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## The Ugliest Part of the Job: Faculty Perceptions on Addressing Graduate Student Academic Misconduct

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THE UGLIEST PART OF THE JOB:  
FACULTY PERCEPTIONS ON ADDRESSING  
GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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## DEDICATION

For my Family:

My children, Seth and Connor, who joined me on this adventure and remind me of what is important. My husband, Brad, my rock, my support. I could not have done this without you. Thank you. “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” – Colossians 3:14

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## ABSTRACT

Faculty can play a significant role in setting the academic standards of a university, and certainly for graduate programs. Addressing academic misconduct is one of many ways to set those standards at a university. Faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct impact how they address it when it occurs. To understand those perceptions, a qualitative study through a semi-structured interview protocol with a supplemental document analysis was conducted. Business faculty who teach at the graduate level were selected to interview based upon research into academic misconduct by business majors. These faculty were recruited from three different institutions that are similar in characteristics, including that they are public institutions, classified as Research Universities (very high activity), offer graduate programs at the masters and doctoral level, and are geographically located in the same region (the South). Through eighteen individual interviews of faculty participants at these institutions, participants shared how they defined academic misconduct, how they discussed it with their graduate students, how they addressed it, and whether or not they utilized their institutional process to report it. The framework providing the lens for faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct is composed of four parts formed by interview responses: graduate student delineation, faculty roles with graduate students, is academic misconduct an issue, and how faculty feel about academic misconduct. This framework was used to answer the four research questions on how faculty address graduate student academic misconduct. Graduate student differentiation of masters and doctoral students was an

important piece of information that most faculty participants emphasized. Findings reveal that faculty participants did not ignore academic misconduct, but depending on the level of the graduate student, participants address it differently. Additionally, the choice of faculty participants to use an institutional process as one means of addressing academic misconduct is dependent on several factors, including knowledge of the process, support and resources provided to faculty, and the effectiveness of the process. Those participants who did utilize their institutional process stated it was an institutional requirement and overall had a positive experience using the process. Those who did not use the process listed a variety of reasons why. These included not knowing about the process, being deterred from using it by their peers, or lack of evidence to submit a misconduct incident to the process. Additionally, participants discussed a lack of support from the university in trying to utilize the process, minimal outcomes for students responsible for misconduct instead of more stringent outcomes, and too severe outcomes for students when faculty believed they should have been less.



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*“Integrity is what we do, what we say, and what we say we do.” – Don Galer*

Faculty can play a significant role in setting the academic standards of a university and certainly for graduate programs. “Integrity in academic settings is a fundamental component of success and growth in the classroom” (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2012). The antithesis of integrity, academic integrity in particular, is academic misconduct. This study seeks to understand faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct and how those perceptions influence how faculty address it. This topic may be important for faculty teaching graduate students because, “Graduate programs in universities exist for the discovery and transmission of knowledge, the education of students, the training of future faculty, and the general well-being of society” (American Association of University Professors, October 1999, para. 1). Addressing academic misconduct in the classroom is one of many ways to set the academic standards at a university. Previous research explores faculty perceptions of academic misconduct and how it is addressed, but almost exclusively at the undergraduate level. Faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct impact how they address it when it occurs, but it is not widely known what those perceptions are. This research examines in depth the faculty perspective of academic misconduct at the graduate level, their responses to it, how they choose to address it, and

finally, what factors influence faculty utilizing institutional processes as part of addressing misconduct.

Why do faculty choose their profession? Different faculty may give you different answers, but some may say that they enjoy teaching, especially at the college level. They enjoy imparting knowledge to those who want to learn and see teaching as a collaborative venture, especially with graduate students. Some faculty may be interested in the research opportunities, guiding their journeys of discovery and setting their own agendas to answer their own questions. An extension of that research agenda is collaborating with doctoral students on research and guiding them through the process of discovery. Other faculty will share that they love being in an environment where they can continue to learn. No matter what drew faculty to academia, “The faculty in American colleges and universities have always been the heart of the institutions where they work, the intellectual capital that ensures those institutions’ excellence” (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007, p. xi). Ensuring institutions’ excellence involves having standards of excellence for their students, and part of this is addressing academic misconduct when students do not meet those standards. Academic misconduct was most likely something that faculty did not list as why they chose their profession, but is a very real, very unpleasant part of that job.

Integrity in higher education is the foundation for carrying out an institution’s mission of teaching, research, and service. Integrity in teaching is carried out by faculty in the classroom providing opportunities for students to learn, including graduate students. As noted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), “The integrity of higher education rests on the integrity of the faculty profession” (2006, p.

111). Integrity, defined broadly, is “the quality of being honest and fair,” and having a “firm adherence to a code of especially moral...values” (Merriam-Webster, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/integrity>, 2013). Specifically this study examines *academic* integrity, the quality of being honest and fair in the academy.

Academic integrity is a foundational prerequisite for what happens in the academy. Academic integrity can conjure up a variety of meanings, but the International Center for Academic Integrity, in their Fundamental Values Project (1999), defines it best as:

...a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action (p. 4).

These values “reinforce educational mission and academic processes” (Drinan, 1999, p. 2). Institutions of higher education are, at their foundation, places where one can seek truth.

To promote truth-seeking, and to reinforce it at all levels, institutions build truth-seeking as part of their culture. The early colonial colleges of America incorporated that as part of their missions and purpose. In Harvard’s very first few years, President Dunster stated to the Board of Overseers that part of their mission was to educate students so that “their conduct and manners be honorable and without blame” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 6). William and Mary, the second oldest college in the nation, had as part of its purpose for those that attended to be “educated in good letters and manners” (Adams, 1887, p. 17), and “Provost William Smith of the college at Philadelphia let it be known that ‘Thinking,

Writing, and Acting Well...is the grand aim of a liberal education” (as cited in Rudolph, 1962, p. 12). Even as that “grand aim” evolved and changed as the country did, preparing “young men for responsible citizenship” still required an adherence to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and integrity (Rudolph, 1962, p. 40).

Today, many institutions cite “to establish and maintain excellence,” “fostering leadership and excellence,” or that they value “excellence in all endeavors” in their missions of carrying out teaching, research, and service to their communities and beyond (University of South Carolina, n.d.a; University of Mississippi, 2014; Vanderbilt University, 2014). To create, to foster, and to value excellence, institutions realize they must promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and integrity. A large part of promoting those values can happen in the classroom, with faculty modeling and talking about those values in the pursuit of truth and education.

Academic misconduct is counter to academic integrity. Defined broadly, it is “dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program” (University of South Carolina, n.d.b) or “any activity that tends to undermine the academic integrity of the institution” (Indiana University, 2008). When it comes to addressing academic misconduct, faculty will often find themselves at the forefront given their primary position in the classroom. However, the sentiment of many a faculty member in institutions of higher education may very well be that, “They’re professors, not policemen” (Schneider, January 2, 1999). Faculty chose their profession to teach, to engage in research and contribute to their chosen field, to continue to learn, and perhaps even inspire young scholars. Preventing and detecting academic misconduct was probably not on the list of things that faculty aspired to do, yet faculty are the front line



tackling academic misconduct in the classroom and the academy. Academic misconduct may be one of the most unpleasant parts of a faculty member's job to address, and research attests to that fact (Hardy, 1982; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002).

While there will most likely not be public floggings any time soon for students who engage in academic misconduct, faculty struggle with the fact that graduate students engage in academic misconduct and can struggle with how to address it. Understanding faculty expectations of graduate students, whether those expectations are framed in terms of graduate students simply being students or in terms of graduate students becoming future colleagues, could help illuminate how faculty can address academic misconduct by graduate students when it occurs.

Faculty who are concerned about academic misconduct may want to do something about it, but there are certainly many factors that get in the way, one of which is the time consuming nature of addressing incidents of academic misconduct. Depending on the nature of the behavior, the time invested by the faculty member can be significant to review the matter, confirm his or her suspicions, contact and then meet and confront the student(s), report the matter through the appropriate channels, participate in any other procedures as required by the institution, all the while still conducting the course where the incident occurred and presumably still interacting with the student(s) involved, in addition to the faculty member's other responsibilities. It is little wonder why faculty may choose to either "handle it themselves" whether through a stern lecture to the student(s) or a failing grade, or simply dismiss the matter altogether to avoid such processes that discourage, rather than encourage, a faculty member to uphold their

responsibility to help set the academic tone for the university (Gehring & Pavela, 1994; Graham, Monday, O'Brien & Steffen, 1994; Hardy, 1982; Jendrek, 1989; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998; McCabe, 1993; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001; Nuss, 1984; Simon, Carr, McCullough, Morgan, Oleson, & Ressel, 2003; Stafford, 1976; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002; Wright & Kelly, 1974).

Other factors that may inhibit faculty from appropriately addressing academic misconduct may include institutional policies and procedures that are cumbersome or even hard to find, their individual college's stance on addressing such matters, the department's "way of doing things" which may or may not fall in line with institutional policies, or even a department chair who may not be supportive of faculty bringing such issues to light (Aaron, 1992; Alschuler & Blimling, 1995; Bertram-Gallant & Drinan, 2006; Hardy, 1982; Kibler, 1994). On the other side of the misconduct is the student(s), who may be in denial, belligerent, or downright hostile to the faculty, making threats of involving parents, lawyers, or lawsuits. When the students are graduate students, they have a lot at stake in terms of investment in the degree (time and money) and future professional consequences.

Faculty workloads can also be prohibitive of pursuing academic misconduct issues. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) states that a faculty member's total workload can be anywhere from 48-52 hours per week (American Association of University Professors, n.d.a). Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) report that in 1998, the mean total hours a faculty member worked per week at their home institution was 48.6 hours (p. 79). At research universities specifically, the mean total hours a faculty member worked per week was over 50 hours (Schuster and Finkelstein, 2006, p.

