors who are qualified to provide help with academic literacy would be recruited from across the university and trained to work with students from all disciplines.



One challenge for the writing support role of the Academic Learning Centre could be that some faculty will view it as a “plagiarism centre.” One way to address this concern is to require faculty to provide explicit instructions in course outlines and assignment instructions concerning the extent of help allowed (Recommendation 3). If tutors are provided with appropriate course outlines and assignment instructions, they will know what sort of help is acceptable.

Another potential form of support for students is offered by transition or foundation courses. A number of universities have introduced transitional or foundation programs to help prepare students for university. This concept appeals to the Task Force as an opportunity to ensure new students understand the significance of academic integrity, to redirect the focus from grades to learning, to help students improve their study skills, and to provide students with a foundation for developing academic literacy. However, given limited resources, it seems unlikely the University could afford to establish a mandatory program of this kind for all new students. Another issue is that such programs are generally effective only with motivated students and the success rates for mandatory programs generally do not justify the expense.

Another approach suggested by students is to provide just-in-time instruction for those who recognize that they need help. Promoting academic honesty in written assignments requires attention to study skills and academic literacy as well as plagiarism. Workshops on study skills and exam preparation are offered by the Health, Counselling, and Career Centre, and other resources and workshops are available or being developed by the Library. All should be promoted on the Academic Honesty and Integrity web site, and more academic resources for students concerned about plagiarism should be developed and promoted. The following recommendation addresses students’ requests for more resources to help understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

**Recommendation 11:**

**Create an online module on plagiarism that includes a self test and is readily accessible to students.**

The proposed module would go beyond format conventions to raise the developmental issues involved in unintentional plagiarism and to allow students to test their skill with paraphrase. Students who realize they have problems could then seek help from available sources such as their instructors, teaching assistants, or tutors at the proposed Academic Learning Centre. Such a module could be maintained by the Library with input from the person promoting Academic Honesty and Integrity and could be accessible through the Library and Academic Honesty and Integrity web sites. Ideally, it would include an option for faculty to receive notification that students in a particular class had completed the module successfully. Any questions students have while working through this module would be directed to the Information Commons in the Library where reference librarians could provide guidance.

The following recommendation also addresses the need to provide educational remedies to address unintentional plagiarism and plagiarism motivated by a lack of familiarity with academic discourse.

**Recommendation 12:**

**Introduce writing-intensive courses within disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts at the first-year level designed to help students develop academic literacy while engaging with intellectually challenging texts.**

Any number of departments could offer such a course that would focus on reading and responding to academic discourse. The reading material could be drawn from any discipline as long as it exposes students to academic writing that relies on many sources and explores divergent perspectives on a topic or includes the work of writers who present divergent views on an issue.

While students unfamiliar with Western academic culture and those with second-language issues should be encouraged to take such an academic literacy course, the Task Force is not recommending a remedial course. Recent research suggests that a significant amount of student plagiarism is due to a lack of familiarity with academic discourse and that much plagiarism goes undetected in the work of students who are judged to have well-developed literacy skills, but who nevertheless lack sufficient understanding of the conventions of academic discourse. Instruction that meets the needs of international students will benefit all students by ensuring that they understand the reasons and conventions for attributing sources in one or more genres of academic discourse. A course that focuses on academic literacy will also address the challenge for both first and second language students of paraphrasing a source in their own words. It will help students determine if they need to develop this skill and clarify what they need to do, which are essential steps in motivating students to visit the Learning Centre or to seek other help to improve their language competency.

Comments on the integrity surveys suggest that some instructors use culture as a reason for excusing plagiarism. Students need a clear understanding of the conflicts between their originating culture's textual practices and those of Western academic discourse so that they can adapt appropriately. As noted above, courses that focus on academic literacy provide opportunities to develop this understanding.