80). This includes developing and updating course content, grading, teaching, research activities, committee requirements or obligations, advising students, engaging in professional activities, and many other things (American Association of University Professors, n.d.b). This certainly does not factor in the time needed to address something critical like academic misconduct.

To overcome these hurdles that prevent faculty from addressing and reporting academic misconduct, we need to better understand why faculty may choose to either handle incidents individually or why faculty may choose to ignore incidents completely. Many studies have been done that quantitatively illustrate what faculty may do when they encounter academic misconduct (Graham, Monday, O'Brien & Steffen, 1994; Hard, Conway, & Moran, 2006; Jendrek, 1984; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998; McCabe, 1993; Nuss, 1984; Singhal, 1982; Stafford, 1976; Tabachnick, Keith-Spiegel, & Pope, 1991; Wadja-Johnston, Handal, Brawer, & Fabricatore, 2001; Wright & Kelly, 1974), but none have asked faculty "why" they choose the action they do. This qualitative study does just that.

### **Purpose**

This study explored how faculty address academic misconduct at the graduate level. Many other studies have looked at academic misconduct among undergraduate students and faculty responses to that (Graham, Monday, O'Brien, & Steffen, 1994; Hard Conway, & Moran, 2006; Jendrek, 1989; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Nuss, 1984; Singhal, 1982; Stafford, 1976; Wright & Kelly, 1974). The purpose of this study is to identify how faculty define and discuss academic misconduct with their graduate students, how faculty address academic

misconduct by their graduate students, and why faculty may choose to either ignore or report academic misconduct by their graduate students.

Part of understanding faculty in higher education is learning how faculty frame their role within the institution. Viewing themselves as educators, mentors, researchers, or some other role impacts how they interact with the graduate students they teach and advise. It also shapes the faculty's view on understanding and defining academic integrity and academic misconduct. For faculty who teach and interact with graduate students, it is important to know their expectations of their graduate students' knowledge of academic integrity and academic misconduct. Additionally, knowing faculty expectations of academic conduct and standards can determine how these expectations influence faculty to address these issues with their graduate students, if they discuss them at all. Faculty may assume there is an implicit understanding that graduate students will not engage in academic misconduct because they are now pursuing a level of expertise in a chosen profession to which the faculty already belong and the students are seeking to join. Do faculty perceive that graduate students are seeking to join their professional field and become future colleagues, or are they just students getting an advanced degree? As faculty, are they hoping "to foster a future generation of well-informed, independent-minded scholars" (Cahn, 1986, p. 100)? Are there other expectations or perceptions that influence how faculty view academic misconduct at the graduate level and therefore influence how faculty address incidents of academic misconduct at the graduate level? Do faculty see the impact of academic misconduct as greater and more severe at this level, perhaps even more personal and offensive? This study seeks to understand these complex, human emotional and rational issues at some level.

## **Research Questions**

The goal of this study is to understand the faculty perspective on academic misconduct by graduate students. Therefore, the research questions for this study are:

1. How, and to what extent, do faculty, who teach graduate students at large, public research institutions, define academic misconduct for their graduate students?
2. How, and to what extent, do these faculty discuss academic integrity and misconduct with their graduate students?
3. How, and to what extent, do these faculty address incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?
4. When academic misconduct is discovered, what factors influence these faculty members to report or not report incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?

Factors that influence a professor's decision on whether or not to report an incident of academic misconduct can be separated into two general categories: personal and environmental. Personal factors may include things like a faculty member's personal values or moral code, their experiences, and their culture. Environmental factors may include things like the faculty member's department, their college, or the institution, all of which have their own culture that can influence behavior and decisions. Additionally, environmental factors may include the students themselves who also have their own culture that influence behavior and decisions. These are just examples of factors that can influence whether or not faculty members report incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students.

These research questions address a clear gap in the literature as this study takes a comprehensive look at faculty expectations for graduate students in the area of academic integrity, how faculty communicate those expectations, and why faculty may choose to either address or ignore academic misconduct by their graduate students when it occurs.

There have been a few studies on academic misconduct at the graduate level that are dated, and these primarily focus on the graduate students and how often they cheat, how they define cheating, or why they engage in cheating (Baldwin, Daugherty, Rowley, & Schwarz, 1996; Brown, 1995; Brown, 1996; Dans, 1996; Gilmore, Strickland, Timmerman, Maher, & Feldon, 2010; Love & Simmons, 1998; McCabe, Butterfield, and Trevino, 2006; Rabi, Patton, Fjortoft, & Zgarrick, 2006; Sierles, Hendrickx & Circle, 1980). There is one study, albeit somewhat dated, that surveys faculty and doctoral candidates in four disciplines to ask if they had been exposed to or had direct evidence of specific behaviors related to misconduct in science (Swazey, Anderson, & Lewis, 1993). This study focuses on the broader scope of ethical problems in academic research, not just academic misconduct by graduate students in their programs. Additionally, this study does not discuss how faculty respond to that misconduct or the process they might use. Another study, which appears to be the only study directly focused on graduate students and faculty regarding academic misconduct, asked faculty how they defined academic misconduct, how often they thought it occurred, and what they thought were the ideal approaches to addressing it (Wadja-Johnston, Handal, Brawer, & Fabricatore, 2001). As a survey study, it did not delve into how faculty communicated with their graduate students about academic misconduct, why they selected the “ideal” approaches they did in addressing academic misconduct, or how the faculty actually addressed

academic misconduct by their graduate students. This study aims to answer those questions and fill in the gaps in the existing literature.

### **Background**

Faculty play a critical role in institutions of higher education. The Statement on Professional Ethics from the AAUP (2009) states that, “As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards of their discipline” (American Association of University Professors, 2009). Additionally, the Statement claims that in this role, “Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct...” (American Association of University Professors, 2009). Fostering honest academic conduct contributes to faculty ensuring institutions’ excellence.

Davis, Grover, Becker, and McGregor (1992) compiled results of a survey they developed and administered to undergraduate students at several institutions over several years regarding attitudes toward cheating, intent, faculty responsibility, and appropriate consequences. When asked, “Should an instructor care whether or not students cheat on an exam?” the students’ response was at least 90% yes on all surveys (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992, p. 18). Yet, as the authors note, “such concerns may not always be translated into appropriate actions” (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992, p. 18). This research only provides a small nugget of information regarding how undergraduate students believe faculty should regard academic misconduct, but does not provide insight on graduate students’ perspectives on this. However, the scope of the study does provide some strength to the belief that faculty do have a role to play in

setting the stage for an academically honest environment, high academic standards, and academic integrity.

To further support the argument that faculty are important in the promotion of academic integrity and addressing academic misconduct, Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) provided eight reasons faculty should be concerned about academic misconduct:

1. Equity – for those students who engage in honest work
2. Character development - for all students, for peer influence (good and bad) is a strong influence and faculty action (or lack of it) can shape this
3. The mission to transfer knowledge – which is the heart of the institution which does not have room for dishonesty
4. Student morale – which can be impacted for good or for bad depending on how faculty and the institution respond to academic misconduct
5. Faculty morale – which can also be impacted for good or bad depending on how the institution supports them in addressing misconduct
6. Students' future behavior – for what they do and learn now can be continued in the future (good and bad)
7. Reputation of the institution – can be negatively impacted when misconduct goes unaddressed
8. Public confidence in higher education – which is already flagging drops lower when misconduct is not addressed (pp. 4-6)

Academic integrity and academic misconduct are not new phenomena, but investigating and researching these phenomena to understand them from a faculty perspective is somewhat new. The earliest study about faculty perspectives on cheating



seems to be from Wright and Kelly in 1974. A limited study of faculty at one smaller institution, the research that followed in its footsteps was similar in nature, survey research of faculty at one institution, and primarily faculty addressing undergraduate behavior.

Many other studies asked faculty how they defined academic misconduct, the level of seriousness of the behaviors, how prevalent they thought it was, if they addressed academic misconduct and if so, how (Graham, Monday, O'Brien, & Steffen, 1994; Hard, Conway, & Moran, 2006; Jendrek, 1989; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Nuss, 1984; Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003; Sims, 1995; Singhal, 1982; Stafford, 1976; Stern & Havlicek, 1986; Wright & Kelly, 1974). Only two studies found by this author include faculty addressing academic misconduct issues at the graduate level (Swazey et al, 1993; Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001). Swazey et al (1993) only asked faculty if they have been exposed to graduate student misconduct, as defined by the study. It did not ask what faculty did to address it. Only Wadja-Johnston et al (2001) specifically asked faculty about their interactions with academic misconduct among graduate students and how they addressed it. This particular work is quantitative in nature, however, and fails to dig deeper into understanding the "why" behind faculty decisions.

Some studies did offer up various categories of impediments to faculty reporting academic misconduct, generally labeled as "time-consuming," "litigation," or "lack of support" (Hardy, 1982; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998; Simon, Carr, McCullough, Morgan, Oleson, and Ressel, 2003; Stafford, 1976). Typically these studies, all conducted via survey, provided a list for faculty to rank or select a

predetermined category to explain how they addressed academic misconduct. However, many of these studies primarily asked about undergraduate academic misconduct, not graduate academic misconduct which may be perceived differently by faculty. Conducting a study that allows faculty to use their own words to describe their experiences rather than providing words for them allows for a greater depth of understanding about how faculty address academic misconduct by their graduate students and why they choose the response they do.

One resource specifically dedicated to faculty addressing academic misconduct was published by Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) entitled *Academic Dishonesty: An Educator's Guide*. The authors' acknowledged early on that faculty do encounter academic misconduct, but may have various reasons for not addressing or reporting it. They grouped these reasons into two broad categories: "Denial of the Problem" and "Factors Inhibiting Faculty Action" (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002, pp. 8, 11). In the first category, the authors' put forth three subcategories of denial: that academic misconduct "doesn't happen in my classes," "I don't want to know about it," and "Cheating is really a form of learning" (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002, pp. 9-10). However, upon close reading of the subcategories, these reasons were presented based upon anecdotes and "some published opinion statements" (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002, p. 8). The second broad category did better as the reasons listed were based upon various research studies. While the first category's subsections may have some truth to them, gathering the data through research to support, enhance, or refute that information is critical in gaining a true understanding of how and why faculty address or fail to address academic misconduct by graduate students.

This study focused on the academic field of business, which includes the disciplines of accounting, management, finance, economics, marketing, management information systems, risk management, and statistics. Business faculty were selected as one group to interview based upon research into academic misconduct by business majors. They are known to self-report cheating at higher rates than other majors (McCabe, 2005, p. 4), therefore it is hypothesized that business faculty would have a greater chance of encountering academic misconduct by their students. Research conducted by McCabe, Butterfield, and Trevino (2006) found that “Graduate business students self-reported more cheating than their nonbusiness peers” (p. 298). This finding about the continuation of cheating at the graduate level supports a further look into faculty responses at that level.

### **Significance**

As stated previously, faculty can play a significant role in setting the academic standards of a university, and certainly for graduate programs. Gehring and Pavela (1994) in their publication *Issues and Perspectives on Academic Integrity* clearly detailed that all members of the academic community are responsible for promoting and adhering to principles of academic integrity, and specifically outlined the part faculty can play in that promotion. (p. 10-11). They stated:

Faculty members play a critical role. They have multiple opportunities to set academic standards, help students understand how academic dishonesty is defined, teach students ways to avoid unintentional infractions, identify and confront violators of community standards, and serve as models of academic integrity (p.11).

Serving as “models of academic integrity” to graduate students is particularly important. Education at the graduate level has “high academic standards” with programs “designed to give qualified individuals professional competence in specialized disciplines and trains scholars, research specialists, teachers at all levels, and experts in various professions” (University of South Carolina, 2013).

Different studies that explored graduate student academic misconduct in various fields suggest that research on faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct and how faculty address it is needed. Sierles, Hendrickx and Circle (1980) reported that 87.6% of medical students in their survey (N= 428) self-reported cheating “at least once in college”, and 58.2 % self-reported cheating “at least once in medical school” (p. 125). Baldwin, Daugherty, Rowley, and Schwarz (1996) reported in their survey of medical school students that 16.5% of the respondents (N=2459) self-reported that they cheated in college and “only 4.7% in medical school” (p. 270). A survey of third year doctoral pharmacy students at four institutions (N=296) also revealed similar results (p. 3). 26.3% of the respondents “admitted to cheating during their prepharmacy education” and 16% “reported cheating during pharmacy school” (Rabi, Patton, Fjortoft, & Zgarrick, 2006, p. 3). Another survey study done by Greene and Saxe (1992) found that 77% of their undergraduate respondents had plans to go to some type of graduate school (p. 9) and 81% of respondents indicated they had cheated at some point in their undergraduate career (p. 12). This data shows that undergraduates are bringing their academic misconduct practices with them to graduate school and faculty need to be aware and be prepared for that. This study, in part, will examine the perceived prevalence of academic misconduct at the graduate level from the faculty viewpoint.

Understanding the faculty perspective on graduate students and their academic performance, particularly when they engage in academic misconduct, can help further understand why faculty choose to respond or not respond to graduate student academic misconduct when it occurs. As Tabachnick et al (May 1991) remarked regarding their survey respondents' answer that one-fifth had ignored student cheating, "it would be of great interest to know more about the barriers or circumstances that account for turning away from the ethical responsibility to be actively involved in the monitoring of ethical behavior of colleagues and students" (p. 514). Even some graduate students understand the connection between integrity in the academy and integrity in society. "The fact that ethics sometimes takes a back seat demonstrates that some students – and professors and administrators – don't foresee how ethics are intricately tied to the quality of work later in life" (Bates, 2009, para. 14).

### **Definitions**

This study uses a variety of terms that may have different meanings to different members of the higher education community. For the purpose of this study, these terms are defined as they will be used and intended here.

*Academic misconduct* is "dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program" (University of South Carolina, n.d.b) or "any activity that tends to undermine the academic integrity of the institution" (Indiana University, 2008). This term is meant to include other terms used to express this behavior like cheating and academic dishonesty, but misconduct is intended to be more broadly defined to cover more behaviors that may not be immediately connected with academic work but certainly impact academic outcomes, such as forging a grade change form. The terms "cheating"

or “academic dishonesty” will be utilized specifically if that is the terminology referenced either in literature, research studies or interviews. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating on academic assignments, plagiarizing, lying regarding academic work, and bribery.

This particular combination of definitions was chosen for their broad wording so that the faculty participants in the study could use their own words to describe academic misconduct or chose specific behaviors they identify as academic misconduct without being restricted by this study’s definition. A review of the literature to date has not singled out a common definition of academic misconduct, much like Kibler (1993) found where he stated, “One of the most significant problems a review of the literature on academic dishonesty reveals is the absence of a generally accepted definition” (p. 253). Searching other resources, like the International Center for Academic Integrity, the Association for Student Conduct Administration, or the Model Code of Academic Integrity developed by Gary Pavela ([http://www.academicintegrity.org/icaai/assets/model\\_code.pdf](http://www.academicintegrity.org/icaai/assets/model_code.pdf)) reveal no common, concise definition for academic misconduct. Many examples list a minimum of three or four behaviors and accompanying definitions, but none are exactly the same.

Two potential examples that come close to being concise in words but broad in meaning are the definitions offered by Genereaux and McLeod (1995) and Mullens (2000). Genereaux and McLeod (1995) actually define “cheating” as “the attempt by students to obtain a desired academic outcome through prohibited or unauthorized means” (p. 687). While this definition is rather broad, it was attributed to defining cheating which can be confined to specific behaviors like test cheating but leave out other

forms of misconduct like plagiarism or fraud. Therefore, Genereaux and McLeod's (1995) definition was not used for this study. Mullens (2000) chose to define "academic dishonesty" which is a more encompassing term "as anything that gives a student an unearned advantage over another" (p. 23). This definition is broader than Genereaux and McLeod's (1995), but does not include the impact to the institution in its words though it is likely there in spirit. Therefore, the combination of the two university statements will constitute the definition of academic misconduct for this study.

*Faculty*, for this study, is categorized in one of two categories: tenure-track or tenured, and non-tenure track. Tenured or tenure track faculty titles may include assistant professor, associate professor, or professor. Non-tenure track faculty may have a variety of titles, such as instructor, lecturer, or clinical faculty. Some may be considered researchers while others may be primarily focused on teaching. In either category, the faculty must be full-time (not part-time or adjunct), and have teaching responsibilities that include teaching graduate students with a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Additionally, faculty participants will have encountered at least one incident of academic misconduct by a graduate student in a course they taught or in their capacity as an advisor to a graduate student.

*Graduate students* are those students who are pursuing advanced degrees that result in obtaining a master's degree or a doctoral degree. Any reference to the level of graduate student made in this study will be delineated for clarity and comparison.

When referring to *Business* as an academic field, it is broadly defined as a field that encompasses a variety of disciplines, including but not limited to, business administration, finance, human resources, accounting, and marketing. Any program

mentioned in the course of this study will be at the master's or doctoral level. Where specific graduate programs or disciplines are mentioned in data gathering, every effort will be made to delineate those in the results while still maintaining the confidentiality of the participants.

When this study refers to *addressing academic misconduct*, it is meant that faculty engage in some action that indicates academic misconduct occurred. For example the faculty member would communicate with the student in some fashion, whether in person, via email, on the phone, etc., about the matter. It may also include, but not always, the faculty member assigning a grade penalty of some sort on the assignment, quiz, or exam in question or for the course overall.

*Reporting academic misconduct* takes *addressing academic misconduct* one step further. It is defined as a faculty member following their institutional policy on completing a report on the academic misconduct whether through an academic dean's office, an office of academic integrity or student conduct office, or some other institutionally specified venue in such a way that creates an actual "record" of the misconduct that could be reportable to an outside party, in compliance with FERPA guidelines.

What is a *good outcome* when addressing graduate student academic misconduct? That may depend on the perspective from which it is viewed. A faculty member may perceive a good outcome to be one that penalizes the misconduct that did occur, prevents future misconduct from occurring in their class by the student(s) involved, and is resolved quickly. An administrator or the institution may perceive a good outcome to be one that went through the institutional process to provide a centralized record of the misconduct,



to provide an institutional sanction, and to detect serial cheating by students. From both perspectives, a good outcome may also include some learning on the student's part who acknowledges what they did was wrong, but more importantly why it was wrong and why they should not engage in that behavior in the future. The findings in this study should provide a clearer picture for determining what a good outcome is from a graduate student academic misconduct incident.

### **Overview of Methods & Limitations**

To answer the research questions presented, this study was conducted using qualitative methods. Individual interviews were conducted with participating business faculty who teach at the graduate level. These faculty were recruited from three different institutions that are similar in characteristics, including that they are public institutions, classified by the Carnegie Classification system as Research Universities (very high activity), offer graduate programs at the masters and doctoral level, and are geographically located in the same region (the South).

This study, while exploring new areas of research regarding academic misconduct, does have its limitations. It does explore academic misconduct at the graduate level from a faculty perspective, but it is only seeking the perspectives of faculty in one academic field. Due to the nature of business as an academic field, the faculty who teach in it may encounter students with different motivations for engaging in academic misconduct than in other academic fields. Additionally, this study only sought out faculty who are full time, whether tenured, tenure-track, or non-tenure track. This omits adjunct faculty and teaching assistants who may also encounter academic misconduct in their classrooms.

Institutionally, this study is focused on faculty at institutions classified by the Carnegie Foundation as Research Universities (very high activity) whose environment, cultures, and demands may be very different from other institutions that offer graduate degrees in the field of business. These institutions are also in the same geographic region which may also influence institutional, and therefore faculty, culture.