## **8. GRADUATE STUDENT ISSUES**

The focus of the preceding sections has been largely on undergraduate student issues. Academic honesty and integrity issues for graduate students are largely related to their relationships with their supervisors and their research. Most problems can be avoided when relationships are supportive and issues relating to intellectual property and authorship are clarified. International graduate students may need additional support.

## 8.1 Community Response and Suggestions

SFU faculty and administrators have described effective relationships between supervisors and their graduate students in terms of mentors and apprentices, with helping students conceptualize their research viewed as an important part of the supervisory process – help that may be particularly useful for some international graduate students. PhD supervision has also been characterized as the process of converting a student into a colleague. While graduate students express substantially fewer concerns with academic honesty and integrity than undergraduate students, the Task Force heard second or third hand of problematic situations.

## 8.2 Recommendations

Given how much graduate students depend upon their supervisors for support during their time at SFU and for recommendations when they graduate, the Task Force recognized that graduate students may be reluctant to speak up; therefore, it seems prudent to review supervisory practices to make certain that the best effort is being made to ensure supervisors provide adequate guidance and encourage timely, open discussion with their graduate students.

### **Recommendation 13:**

**At the graduate level, review supervisory practices to ensure graduate students have effective access to their supervisors and the SFU guidelines for supervisor/graduate relations are discussed early in a student's graduate program.**

An important safeguard of intellectual property for both faculty and graduate students is a contract negotiated by the student and supervisor before research begins. Issues to consider include the following:

- Is the supervisor paying the student to do research? If so, both parties need to agree on what part of the research can be used in a thesis or dissertation and who owns the data if the student does not complete the degree. Such an agreement can protect the faculty member as well as the student by ensuring continued control of the data after the student leaves.
- If the research project is a group effort, what is the student's contribution and how will data from specific parties be acknowledged?
- What are the expectations for publishing? When is joint authorship required? What determines the order in which authors' names appear?
- Does the research involve human subjects? At what point must all necessary approvals be obtained?
- Is the research confidential? If so, how will the student be able to meet the university requirements for publication and a public defense? (At SFU, a thesis or dissertation can be held for one year before becoming available in the library, but during that year, the document is still available on request in a secretary's office and the defense is public.)

- What is the supervisor's policy on the use of editors? Is copy editing allowed? What sort of help is prohibited?

**Recommendation 14:**

**Revise the Sample Template for Agreement between Graduate Students and Supervisor in the Graduate Student Handbook to expand the section on intellectual property and to specifically address issues such as authorship and confidential research.**

The International Teaching Assistant seminars were introduced to improve the quality of undergraduate education by helping international graduate students improve their comprehension of spoken Canadian English, their pronunciation, and their understanding of Canadian academic culture. The seminars have operated every semester for more than a decade and are free of charge. These seminars are of value to all international graduate students, but particularly those who are new to Western culture and lack sufficient knowledge of the cultural norms informing academic honesty and integrity at SFU.

**Recommendation 15:**

**Ensure that issues of academic honesty and integrity are given sufficient attention in the International Teaching Assistant seminars and that all international graduate students are made aware that they can attend and are encouraged to do so when they first arrive at SFU.**

## **9. PLAGIARISM DETECTION**

While the Task Force terms of reference call for an examination of software and other computer-aided means for detecting plagiarism, our findings indicate a need to consider plagiarism detection in a broader context, as explained below. In terms of plagiarism-detecting software, the Task Force focused on Turnitin.com rather than a wider range of software not just because SFU provides all instructors with access to the service, but also because of its growing market share and apparent lack of strong competitors.

When the use of Turnitin.com was first raised in Task Force meetings, some members expressed serious concerns with intellectual property and privacy protection. Further deliberations, articles on the subject, and consultations with members of the University community and with faculty at other institutions raised other issues of concern. At the same time, support for Turnitin.com has been expressed by faculty teaching large classes who note that plagiarism-detecting software is the only viable way of catching students who recycle papers. Others deem it useful in identifying internet plagiarism in their students' work and/or in deterring plagiarism in the first place. Few faculty appear to be fans of Turnitin.com, but rather to view it as the best option available, as better than nothing, or as an unfortunate necessity. Some are opposed to its use.