Regardless of these limitations, this study is significant in that it explores in detail the perceptions of faculty when addressing academic misconduct with their graduate students. This particular topic has not been explored in the literature and this study would fill a gap in the research.

### **Summary**

This study started as a journey to discover why faculty may choose to report or not report, through whatever university channels, a graduate student who engages in academic misconduct. It was to understand the perspective of faculty who teach graduate students when they encounter academic misconduct by those students. What this researcher learned along the way changed her perspective on faculty, while still gaining insight into the faculty viewpoint. Understanding the faculty perspective on graduate student academic misconduct may help an institution change how faculty address academic misconduct – if it is needed. It could certainly help the institution change how it addresses graduate student academic misconduct, probably for the better.

Integrity is central to an institution's mission, particularly in promoting and ensuring excellence, and is no less important for graduate programs. As Drinan (1999) so ably states, "Academic institutions are compelled to pursue truth" (p. 29). The researcher thinks this includes truth in dishonesty, in misconduct. If faculty choose not to ignore it,

if they are proactive and discuss with their graduate students “how principles of academic integrity are fundamental to the academic processes and the pursuit of truth” (Drinan, 1999, p. 33), then faculty truly will be setting the stage to ensure their institution’s excellence and reinforcing their own intellectual capital and position in the institution.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic misconduct at the graduate student level has not received noticeable attention in research, particularly from the faculty perspective, despite the growing interest in academic misconduct overall. As interest in academic misconduct as a phenomenon grows, so does the research on this topic. It has been addressed from several aspects, particularly how often students engage in academic misconduct, what students consider to be academic misconduct, why students engage in this behavior, and how to prevent academic misconduct from occurring. However, this research has focused primarily on undergraduate students and their behaviors though it has provided rich scholarship on understanding academic misconduct from that perspective. There has been some attention given to graduate student academic misconduct, but there is certainly room for more research in that area. Many solutions have also been proffered as a result of the research on academic misconduct, including introducing honor codes at institutions, proactive educational programming for students on understanding academic misconduct, creating institutional cultures of academic integrity, and offering helpful hints to faculty on how to discuss academic integrity in their classes, how to prevent misconduct, and how to address misconduct once it occurs.

The literature on faculty and academic misconduct, their understanding of it and how they define it, prevent it, and address it, while not as pervasive as the literature from the student perspective, is growing and adding to the field additional knowledge of the

faculty's perspective on this issue. What is missing is literature on the faculty perspective of graduate student academic misconduct. What follows is a review and analysis of the existing literature, that while broad in nature, does not address all aspects of the faculty perspective on academic misconduct, especially when it comes to graduate students.

### **Initial Faculty Perspectives**

Studies have been conducted that seek out faculty perspectives on academic misconduct, but usually juxtaposed to student perspectives on academic misconduct (Graham, Monday, O'Brien, & Steffen, 1994; Hard, Conway, & Moran, 2006; Nuss, 1984; Sims, 1995; Singhal, 1982; Stafford, 1976; Stern & Havlicek, 1986; Wright & Kelly, 1974). Research that seeks out only faculty perspectives on academic misconduct does not seem to appear until 1989 when Jendrek conducted a study that "examine[d] faculty members' reactions to students' cheating on examinations" (p. 401). Conducted at one large, public mid-western institution, Jendrek (1989) sent 743 faculty members questionnaires and 337 faculty completed and returned them. When faculty were asked about their reaction, or attitude, "toward students who were observed cheating," most faculty members responding (76%) indicated that they felt either anger or disgust towards the students observed cheating (Jendrek, 1989, p. 404). While this study has its limitations of being conducted at only one institution, only asked faculty about test cheating, and only sought out perspectives of full-time faculty members, it does not seem surprising that the majority of respondents had such a reaction. One would not imagine that faculty would have a positive attitude about addressing test cheating by students.

A more recent study exploring faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty was conducted in 2003 by Pincus and Schmelkin. Their goal was to “uncover some of their [faculty] underlying perceptions and to gain a better understanding of how they conceptualize academic dishonesty” (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003, p. 198). Two different surveys were created to gather the same data but in different formats for validity purposes, creating six possible surveys in total. Conducted at a private institution in the northeast, 300 faculty were randomly assigned and mailed one of the six possible survey forms to complete, with 212 usable surveys completed and returned (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003, p. 201).

What the Pincus and Schmelkin (2003) study found, in part, was that faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty, given 28 behaviors to rate, were placed on a scale of “seriousness,” meaning that they viewed some academically dishonest behaviors as more serious than others (p. 203). What they did not uncover, based on the study methodology, was why faculty viewed behaviors on such a continuum and why certain behaviors were perceived as more egregious (like “sabotaging someone else’s work”) and others were not (like “delaying taking an exam or turning in a paper due to a false excuse”) (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003, p. 203). This study also did not provide faculty the opportunity to name behaviors they perceived as academically dishonest, instead limited to a predetermined list to rate behaviors. Like its predecessor in Jendrek (1989), it is also limited by its faculty response at just one institution, but it does provide an insight into faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty.

Dissertation studies have also explored faculty perceptions of academic misconduct. The dissertation work of Marcoux (2002), Austin (2007), and Henderson

(2007) all examined faculty perspectives of student academic dishonesty. Marcoux (2002) specifically sought out faculty who taught undergraduate students at one institution to ascertain their perspective on academic dishonesty as it relates to their perspectives on student development when those students engage in academic misconduct (p. 99). Marcoux (2002) conducted surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews with faculty, with 368 faculty completing the survey (pp. 97-98). One of the questions asked on the survey and in focus groups was how faculty made “meaning of the term academic dishonesty” (Marcoux, 2002, p. 100). Marcoux (2002) found that when the faculty participants were asked to write three words that come to mind when they read “academic dishonesty,” the most popular responses were “cheating, plagiarizing, and copying,” terms classified as “words depicting student behavior” (p. 115). Other terms or phrases provided were classified as “words depicting character or personality traits” like “scum” or “liar,” “words depicting consequences of cheating” like “intolerable” or “cheat and die,” and “unique words and phrases” like “headache” or “open enrollment” (Marcoux, 2002, pp. 102-105). Much like what Jendrek (1989) found, none of these responses were very positive. Marcoux’s (2002) study certainly goes in-depth to explore faculty perceptions of academic dishonesty through various means of data collection, but is limited by its study at only one institution, and only seeks faculty perspectives on undergraduate student behavior, not graduate students as well.

Henderson (2007) conducted a case study to understand “faculty perceptions surrounding the issue of academic integrity” at one undergraduate institution (p. 5). Surveys were distributed to 242 faculty, with 41 responses completed. From the completed responses, ten faculty were identified to individually interview on the topic

(Henderson, 2007, p. 54-55). In attempting to answer the overarching research question of “how do faculty perceive and respond to instances of academic dishonesty,” Henderson’s (2007) conclusion was really only how faculty perceived academic dishonesty at their institution and they had “mixed feelings about the importance of the issue and whether it requires further research and attention” (p. 114). The major findings of the study were more focused on the faculty’s interaction with students when addressing academic dishonesty rather than their perception of academic dishonesty. While the study revealed interesting findings about the faculty approach to addressing misconduct, it did not address perceptions of academic dishonesty as independently as the reader is lead to believe, and it was limited to one institution.

While Marcoux’s (2002) and Henderson’s (2007) studies did more in-depth examination on aspects of the faculty perspective on academic misconduct, they still were focused on it via the undergraduate lens. Austin’s (2007) dissertation work sought to understand how “faculty members experienced academic dishonesty by students in their classroom” (p. 11). Research methods to answer this question included interviewing two faculty each at three separate institutions that were different in type. Due to institutional differences, some, though not all, of the faculty did teach graduate students and had encountered academic misconduct with those students. What Austin (2007) concluded, based on interview responses and analysis, was that faculty who experienced academic dishonesty were analogous to victims of crime, as they were members of the academic community who “deeply identified with the intellectual atmosphere and environment of a college campus” (p. 249). Acts of academic dishonesty by students were “seen [by faculty] as an attack on all they hold dear” (Austin, 2007, p. 249). This



type of perspective and reaction impacted how faculty then addressed academic dishonesty when it occurred. This qualitative study certainly expanded on the work of the previous two as it gathered data across disciplines and institutional type, but with a small number of participants (six), more research is needed to see if these perceptions are pervasive across disciplines, and if they apply to faculty perceptions of graduate student academic dishonesty as that was not delineated in this study.

### **Graduate Student Academic Misconduct**

Some research has been conducted on graduate student academic misconduct, but the depth and breadth of information is not as great as it is for undergraduate students. The studies that follow provided some insight into how often graduate students in various fields engaged in academic misconduct, but none of these sought a faculty perspective on these students. Nevertheless, reporting these studies will help provide a framework of the faculty perspective on academic misconduct by providing information on the amount and type of academic misconduct faculty may be encountering at the graduate level in various graduate programs.

A few studies have focused on professional health care fields, such as medicine and pharmacy. The studies focused on medical student academic misconduct used a variety of sampling approaches. One study surveyed “first through fourth year medical students at two American medical schools” (Sierles, Hendrickx & Circle, 1980, p. 124), while another conducted a longitudinal survey, utilizing incoming medical students and then exiting fourth year students four years later over the course of 3 classes (Dans, 1996, p. S70). One other survey went for a broad approach surveying second year students at 40 randomly selected medical schools (Baldwin, Daugherty, Rowley, & Schwarz, 1996,

p. 268). The results varied on the percentages of students who admitted to academic misconduct in medical school, ranging from a self-reported high of 58% engaging in academic misconduct at least once (Sierles et al, 1980, p. 125) to a self-reported low of 4.7% engaging in academic misconduct at least once (Baldwin et al, 1996, p. 270). These survey studies certainly provided a glimpse into how often medical students participated in academic misconduct, but the results are not completely comparable to each other given the different students surveyed and the timing of the surveys.