That Turnitin.com maintains a database of all papers submitted to the service raises concerns with privacy protection. For some, these concerns have been strengthened by

the U.S. PATRIOT Act. Given that Turnitin.com is a U.S. company, it appears possible that an intelligence agency could conduct a word search of the data base, find, for example, a paper on Middle East politics that expressed opinions deemed a threat to U.S. national security, and gain access to the identity of the writer.

Another concern is that the use of plagiarism-detecting software could be viewed as the answer to the plagiarism problem and potentially reduce concern with educating students about what plagiarism is, why it is an essential aspect of academic honesty, and how to avoid it. As noted elsewhere in this report, a significant amount of plagiarism in students' academic writing can be explained by a lack of familiarity with academic discourse. From this perspective, dealing with plagiarism requires improving students' academic literacy. Used as the main strategy for dealing with plagiarism, Turnitin.com would provide an insufficient technological fix to this pedagogical problem.

Another concern is that untrained instructors might act upon Turnitin.com's results without further investigation. In "Trust or Trussed? Has Turnitin.com Got It All Wrapped Up?" ([http://www.teacherlibrarian.com/pages/30\\_4\\_feature.html](http://www.teacherlibrarian.com/pages/30_4_feature.html)), librarian John Royce points out that "The bulk of comments on Turnitin's testimonials page provide evidence of great and sometimes unquestioning trust in Turnitin's results." Royce points out that the search capabilities of Turnitin.com do not extend to text sources, Web sources translated from a foreign language, usenet discussion groups, discussion lists, online encyclopedias, and journals in subscription databases. This last point is significant because faculty and librarians routinely encourage students to search periodical databases when researching a subject. If instructors were to rely on Turnitin.com as their sole means of detecting plagiarism, then students who plagiarize intentionally from these sources would likely escape detection. At the same time, others who plagiarize unintentionally could be left with false confidence that they know what plagiarism is and are avoiding it when they are not.

More generally, because Turnitin.com does not catch a great deal of plagiarism that is based on rearranging sentences and changing the language slightly, students whose papers pass Turnitin.com may be left with a false sense that they can paraphrase appropriately. Furthermore, those whose work is not flagged but who paraphrase without citing their source will likely not learn that all sources must be attributed whether or not the author's exact words are used. This was a point of confusion evident in students' comments on the SFU integrity surveys.

Researchers also point out that a paper Turnitin.com identifies as plagiarized may not be. Royce recounts that when he submitted a paper he had written that contained plagiarized passages, Turnitin.com marked original passages as plagiarized. (It also missed 15 of 18 plagiarized passages.) Other limitations of Turnitin.com are that once it finds a potential match it looks no further and that it does not recognize when a phrase or passage is in quotation marks.

Another concern is workload. Jon Radue is a faculty member at Brock University and the person responsible for training faculty to use Turnitin.com and for advising his university

on its use. Once a strong supporter, he now expresses serious doubts. In a conversation with a member of the Task Force, he explained that, if used in a way that is fair to students, Turnitin.com may well generate more work for instructors than would be the case with a Google search of suspect papers identified while marking. One problem is that the paper a student turns in to Turnitin.com may be different than the paper turned in for grading. To ensure that students are not substituting papers, an instructor would need to cross check the two sets of papers. Also, to be fair to students and ensure a level playing field, instructors would need to manually check the Turnitin.com copy of every paper that is identified at the green level or above to determine if marked passages are plagiarized (nearly 25% of a paper flagged as green could be plagiarized). Checking papers manually is the only way to determine if marked passages have been plagiarized or are legitimate quotations.