Another study in a professional health care field surveyed “third year doctor of pharmacy students at four universities” to gauge their attitudes on and prevalence of academic misconduct (Rabi, Patton, Fjortoft, & Zgarrick, 2006, p. 3). “All 296 completed survey instruments were included in the analysis” and the results were not too different from what was found in the medical students’ surveys (Rabi et al, 2006, p. 3). The authors found that 16% of the respondents self-reported being academically dishonest in pharmacy school, though the number may be higher as the authors noted that “over 50% of the respondents admit to committing activities traditionally defined as dishonest...but when students were asked the question if they...currently cheat in pharmacy school, only 16.3% said yes” (Rabi et al, 2006, p. 4). Two observations that all of the above studies noted were that typically those students who admitted to academic misconduct in previous schooling (undergraduate or younger) also engaged in academic misconduct at the graduate level. Additionally, it was noted that students who engaged in academic misconduct at the graduate level tended to engage in unethical behaviors as professionals.

Other graduate fields are certainly not immune to academic misconduct. Some studies have also been conducted regarding graduate business students' behaviors. One early study surveyed all of the business master's students at one college with a 66% response rate (207 students) (Brown, 1995, p. 152). Overall, Brown (1995) found that "eighty percent of respondents reported participating in at least one unethical practice more than infrequently" (p. 154). A larger study by McCabe, Butterfield, and Trevino (2006) surveyed over 5,000 graduate students (business and non-business) from "54 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada" in part to measure if business graduate students engaged in academic misconduct at higher rates than non-business graduate students (p. 296). The results found that business graduate students self-reported engaging in academic misconduct at higher rates than non-business graduate students, 56% versus 47% respectively (McCabe et al, 2006, p. 298).

Brown (1996) also did a comparative study of business graduate students' behavior to education and engineering graduate students at one master's college. He sent a survey to 1504 students enrolled in those courses for a response rate of 57.3% (Brown, 1996, p. 295). The results of his survey indicated a rather high amount of self-reported participation in at least one "unethical practice" by all graduate students: "business, 81.2%; engineering, 80.2%; and education 85.7%" (Brown, 1996, p 297). While these results did not align with McCabe et al's (2006) study particularly because the scope was significantly smaller, it still showed that graduate students engaged in academic misconduct, no matter what the level.

These studies demonstrated that academic misconduct occurs at the graduate level of education and in a variety of programs. While these studies did not seek or address the

faculty perspective on academic misconduct for their particular programs, they do set the stage for examining how faculty define, prevent, and address academic misconduct and exploring faculty's overall perceptions of academic misconduct at the graduate level. The following sections will explore the faculty perspective on academic misconduct, though from a limited survey method and largely on undergraduate student behaviors. However, it provides a basic foundation for the larger questions to be explored in this study.

### **Faculty Definitions of Academic Misconduct**

In seeking to understand the faculty perspective on academic misconduct, particularly for graduate students, it is important to understand how faculty define it. Several studies have sought to define what behaviors are considered academic misconduct. Some research has been done on what behaviors undergraduate students consider to be academic misconduct (McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Roig & Ballew, 1994) but the more interesting ones asked students *and* faculty what they considered to be academic misconduct and then compared those answers. Unfortunately, no research has been found that asked graduate students and graduate faculty how they define academic misconduct to then compare those answers, so the studies that follow provide a beginning framework for the faculty perspective on defining academic misconduct, even if only in the context of undergraduate work.

One of the initial studies that explored how faculty defined academic misconduct was conducted by Wright and Kelly (1974). In a survey to faculty and undergraduate students, the authors asked faculty to determine whether ten behaviors listed were considered academically dishonest or not. Among the behaviors listed that had high

agreement among faculty to be considered academically dishonest included “copying off the exam paper of another during an exam (99%),” “knowingly letting someone copy off my exam paper (97%),” “using ‘crib’ notes during an exam (95%),” and “using material for a paper from an outside source without citing the reference (81%)” (Wright & Kelly, 1974, p. 31). While these behaviors may seem obvious to some as academic misconduct, it is interesting to note that no single behavior listed by the authors had 100% agreement by faculty as constituting academic misconduct. This is also one of the earliest studies done that solicited faculty input on the topic of academic misconduct, so it comes with several limitations including the fact that the survey was done at only one institution, only sought input regarding undergraduate behaviors, and only provided a list of ten behaviors on which to rate – and not all would be considered academic misconduct – potentially leaving out other behaviors that faculty might have considered to be misconduct but not listed as an option for which to provide that opinion.

Nuss (1984) also surveyed undergraduate students and faculty to better understand what each group considered to be academically dishonest behavior. Like Wright and Kelly (1974), Nuss (1984) provided a list of behaviors, fourteen in all. Unlike Wright and Kelly, Nuss (1984) asked respondents to rank the behaviors from 1 to 14, with one being the most serious (academically dishonest) and 14 being the least serious (p. 140). Faculty and students did not agree on which behavior was the most serious, but both selections dealt with testing behavior. Faculty felt that “copying from someone’s exam paper without his or her knowledge” was the most serious behavior and most academically dishonest, while students had a tie for two different behaviors as most serious: “taking an exam for another student” and “having another student take an exam

for you” (Nuss, 1984, p. 141). The remaining top five most serious behaviors faculty cited as being academically dishonest were (in order), “paying someone to write a paper to submit as your own work”, “arranging with other students to give or receive answers by use of signals,” “having another student take an exam for you” and “taking an exam for another student” (Nuss, 1984, p. 141). This study revealed more information about how faculty define and view academic misconduct, but it also has its limitations. The response rate for faculty was 34%, but the study was conducted at just one institution making it hard to generalize faculty perceptions at that institution to other settings. Additionally, it only asked faculty to rate undergraduate behaviors and not graduate behaviors, on which faculty may have different perspectives.

Stern and Havlicek (1986) continued building the research on how faculty define academic misconduct with another survey, distributed to 314 undergraduate students and 250 faculty, to compare how faculty defined academic misconduct and how students defined academic misconduct (p. 131). Only 104 faculty of the 250 completed and returned the questionnaires (Stern & Havlicek, 1986, p. 131). The student participants were from “three sections of a large survey course” taught by one professor but had representation from each classification year (freshman, sophomores, etc.) (Stern & Havlicek, 1986, p. 131).

In their study they provided a list of thirty-six behaviors for faculty and students to identify as being academic misconduct. The results showed that faculty and students “differed significantly on 24 of the 36 items” (Stern & Havlicek, 1986, p. 132). The seven items upon which faculty and students agreed constituted academic misconduct were:

- Copying during an exam
- Using crib sheets
- Copying a paper
- Taking pages on an examination
- Getting a copy of an exam by having another student steal one
- Changing a response then requesting a 'regrade'
- Sitting for an exam for another student (Stern & Havlicek, 1986, p. 132)

Like Nuss' (1984) findings, most of these behaviors above dealt with testing behaviors. Two of the behaviors above were among the top three behaviors that faculty had the most agreement on as being academic misconduct: copying during an exam and using crib sheets (99%). The third behavior, also agreed upon by 99% of the faculty, was "having another student write a paper or homework assignment, which you then present as your own work" (Stern & Havlicek, 1986, p. 133). While Stern and Havlicek certainly provided faculty an opportunity to identify more behaviors as being academic misconduct than their predecessors, they run into the same limitation problems as their predecessors as well: they only surveyed faculty at one institution, and only discussed behaviors related to undergraduate students and did not include graduate student behaviors (Stern & Havlicek, 1986, p. 131).

What is interesting to note about these first three studies of faculty definitions of academic misconduct is that over a span of twelve years at three separate institutions, faculty are still fairly well aligned in what they consider to be serious academically dishonest behavior among undergraduate students. The number one academically dishonest behavior that faculty agreed upon in all three studies was copying off

someone's test paper during an exam. It appears from the early literature that behaviors surrounding testing were perceived as much more serious and agreed upon by the faculty at high rates as being academic misconduct.

Graham, Monday, O'Brien, & Steffen (1994) conducted a study that, in part, looked at how faculty and undergraduate students defined academic misconduct. As part of the survey, both faculty and students were asked to review 17 different behaviors and classify each behavior as cheating or not, and then separately rate how severe each behavior was with 1 = not cheating and 4 = very severe (Graham et al, 1994, p. 256). Faculty agreed 100% on 11 of the 17 behaviors that these behaviors constituted cheating. As in previous studies, eight of the behaviors all related to testing situations, including "looking at notes during a test," "arranging to give or receive answers by signal," "copying during an exam", "taking a test for someone else," "asking for an answer during an exam," and "giving answers during an exam" (Graham et al, 1994, p. 256). While student agreement did not reach 100% on any of the items, students did agree at high rates that the behaviors the faculty agreed upon as cheating the students acknowledged as cheating as well (Graham et al, 1994, p. 257). Students and faculty also showed congruence in rating the severity of the behaviors, with both groups rating the same three behaviors as the top three most severe cheating behaviors: "taking a test for someone else," "copying someone else's term paper," and "having someone write a term paper for you" (Graham et al, 1994, p. 257).

The Graham et al (1994) study, however illuminating in demonstrating consistency of faculty definitions of academic misconduct over the years, still has its limitations. It was done at only two small institutions, one four year institution and one



two year institution, and only the students were surveyed at both institutions all of which were undergraduate students. Only the faculty at the four year institution were surveyed. Even though the response rate was 45%, that constituted only 48 faculty members which is hardly representative of the overall faculty population even when looking at the entirety of small colleges nationwide. The institution was also religiously affiliated, which also impacts any generalizability of the findings. Despite all the limitations, this study's findings of how faculty defined academic misconduct was still congruent with previous studies, also done at only one institution, but all different institution types and over a span of twenty years.