Both Royce and Radue suggest that using a search engine to find plagiarized Internet sources can produce better results than plagiarism-detecting software if the search is conducted with skill and persistence. A number of SFU faculty have reported that they and their teaching assistants have located sources quickly using search engines such as Google – even sources that Turnitin.com missed. The sources for other suspect papers may take many hours to locate, but an instructor using Turnitin.com may also need to spend many hours to confirm that the papers handed in for marking are the papers submitted to the system and to perform due diligence on the papers flagged by the software.

Another issue is that at this point in time, plagiarism-detecting software and search engines can only locate Internet sources. If, as some research suggests, a significant amount of plagiarism still involves text sources, then manual searches of books, journal articles, and other text-based sources are advisable for suspected papers when computer-aided means of detection fail to produce results. Assistance from librarians or the Academic Conduct person could be useful for difficult cases requiring manual searches.

Another potential problem with Turnitin.com is raised by Don McCabe, one of the leading experts on academic integrity. In a presentation at SFU in September 2003, McCabe expressed his concern that requiring students to use plagiarism-detecting software promotes a lack of trust and resentment on the part of students toward their instructors. McCabe points out that feeling respected and trusted is a major deterrent to academic dishonesty and that instructors should keep this in mind when deciding whether or not to use Turnitin.com. Those who already use Turnitin.com may want to consider addressing this issue with their students.

Further concerns are that SFU faculty and sessional instructors receive no training in plagiarism detection and that there is no established procedure for how plagiarism-detection software should be introduced or for what to do if a student objects to using it.

## 9.1 Community Response

Despite the above concerns, the Task Force is not recommending that SFU stop supporting Turnitin.com. Despite serious reservations, the Task Force acknowledges that a number of instructors are convinced they need plagiarism-detecting software, such as Turnitin.com, that builds a databank of previously submitted papers so that they can identify duplicate assignments submitted to their courses as well as assignments previously submitted for other courses. This need is felt most in large classes with several markers. As quite a few members of the SFU community have pointed out, the BUEC 333 case is not an isolated incident. For many, Turnitin.com is viewed as the most effective available means of discouraging cheating, of helping to level the playing field for honest students, and of protecting the integrity of SFU degrees.

One alternative to using plagiarism-detecting software is to create assignments that resist copying. However, developing plagiarism resistant assignments could be difficult for some courses and new assignments would likely be required every time the course is offered. Some instructors are concerned with finding time while others are concerned with reducing the effectiveness of their assignments. For those who are amenable to deterring plagiarism through assignments, encouragement should be available in the form of instructional support – something the person promoting academic honesty and integrity could help arrange.

Student comments on the integrity surveys suggest that many students welcome any promise of a deterrent to academic dishonesty and are therefore in favour of instructors using Turnitin.com. The Task Force is also aware of SFU students with concerns about intellectual property and privacy rights and a perceived lack of trust on the part of their instructors. Another student concern was reported in the *Vancouver Sun* on October 16, 2003. According to the report, a second-year student at McGill is challenging the university's requirement that he submit his work to Turnitin.com. As well as objecting to being assumed guilty until proven innocent, he is reported as objecting to a company making a profit from the data base his work would be part of. In this case, the student handed in a hard copy of his paper to the instructor who automatically assigned the student an F for failing to submit the paper to Turnitin.com. Given that SFU has no procedures relating to the use of this software, a similar situation could potentially arise.

## 9.2 Recommendations

Given that the use of plagiarism-detecting software is controversial and that some students may object to using it, the Task Force recommends the following:

### **Recommendation 16:**

**Establish a procedure whereby students sign a consent form before submitting work to Turnitin.com or any other plagiarism-detecting software.**

The proposed form would explain how the software functions (such as whether it creates a database of submitted work) and ask students to agree that all their questions about the

system have been answered to their satisfaction. The procedure should also outline the process to follow if a student chose not to sign.

The Task Force is also concerned with the lack of training offered to faculty.

**Recommendation 17:**

**Offer a workshop for instructors on various means of detecting plagiarism.**

Given the increasing numbers of SFU faculty who are using Turnitin.com, this training session should be created as soon as possible. Anyone planning on using plagiarism–detecting software should be invited to participate. If the Academic Conduct person is appointed in a timely manner, he or she could be involved in designing and offering this workshop; otherwise, it could be developed through the Learning and Instructional Development Centre.

Instructors would also benefit from materials that could be available on a restricted-access section of the Academic Honesty and Integrity web site. These materials would provide advice on ways of creating assignments that resist cut-and-past plagiarism and on various means of detecting plagiarism, raise awareness of the continuing need to search text and database sources, alert instructors to the limitations of plagiarism-detecting software, and recommend procedures for using whatever software is supported by the University.

The Task Force also recommends that the University review the use of Turnitin.com.

**Recommendation 18**

**Review how well Turnitin.com has been received by faculty and students, whether its limitations are understood, whether it is being used appropriately, and whether the University should continue to support this or any other plagiarism-detecting software.**

## **10. FACULTY ISSUES**

Faculty and other instructors play a key role in promoting and maintaining academic honesty and integrity. Their contributions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Reducing opportunities for academic dishonesty by
  - providing students with honesty-friendly exams and assignments
  - taking adequate measures to reduce the opportunities for cheating on assignments and exams
  - avoiding recycling exams and using questions from published question banks
- Promoting academic honesty and integrity by
  - including academic honesty statements and explanations of grading practices on all course outlines and assignment instructions



- promoting and discussing academic honesty and integrity with students
- ensuring course and lecture materials conform to Canadian copyright law
- following up on suspected cases of academic dishonesty reported by teaching assistants and those suspected by the faculty member
- ensuring teaching assistants understand how to deal with suspected cases of academic dishonesty and that faculty deal with these cases rather than leaving this responsibility in the hands of a TA.
- submitting old exams to the proposed exam bank
- ensuring that supervisory relationships with graduate students are supportive and that issues of intellectual property are dealt with before students begin their research
- Modeling academic integrity by
  - acknowledging ideas and information from the published work of other scholars and researchers in publications, presentations, and teaching
  - acknowledging ideas and information obtained from the unpublished work of colleagues, graduate and undergraduate students, and others in publications, presentations, and teaching ,
  - respecting copyright
  - establishing contracts with colleagues, graduate students, and undergraduate research assistants about authorship at the beginning of all research projects
  - fairly and appropriately ascribing authorship on all publications according to disciplinary standards and practices

SFU has many dedicated teachers who need no encouragement to give their best to students even though academe places a higher value on research than teaching and the extrinsic incentives for putting time into teaching are few. The requirement for all departments to develop guidelines by the end of 2003 for assessing teaching as part of tenure, promotion, and salary review is a potentially positive step toward raising the profile and prestige of teaching. Unfortunately, faculty members in a number of departments have expressed concern that they have not been consulted concerning the development of these guidelines. Some were unaware of this initiative until they read the draft report. Members of the Task Force hope that Chairs/Directors and other members of tenure committees have included their colleagues in their deliberations and given adequate attention to this important initiative.

## **10.2 Community Response and Suggestions**

Given the key role faculty play in promoting and maintaining academic honesty and integrity, it is not surprising that faculty responsibility was a recurring theme throughout the consultation process. While the Task Force met with many committed faculty who make every effort to promote academic honesty and integrity in their classrooms and throughout the university community, the general consensus is that some could do more.

In discussions that raised concerns about faculty accountability and responsibility, considerations of solutions centred on providing adequate support and promoting the

value of teaching by giving it appropriate weight in tenure, promotion, and salary considerations. Various forms of support for instructors have been suggested and recommended throughout this report:

- The proposed full-time person to promote academic honesty and integrity would ensure a wide-range of pedagogical support was available to instructors
- The proposed full-time person to take responsibility for cases of academic misconduct could save instructors many hours investigating and preparing cases for the University Board of Student Discipline and attending hearings
- The Academic Learning Centre would provide instructors with a place to send students who engaged in plagiarism because of language issues or who needed other forms of academic assistance

The list goes on.