Sims (1995), like Graham et al (1994), also surveyed undergraduate faculty and students to ascertain the perceived severity of certain academically dishonest behaviors while actually defining the behaviors as dishonest or not by their ranking. Conducted on one (small) campus with faculty and students, 45 faculty members and 131 undergraduate students completed the survey. A list of 18 behaviors were provided and each respondent had to rank each behavior on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 = not at all dishonest and 5 = very severe (Sims, 1995, p. 235). The author averaged the scores from the faculty for each behavior and the scores from the students on each behavior and conducted a Spearman correlation to determine how similar each set of ratings was in terms of perceived severity. It was determined that the overall ratings were very similar, even if the ratings between individual items seem dissonant (Sims, 1995, p. 236). The author also conducted a one-way ANOVA utilizing the students' classification as the variable to compare with the faculty ratings. The author found that as students progressed in classification (from freshman to senior), the ratings grew closer to that of the faculty. In

fact, there was no significant difference between the severity ratings of senior students and faculty members (Sims, 1995, p. 237).

While this small study shows that at least students seemed to grow in their understanding of academic misconduct as they progressed through college, this knowledge can really only be applied to this population. The author indicated that the day population of students at this institution was only 600 and that the total number of faculty was 54. These results are hardly generalizable but could certainly be used to conduct other studies in other settings to see if similar results are found. Expanding this research to see how closely graduate students and faculty are aligned in their understanding of academic misconduct would help in understanding how faculty address academic misconduct by graduate students.

The latest study on determining faculty definitions of academic misconduct was conducted in 2003 by Pincus and Schmelkin. They designed a survey specifically for faculty “to gain a better understanding of how they conceptualize academic dishonesty” (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003, p. 198). Conducted at one private university in the Northeast, the survey hinted at the fact that the population of the university may include some graduate students, so the faculty included in this survey may have taught graduate students, but that information was not provided. The survey contained a list of 28 behaviors on two different scales. One scale was a pairwise rating to determine how similar or different the pair of behaviors listed was. Doing all pairwise comparisons resulted in 378 pairs for faculty to rate. Additionally, faculty were asked to rate the same 28 behaviors on two bipolar forms with five scales resulting in 140 ratings (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003, p. 200).

The analysis performed for this study was much more complex than previous studies, but still provided some similar results. An important finding was “that faculty perceive academically dishonest behaviors on two dimensions: a clear-cut continuum of Seriousness and a somewhat more ambiguous Papers vs. Exams dimension” (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003, p. 206). On the “seriousness” dimension, the authors found that some of the behaviors that faculty defined as more or most serious included “using crib sheets,” “obtaining answers from someone else during an exam,” “stealing a test,” and “forging a University document” (Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003, p. 203). The second dimension, “Papers vs. Exams” did not provide as much clear cut data other than to separate behaviors related to each type of academic work. The seriousness dimension provided results that were found in the previous studies mentioned. Like the previous studies, this one also has its limitations, the primary one being that the study was conducted at one institution. As the authors did not specify if the faculty participants only taught undergraduate students, it might be assumed that they did, thus, like previous studies, these faculty definitions are most likely applied to undergraduate students.

As the research shows, it appears that faculty are fairly consistent in how they define academic misconduct, largely in relation to undergraduate students, which leaves a gap in knowing and understanding how faculty define academic misconduct in relation to graduate students. Defining academic misconduct is just one part of understanding the faculty perspective on academic misconduct. Understanding how pervasive faculty believe academic misconduct is at their institution, or even nationwide, is also important. This perception of the prevalence of academic misconduct could influence how faculty

either proactively or reactively address academic misconduct, particularly when it comes to graduate students.

### **Perceptions of the Prevalence of Academic Misconduct**

Several studies, in addition to inquiring about definitions or severity of academic misconduct, also asked about the prevalence of academic misconduct. For students, they were asked if they had ever engaged in academic misconduct (whether asked broadly or regarding specific behaviors), and faculty were asked how often they believed certain behaviors occurred or how often they saw academic misconduct occur. This has been the majority of research conducted regarding academic misconduct and has focused almost solely on undergraduate students (including but not limited to Baird, 1980; Bowers, 1964; Carpenter, Harding, Finelli, Montgomery, & Passow, 2006; Chapman, Davis, Toy, & Wright, 2004; Davis, Grover, Becker & McGregor, 1992; Davis & Ludvigson, 1995; Genereux & McLeod, 1995; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2003; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Tom & Borin, 1988; Vandehay, Diekhoff, & LaBeff, 2007).

There are studies that asked graduate students in various programs, many related to health and medical fields, about how often they engaged in academic misconduct (Baldwin, Daugherty, Rowley, & Schwarz, 1996; Brown, 1995; Brown, 1996; Dans, 1996; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006; Penzel, 2000; Rabi, Patton, Fjortoft, & Zgarrick, 2006; Sierles, Hendrickx, & Circle, 1980), but apparently only two studies, discussed later in this section, asked graduate students *and* faculty about the prevalence of academic misconduct. This section will focus on the studies that sought faculty

perspectives on the prevalence of academic misconduct to continue to build the framework on the faculty perspective of academic misconduct overall.

One early study conducted at North Carolina State University surveyed undergraduate students and faculty, asking in part how prevalent they thought student cheating was on campus. Students estimated that approximately 10% of their peers cheated in the previous year, while faculty estimated that 5-6% of students cheated in the previous year (Stafford, 1976, p. 2). When asked about the type of cheating they thought occurred, faculty indicated that copying from exams was the most frequent, followed by plagiarism, copying from cheat sheets, or “giving aid on an exam or quiz” (Stafford, 1976, p. 3). Some limitations of this study are that it was conducted at one institution, only inquired about undergraduate student behaviors, and was for institutional purposes. The study also asked faculty what they thought occurred, not what actually had been caught or reported in terms of academic misconduct.

Another study similar in design to Wright and Kelly’s (1974) was conducted at Arizona State in 1982. A survey was administered by an Ad Hoc Committee on Student Dishonesty to faculty and students in part to gather data in an effort to stop cheating in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences (Singhal, 1982, p. 775). There were 364 student participants and 80 faculty participants, all from the schools of Agriculture, Technology, and Engineering (Singhal, 1982, p. 776). Looking at how often student respondents cheated and how often faculty believe students cheat, the results showed that 56% the students self-reported cheating in college and faculty reported that 65% of those responding had caught a student cheating within the past five years (Singhal, 1982, p. 778). Like Stafford’s (1976) results above, this survey was institution specific for

specific institutional and college purposes and hard to generalize to a broader population. Unlike Stafford's (1976) study, the timeframe in this study looks at academic misconduct over the past five years, while Stafford only reviews the previous academic year (1976, p. 1). While not specified in the study, it is assumed that the students surveyed are undergraduates and thus the faculty perception of how often these students engaged in academic misconduct may only be applicable to that population and not necessarily to a graduate student population.

Hard, Conway, and Moran in 2006 conducted a survey of faculty and undergraduate students that also, in part, looked at how frequently academic misconduct occurred. A total of 421 students and 157 faculty from a "medium sized public university in the northeastern U.S." completed the survey (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1062-1063). Students were asked to self-report if they had ever engaged in any of the 16 behaviors listed and faculty were asked to rate how often they believed students engaged in these behaviors. The rating scale was 1= Never, 2 = Seldom (once or twice), 3 = Occasionally (several times), 4 = Often (5 or 10 times) and 5 = Very Often (more than 10 times) (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1064). On average, 32% of the students self-reported that they engaged in the cheating behaviors listed, with "90.1% of students admitted engaging in at least one misconduct behavior at least once" (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1067). Faculty rated most behaviors as occurring "seldom" (once or twice), with two exceptions; faculty perceived students to "occasionally (several times)" "copy information from internet websites and submit it as your own work" with a mean of 3.01, and with a mean of 3.31 faculty perceived that students "occasionally (several times)" "copy sentences, phrases, paragraphs, tables, figures, or data directly or in slightly modified form from a book,

article, or other academic source without using quotation marks or giving proper acknowledgement to the original author or source” (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1069). That last perception is not too far off as student respondents in that survey self-reported engaging in that behavior almost 61% of the time (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1069).

Recent findings show that there is more perceived wrong doing for written work than testing. Could this be due to the internet and explosion of information available? Overall, the faculty rating perceived student cheating at lower rates than the students rated themselves. As this survey was about undergraduate behavior, it cannot necessarily be applied to faculty perceptions of the prevalence of graduate student behavior, but two studies sought to find that out.

Swazey, Anderson, and Lewis (1993) conducted a large survey study of 2,000 doctoral candidates and 2,000 faculty in four disciplines “from 99 of the largest graduate departments in chemistry, civil engineering, microbiology, and sociology” (p. 542). Their study explored the prevalence of ethical problems in academic research, so it was not confined to just academic misconduct in a graduate program. There were three categories of ethical problems used for analysis in the study and the one that has bearing here is the category of “misconduct in science” which includes “fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism, in proposing, or reporting research” (Swazey et al, 1993, p. 542). Faculty and doctoral students were both asked if they had “observed or had other direct evidence” of misconduct in science, followed by a list of 13 behaviors (Swazey et al, 1993, p. 544). Faculty responses showed that one-third “claim to have observed student plagiarism” and that 10-12 percent of faculty observed data falsification by graduate students (Swazey et al, 1993, p. 545). As these results were specifically about doctoral students, those

numbers are disheartening. However, as Swazey et al (1993) note, the faculty that reported those observations “were aware of such misconduct by only one or two people” (p. 545).

Certainly this study is in line with previous studies that show plagiarism coming to fore-front of misconduct issues, but it is important to point out that this study focused on the broader context of ethical problems in academic research. The faculty were asked to report observations of misconduct by doctoral students and colleagues, and the doctoral students were asked to report observations of misconduct by their peers and faculty. This certainly takes the misconduct context out of a direct academic program environment, though it has implications for the type of behavior that could occur in such an environment by doctoral students.