In terms of raising the prestige of teaching, many expressed resignation, viewing the problem as embedded in the very nature of universities and impervious to change. Others were more optimistic, noting that while changing academic culture may be difficult, history confirms that it is not impossible. Small changes can lead to big effects. One such change would be to give more than lip service to the 50-50 split between teaching and research in a faculty member's workload and to enshrine it in policy.

Workload is another issue of concern. Providing more pedagogical support for faculty is part of the answer, but members of the university community have also pointed out that some first-year and introductory courses have large enrolments with few, if any, teaching assistants. Adequate teaching-assistant support is essential to promoting and maintaining academic honesty.

## 10.2 Recommendations

The draft report included a recommendation that information, advice, and assistance on copyright be readily available to faculty. We are pleased that a position is being created that will provide this support.

The Code of Faculty Ethics and Responsibilities (A30.01) is an obvious place to outline faculty members' responsibilities in regard to academic honesty and integrity.

### **Recommendation 19:**

**Revise the faculty ethics policy (A30.01 Code of Faculty Ethics and Responsibilities) to address issues relevant to academic honesty and integrity (such as authorship, intellectual property, copyright, and ownership of data) and to include faculty members' responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity in teaching and research.**

One way to give teaching a higher profile would be to enshrine in policy the formula that a tenure-track or tenured faculty member's duties are typically forty percent teaching,

forty percent research, and twenty percent service – a formula that is often used as a rule of thumb. While the 40-40-20 split would not be appropriate at all points in a faculty member's career, it suggests a general norm for a typical career path in keeping with the categories of evaluation listed in section 2 of policy A11.05, Criteria for Appointment, Contract Renewal, Tenure, Promotion and Salary Review.

**Recommendation 20:**

**Revise the appropriate faculty Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion policies for tenure-track appointments to ensure teaching is given adequate weight in tenure, promotion, and salary decisions by acknowledging forty percent teaching, forty percent research, and twenty percent service as a general norm for faculty workload. Also review departmental criteria for assessing teaching to ensure that these criteria provide effective guidelines for giving teaching appropriate weight in tenure, promotion, and salary reviews and during the appeal process.**

To address the issues of class size and level of TA support, the Task Force offers the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 21:**

**Review class size and teaching assistant allocations for first-year and introductory courses to ensure students have reasonable access to instructors and teaching assistants.**

This review is important to determine if students can expect reasonable access to faculty and teaching assistants and if faculty can reasonably be expected to fulfill their obligations in promoting academic honesty and integrity. Section 6.4 of the Teaching Appointments policy (A 12.01) lists factors that should be taken into account when assigning workload and could serve as a guide for this review.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

The Task Force has been encouraged by the strong interest in its work and the high level of support it has received from members of the SFU community. The twenty-one recommendations in this report address the need to balance deterrence, detection, and punishment with education and support.

Everyone in the University community has a role to play in this endeavour. Students are ultimately responsible for their actions, but the institution must take responsibility for promoting academic honesty and integrity. The two keys to strengthening the culture of academic honesty and integrity at SFU are 1) consistent and fair punishment of all violations of academic honesty and 2) ongoing education to create and support an understanding of the value of academic honesty.

If students perceive that academic honesty and integrity are promoted by the institution and its instructors, that reasonable measures are taken to discourage cheating, and that the risk of being caught and the penalties for cheating outweigh the possible benefits, then they will be encouraged to maintain academic honesty. Students also need to understand why academic integrity is a core value of the University, why maintaining academic honesty is personally beneficial, and why what they are learning is more valuable than the grades on their transcripts.