Wadja-Johnston, Handal, Brawer, and Fabricatore (2001) more recently tackled the issue of academic misconduct and specifically sought out graduate students and faculty to survey to determine how prevalent academic misconduct was among graduate students only. While the study was limited to one institution, it covered 22 different graduate programs at all levels (master’s, PhD, JD, and MD). Unfortunately, the response rate was low for both faculty and students; only 49 of 387 faculty returned completed surveys and only 246 of 2,752 students returned completed surveys (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 290). The survey was also sent to 50 administrators who had current or previous graduate teaching experience, with 20 of them returning completed surveys (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 291).

Part of the survey asked students to self-report how often they engaged in 40 specific behaviors. Responding to the initial question of, “Have you ever cheated in



graduate school?” only 28.7% of the respondents (69 students) stated they had. However, when responding to the specific behaviors, almost 75% indicated they had engaged in at least one of the behaviors listed, with the highest percentage (55.1%) indicating they had “not copying word for word but changing the wording slightly from an original source while writing a paper” (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 293). Terminal master’s degree students appeared to engage in more academic misconduct than other graduate students. Faculty and students were also asked generally what percentage of students they think engage in academic misconduct and, “Faculty perceived that between 0% to 10% of students cheat whereas students perceived between 10% and 20% of students cheat” (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 296). Respondents were also asked to determine how often students engaged in each of the 40 behaviors listed and while faculty and students’ ratings were generally low, the behavior faculty believed students engaged in most was “using old tests without permission” while students believed that their peers “changed words slightly from an original source while writing a paper” which is also the one that students self-reported engaging in the most (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 296).

The results of the faculty perceiving lower academic misconduct is more in line with Stafford’s (1976) results, whose faculty also underestimated the amount of academic misconduct occurring at their institution, even though Stafford’s results were about undergraduate students. It is important to note that in Wadja-Johnston et al’s (2001) study no time frame was provided within which the faculty reported the estimated academic misconduct they thought occurred, while the graduate students were specifically asked about their time in graduate school. Like Stafford’s (1976) study, Wadja-Johnston et al’s (2001) study was done at only one institution, but the range of

programs surveyed offers some view into graduate students' understanding of and perspectives on academic misconduct. Wadja-Johnston et al's (2001) study also provides a glimpse into differences between undergraduate and graduate faculty perspectives on academic misconduct.

Overall these studies seem to indicate that faculty generally perceive that students engage in academic misconduct at lower rates than what students themselves self-report at both the undergraduate and graduate level. There does not seem to be agreement among faculty, based on these studies, as to the nature of academic misconduct that seems to be more prevalent, but that could be based on a variety of factors, including the academic discipline in which they teach or nature of the coursework that faculty administer. No matter what the faculty perceive, their perception of the amount of student academic misconduct may also impact how they discuss it in their classrooms and lay out expectations for their students to help prevent academic misconduct from occurring.

### **Proactive Measures to Prevent Academic Misconduct and Promote Academic Integrity**

As faculty tend to underestimate the amount of academic misconduct that occurs, noted in the studies above, how they decide to address academic integrity expectations in their classrooms may be driven by this misperception. The discussion that follows reviews literature previously mentioned that also asked as part of the research how faculty promoted academic integrity and prevented academic misconduct in their classrooms. Most of the studies are undergraduate student focused, with one of the

graduate student and faculty studies adding more specific information to this study's framework on overall faculty perceptions of academic misconduct.

One study previously reviewed in part is Singhal's study (1982) which also examined how faculty prevented academic misconduct or promoted academic integrity in their classrooms. Of the engineering faculty respondents at the University of Arizona, only 57% covered "the topic of cheating in their course orientation" but 80% indicated that their students knew what they as faculty considered to be cheating (Singhal, 1982, p. 777). One wonders how that could be if the faculty did not define cheating for their students. Additionally, only 37% took "preventive measures to reduce cheating in homework," but 100% took "preventive measures to reduce cheating during examinations" (Singhal, 1982, p. 777). Lastly, only 21% of the faculty encouraged students to report cheating (Singhal, 1982, p. 779). Even though 65% of the faculty respondents indicated they had caught a student cheating in the last five years, not as many took overall proactive approaches to prevent academic dishonesty. While this study focused on undergraduate classrooms, it may provide an overall expectation of faculty that their students know and understand what academic misconduct means to them, even if that definition is not clearly articulated. However, this observation would be hard to generalize to the larger faculty population as the study, as mentioned earlier, was conducted at only one institution and was not specific to graduate students.

Stafford's 1976 study found somewhat similar attitudes. When asked if the promotion of academic integrity should "be an important objective for this university?" 86% of the faculty said it was "important" or "very important" (Stafford, 1976, p. 17). However, when asked when and how they reviewed standards of academic honesty, the

faculty answers did not match the importance they felt about the promotion of academic integrity. 48% of faculty never reviewed standards of academic honesty at the beginning of the term, 44% never reviewed the standards before a quiz or test, 49% never reviewed the standards before the midterm exam, and 45% never reviewed the standards before the final exam. Most striking was that 80% of faculty never used an honor pledge on quizzes or exams (Stafford, 1976, p. 17). If promoting academic integrity was important to faculty at this institution, one wonders if faculty saw it as the institution's responsibility and not theirs. If so, faculty may be less inclined to see it as part of their responsibility to educate their students on academic integrity and therefore not discuss it in their classrooms to any great extent, if at all. If faculty believed this at this one institution which does have graduate programs, even though this survey was not about graduate behaviors, they might transfer that same attitude into graduate classrooms and not discuss academic integrity in that setting as well.

Other studies found similar disconnects between faculty and their responsibility to promote academic integrity. Nuss's (1984) survey found that when faculty were asked "how often university policies on academic dishonesty were discussed in their classes," 53% of the respondents "indicated that they never or rarely discussed university policies or their own requirements pertaining to academic dishonesty" (p. 142). Graham et al's (1994) results showed only 64% of faculty respondents had a statement on their syllabus regarding cheating, and only "20% reported that they do not watch students while they are taking tests" (p. 258). These two studies, as mentioned previously, were each conducted at one institution regarding undergraduate student behaviors, so it would be difficult to generalize it beyond those populations. However, it seems that based on the

next study that type of generalization to other populations, like those of graduate student faculty, would not be inappropriate.

Wadja-Johnston et al (2001), studying graduate students and graduate faculty, included in their survey if faculty “addressed academic dishonesty in their syllabi, on the first day of class, and on exam days” (p. 300). The authors stated that “fewer than half of the faculty respondents addressed cheating in any way, with 32.8% including a statement about cheating in their syllabi, 24.6% addressing cheating on the day of exams, and 35.9% discussing academic dishonesty on the first day of class” (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 300-301). This was in contrast to the 58.2% of faculty respondents who indicated they were either “concerned a good deal” or “concerned a great deal” about academic dishonesty (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 300).

Like many other surveys, while only the sentiments of faculty at one institution, it showed a similar pattern of faculty concerned about academic misconduct but not preventing it or promoting academic integrity. At the graduate level, it would seem that faculty should be more open to discussing academic standards like academic integrity and preventing academic misconduct as these students are purposefully seeking a more advanced, specialized education in a specific field of which the faculty are members. However, as this study is survey research and not qualitative, faculty were not afforded a voice to explain why they might be “concerned a good” or “great deal” about academic dishonesty yet not discuss it in their classrooms. Knowing this disconnect shows another gap that needs to be filled in understanding faculty perceptions of academic misconduct at the graduate level.

Hard et al (2006) also examined prevention efforts of academic misconduct by testing if faculty beliefs about how often students cheat would correlate with faculty cheating prevention efforts (p. 1071). Using multiple regression with prevention efforts as the outcome variable, the authors determined that full time faculty who believed that academic misconduct occurred more frequently, and were familiar with their institution's policy on academic misconduct, were more likely to engage in prevention efforts (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1071). However, the authors did not provide what those efforts were or how often faculty used them nor it is known the percentage of faculty that fit into both of those criteria. It did provide an interesting framework for how faculty decided to address academic dishonesty incidents when they occurred. What it did not do was indicate if these findings would be applicable to faculty preventing academic misconduct at the graduate level. Would faculty who believe that academic misconduct occurs more frequently among graduate students and are familiar with their institutional academic misconduct policy talk to their graduate students more about academic misconduct to deter it and promote academic integrity? Based on Wadja-Johnston et al's (2001) study, not necessarily. But these studies, whether focused on undergraduate or graduate students, were all largely done at one institution so generalizability to any other population would be challenging, which highlights a need to seek faculty perspectives at more than one institution within a study.

Regardless of what faculty do or how often they do it, when it comes to preventing academic misconduct, no matter what prevention is provided, it will still occur. Several studies have examined how often faculty encounter academic misconduct and how the faculty chose to address it.

### **Frequency of and Methods of Addressing Academic Misconduct**

If previous research showed that a majority of faculty did not proactively promote academic integrity or discuss academic misconduct, discovering how often faculty actually observe academic misconduct and subsequently how they address it may further reveal faculty's overall perception of academic misconduct. The majority of the literature in this section is studies mentioned previously as many of them sought to gather data on a spectrum of issues related to academic misconduct. Most focused on faculty perspectives of undergraduate behavior, and input from undergraduates themselves, but also included is the study by Wadja-Johnston et al (2001) that surveyed graduate student and their faculty and included this issue as part of that survey.

Hard et al (2006) in their survey asked faculty if they had ever confronted certain academically dishonest behaviors, and if so how often. The highest percentage of faculty respondents, 70.5%, indicated they had confronted a student about submitting "another's material as one's own for academic evaluation," with a mean response at 2.50, indicating they had confronted this issue somewhere between once in their career and every few years (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1068-1069). The second highest response rate was 70.3% of faculty indicating they had confronted a student about copying "sentences, phrases, paragraphs, tables, figures, or data directly or in slightly modified form from a book, article, or other academic source without using quotation marks or giving proper acknowledgement to the original author or source," with a mean response of 3.04 indicating they had confronted this issue every few years (Hard et al, 2006, p. 1069). While this study did not indicate how faculty addressed the misconduct, it is interesting to note that the nature of the misconduct confronted was some form of plagiarism. In

Wadja-Johnston et al's (2001) study, some form of plagiarism was the type of misconduct the responding graduate students self-reported engaging in the most. While Hard et al's (2006) study does not address graduate student behaviors, Wadja-Johnston et al's (2001) results seem to correspond with this study's outcomes.