We hope that all those who gave their time to help the Task Force with its work find their concerns and ideas reflected in this report. However, given the complexity of the issues involved and the controversies raised, we cannot hope to have reached conclusions that are to everyone's satisfaction. Nevertheless, the Task Force is confident that we have identified a consensus within the university community as to how to strengthen the culture of academic honesty and integrity at SFU and that the university community will continue its strong support for this on-going endeavour.

## Appendix A

### TASK FORCE MEMBERS

All members of the Task Force were appointed by the Vice-President Academic. Eight members were appointed in March 2002, two were replaced during the term and three were added: two additional student representatives and the Director of the Learning and Instructional Development Centre, *ex officio*.

David Boal	Faculty, Physics	Chair, March to May 2002 Member until December 2002
Sarah Dench	Director of Student Academic Affairs, Registrar's Office	
Bunni Gannan	Graduate student, Communication	Member, March to August 2002
Alton Harestad	Faculty, Biological Sciences	Member since February 2003
Laurine Harrison	Ombudsperson	
David Kaufman	Director, Learning and Instructional Development Centre	
Meredith Kimball	Faculty, Women's Studies and Psychology	
Jen Perry	Graduate student, Biology	Member since September 2002
Julie Shugarman	Undergraduate, Philosophy	Member since November 2002
Michael St. Denis	Graduate student, Archaeology	Member since November 2002
Susan Stevenson	Faculty, Engineering Science	Chair since May 2002
Mark Vance	Undergraduate, Mathematics	

The Task Force was supported in its work by Anne Cooper of the President's Office and by Julie Delisle as research assistant during the spring semester, 2003.

## Appendix B

### MEETINGS AND CONSULTATIONS

The members of the Academic Honesty and Integrity Task Force wish to thank all those who took the time to meet with us and offer their concerns, suggestions, and ideas. Meetings and consultations that the Task Force held between March 2002 and October 2003 are listed below. We wish also to thank the many individuals throughout the university who communicated with us through e-mails, phone calls, and spontaneous conversations. Your communications made our work possible.

The Chair also wishes to thank the members of the Task Force for their time and energy over the long haul, for their commitment to an open consultative process, for their willingness to debate complex and controversial issues with passion, and for their ability to work together and reach consensus. Student members deserve a special thank you for the initiative they took in consulting with student groups and for their valuable contributions throughout the process.

Date	Meetings and Consultations
Oct 23/03	Task Force meeting
Oct 09/03	Consultation on draft recommendations at Surrey Campus
Sep 25/03	Task Force meeting
Sep 18/03	Consultation on draft recommendations at Burnaby Campus
Sep 17/03	Consultation on draft recommendations at Harbour Centre
Jun 17/03	Joint meeting with Curriculum Implementation Task Force
Jun 03/03	Meeting with John Waterhouse, VP Academic
May 29/03	Task Force Meeting
May 22/03	Task Force Meeting
May 15/03	Task Force Meeting
May 08/03	Meeting with Paul McFetridge, Chair of Linguistics
Apr 24/03	Meeting with Rob Gordon, Director, School of Criminology and with the Diversity Working Groups (Moninder Bubber, Kumari Beck, Ada Christopher, Gayel Knott, Hiromi Matsui)
Apr 16/03	Meeting with Sarah Fleming, Director, Bridge Program and with Dianne Tiefensee, Director, English Language and Culture Program
Mar 24/03	Meeting with Jon Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies and Bruce Clayman, Vice-President Research
Mar 19/03	Meeting with Randall Martin, Director, SFU International
Mar 12/03	Meeting with Katherine McManus, Program Director, Distance Education
Mar 05/03	Task Force Meeting
Mar 03/03	Meeting with Statistics and Actuarial Science graduate Student Caucus
Feb 27/03	Campus-wide event – Academic Honesty and Integrity: A Community Conversation
Feb 25/03	Meeting with Education Graduate Student Caucus
Feb 24/03	Meeting with Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) Executive
Feb 19/03	Meeting with Malgorzata Dubiel, Faculty, Mathematics

Feb 19/03	Meeting with Economics Student Union
Feb 10/03	Meeting with Ian Andres, Acting Dean of Education and Keleen Toohey, Graduate Program Director, Education and Lucy LeMare, Undergraduate Program Director, Education
Feb 10/03	Meeting with Surrey Student Society
Feb 06/03	Meeting with Math Student Union
Feb 05/03	Meeting with Michael Stevenson, President, SFU
Feb 05/03	Meeting with Philosophy Student Union
Feb 05/03	Meeting with Maureen Fizzell, Associate Dean, Faculty of Business
Jan 31/03	Meeting with Biology Graduate Student Caucus
Jan 31/03	Meeting with Archaeology Graduate Student Caucus
Jan 27/03	Meeting with SFSS Executive
Jan 22/03	Meeting with Jim Cranston, Chief Information Officer, SFU
Jan 14/03	Meeting with Willie Davidson, Dean of Science
Jan 08/03	Task Force Meeting
Dec 12/02	Meeting with Faculty Association Executive
Dec 03/02	Meeting with members of the University Board of Student Discipline: Joan Brockman, Faculty, Criminology; Donalda Meyers, Staff, Education; Terri LaCourse, Graduate Student, Biology; Deborah Connolly, Faculty, Psychology
Nov 28/02	Meeting with Karen Kavanagh, Senate Committee on Disciplinary Appeals
Nov 26/02	Meeting with Bill Krane, Associate VP Academic and Judith Osborne, Associate VP Policy, Equity, and Legal
Nov 21/02	Meetings with Todd Mundle, Librarian, Gary McCarron, Faculty, School of Communication, and Sada Rangnekar, Departmental Assistant, Physics
Nov 14/02	Meetings with Wendy Strachan, Centre for Writing Intensive Learning and with Julie Shugarman, Undergraduate Student and TA, Philosophy
Oct 24/02	Meetings with Elaine Fairey, Head Reference Librarian and with Joan Collinge, Director, Distance Education
Oct 23/02	Meeting with SFSS Forum
Oct 17/02	Task Force Meeting
Oct 16/02	Meeting with SFSS Graduate Issues Committee
Oct 10/02	Task Force Meeting
Oct 04/02	Meeting with Biology Graduate Student Caucus
Sep 26/02	Task Force Meeting
Sep 19/02	Task Force Meeting
Aug 08/02	Task Force Meeting
Jun 13/02	Meetings with Chris McGrath, Residence Coordinator, with Greg Dow, Chair of Economics, and with John Jones, Director, School of Engineering Science
May 30/02	Meeting with Engineering Undergraduate Student Society representatives, Julie Delisle and Maria Trinh
May 22/02	Task Force Meeting
May 01/02	Task Force Meeting
Mar 20/02	Initial meeting with John Waterhouse, Vice President Academic

## **Appendix C**

### **PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS**

#### **Guest Speaker**

September 2003, Don McCabe, “Promoting Academic Integrity in the Internet Age,” Diamond University Club, SFU

#### **Presentations by Task Force Members**

October 2003, Sarah Dench and Susan Stevenson, “From Punishment to Pedagogy,” a presentation on the work of the task force, including the consultation process and our evolving understanding of the importance of addressing both the need to deter cheating and to promote academic honesty through education. Centre for Academic Integrity, San Diego, CA.

September 2003, Jen Perry and Michael St. Denis, “Workshop on Academic Honesty and Integrity,” TA/TM Day, SFU.

June 2003, Susan Stevenson, “Academic Integrity Surveys: Levering Change”, Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, UBC.

May 2003, Task Force Members, “Discouraging and Dealing with Academic Dishonesty,” Symposium on Innovative Teaching, SFU.

February 2003. Task Force Members, “Academic Integrity: A Community Conversation,” a campus-wide workshop, SFU.