Wright and Kelly (1974) in their survey also examined how often faculty observed some form of academic misconduct and if the faculty addressed it. They reported that 22% of their faculty respondents indicated they observed test cheating within the past year, and 22% said they caught plagiarism in the past year (Wright & Kelly, 1974, p. 34). While 65% of the faculty indicated they "had confronted at least one student for cheating in their class" while working at the university, "only 15%" said they reported the matter (Wright & Kelly, 1974, p. 34). That response is disproportionate to the amount of academic misconduct detected by the faculty, but that level of response does not appear to be uncommon. Singhal (1982) found that while 65% of faculty indicated they had caught a student cheating within the past five years, only 21% reported a cheating case to administration in the last 5 years (p. 777). These results show a disconnect between when faculty observe and catch academic misconduct and subsequently reporting the behavior. If faculty are prone to do this for undergraduate behavior, they might do the same for graduate behavior. What is lacking from these studies is faculty explaining why the rate of addressing academic misconduct is so low compared to the higher rates of observed academic misconduct.

Stafford (1976) in his survey of faculty at NC State found that only 14% of the faculty would report cheating to the Judicial office, while 68% said "it would depend," the top 3 reasons being "if the case appears difficult to prove," "feel situations can be



handled better individually on one to one basis,” and “if the student admitted guilt and asked for leniency” (p. 4). Similarly, Nuss (1984) asked faculty about addressing incidents of academic misconduct, and 39% responded that they would report the matter to the “appropriate authorities” but many indicated “their response would depend on the severity of the offense” (p. 142). These two studies, while focused on undergraduate behavior, provide some insight as to why faculty respond to academic misconduct at rates that are not congruent with the rates at which it occurs. However, these reasons seem to only scratch at the surface of the “why” and don’t provide for a more in-depth understanding of this issue, particularly when addressing graduate student behavior.

Jendrek (1989) had similar findings in her survey just five years later. While 60% of faculty respondents indicated that they had witnessed cheating, only 20% actually followed their institution’s policy by meeting with the student and department chair to discuss the matter. “Eight percent said that they ignored the incident altogether” (Jendrek, 1989, p. 404). Not providing any explanations for the 40% who did not follow policy or the 8% who ignored the incident completely, the author left many questions for the reader again as to the “why.” Would the reasons Stafford (1976) provided in his survey fit these faculty? Are there other reasons why faculty would minimally address or completely ignore academic misconduct? As an undergraduate-focused study, one wonders if the faculty would respond similarly to graduate student misconduct.

Tabachnick, Keith-Spiegel, and Pope (1991) surveyed psychologists who were educators in a higher education setting regarding ethical issues, and on one item found: “One-fifth of the respondents reported they had, at least on rare occasions, ignored strong evidence of student cheating,” (p. 514). The authors note that as no space on the survey

provides for why this occurred, “it would be of great interest to know more about the barriers or circumstances that account for turning away from the ethical responsibility to be actively involved in the monitoring of ethical behavior of colleagues and students” (Tabachnick et al, 1991, p. 514). It seems in asking this question the authors have provided an area for further research, which is exactly what this study proposes to do.

Following the trend of the survey results above, Graham et al (1994) reported that while almost 79% of faculty respondents caught students cheating, only 9% took any action on it (p. 258). This did not include reporting the matter to any administration or central location for adjudication. The action was “failing the assignment, deducting points, or failing the course” (Graham et al, 1994, p. 258). The survey did not provide information as to why only 9% took action, which leaves more questions than answers on how to help faculty tackle this problem. It was also not noted in this study the timeframe within which faculty caught students cheating making these results difficult to compare to others. Again, like Tabachnick et al’s (1991) study above, it opens up an area of further research to explore the “why” behind faculty decisions regarding academic misconduct.

In an effort to broaden the scope of their previous findings, McCabe and Trevino (1995) conducted a survey of faculty in the 1991-1992 academic year as the second part of a two part study on student academic misconduct. They surveyed a random sample of 100 faculty members at each of the 16 different institutions who agreed to participate in the study, and received 801 surveys back for a 50% response rate (McCabe & Trevino, 1995, p. 207). The authors found that when faculty were asked how they would respond to a student they knew to be cheating, “only 50% indicated they would use their school’s prescribed reporting procedures” (McCabe & Trevino, 1995, p. 215). The authors also

looked at the responses to academic misconduct by faculty in their discipline and found that “although self-reported cheating was highest among business majors, business faculty had reported that they had observed significantly less cheating in their courses compared to other faculty” (McCabe & Trevino, 1995, p. 216). As the students in the first part of this survey indicated, if they know faculty won’t report on incidents, they will certainly engage in cheating opportunities to give themselves what they see as a competitive advantage. It also raises the question that if these students continued on into graduate work, would they continue to engage in academic misconduct? If so, how would the faculty respond at that level?

McCabe (1993) also examined how the presence of an honor code at the institution may influence how faculty address academic misconduct. He did a large scale survey of 789 faculty members at 16 different institutions, hypothesizing that “faculty in institutions with honor codes will display a greater tendency to report incidents of cheating to the designated authority than will faculty in noncode institutions” (McCabe, 1993, p. 651). His hypothesis was supported given that 59% of the faculty respondents at code schools would report an incident of academic misconduct to the “appropriate authority” while only 31% of faculty at noncode schools would do the same (McCabe, 1993, p. 652). Only 1% of all faculty respondents indicated they would do “nothing” if they knew a student was academically dishonest on work in their course (McCabe, 1993, p. 652). He wrote that “faculty who observe student cheating are generally reluctant to get involved in the designated campus judicial process” (McCabe, 1993, p. 653). While this study did not specify if the faculty were responding to undergraduate or graduate

student behavior, the presence of an honor code, or lack of one, may also influence how faculty address academic misconduct with graduate students.

Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, and Washburn (1998) also explored in a survey how faculty addressed academic misconduct by tackling this problem head on and discovering in part “why professors ignore cheating,” sampling psychology faculty nationwide. The survey, with a 63.5% response rate, asked faculty to rate reasons that might be used to justify ignoring academic misconduct by students. Most of the respondents agreed that “Professors have stated that dealing with a cheating student is one of the most negative aspects of the job” (Keith-Spiegel et al, 1998, p. 217). The top reason for ignoring academic misconduct was “insufficient evidence that academic dishonesty actually occurred” (Keith-Spiegel et al, 1998, p. 218). In general, the authors stated that “four factors appear to account for other underlying beliefs as to why some faculty do not aggressively confront academic dishonesty”: emotionality, difficulty, fear, and denial (Keith-Spiegel et al, 1998, p. 222-223). These general findings start a framework for better understanding why faculty choose to address, or not address, academic misconduct they observe in their classrooms.

Wadja-Johnston et al (2001) took a softer approach in asking faculty about addressing academic misconduct. The survey asked graduate faculty how they would ideally and realistically confront academic dishonesty. Ideally, 66.7% of the faculty respondents would immediately confront the cheater, but the realistic number was 53%. However, when it comes to reporting the matter, ideally only 10.6% of faculty would “immediately report the cheater to a dean, chair, other administrator, or student government;” the realistic percentage drops to 6.1% (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 300).

It appears these findings may provide quantitative data for Keith-Spiegel et al's (1998) findings in that faculty seem to avoid confronting academic misconduct.

Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) in their book, *Academic Dishonesty: An Educator's Guide*, discussed the reasons why faculty, who as evidenced in the surveys above encounter academic misconduct, did not always address it in ways consistent with their institution's policy. They listed two overarching reasons as "Denial" and "Factors inhibiting Faculty Action" (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2002, p. 8, 11). Faculty in denial either naively state it does not occur in their courses, that they do not want to know about it, or state that "cheating is really a form of learning" (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2002, p. 9-10). It is important to note that these reasons were drawn from anecdotal evidence and "some published opinion statements" (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002, p. 8) and therefore research needs to be done to either support or refute these assertions.

For those faculty who acknowledged academic misconduct's existence, they ran into other issues when trying to address it. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) stated that some of the factors that prevented faculty from taking action, based on previous research, included a lack of training or education on how to address it and what the processes were; if faculty attempted to address it, it could be a time-consuming process; addressing academic misconduct may somehow put the faculty in a negative light as educators; addressing academic misconduct in general is just emotionally stressful; and some faculty were afraid of being sued, especially in today's litigious society (p. 11-14). These reasons expanded on Keith-Spiegel et al's (1998) initial findings on why faculty members ignore academic misconduct.

These studies confirm that faculty know academic misconduct occurs. It can be said they would also prefer academic misconduct go away based upon the faculty's response in how they address it (or not). Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) raised some interesting points about why faculty ignore it, but more research needs to be done to better understand the faculty perspective on academic misconduct, particularly how they address it. As stated previously, the majority of these studies sought faculty perspectives on undergraduate behavior leaving a gap on faculty perspectives on graduate behavior. Wadja-Johnston et al (2001) provided a good start with a broad study, even if at one institution, but further studies need to be conducted. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) also hinted at some factors that inhibit faculty from addressing academic dishonesty that may be institutional in nature. Some studies have looked at this perspective to see what can be learned.

### **Policy and Institutional Factors**

Examining institutional policies regarding academic misconduct to explore their effectiveness can help inform the faculty perspective on academic misconduct, especially when reviewing whether faculty utilize institutional policies as a means to address academic misconduct. Hardy (1982), exploring reasons why students engage in academic misconduct, also examined other variables that contribute to the problem of academic misconduct. When reviewing classroom settings and testing issues, Hardy (1982) mentioned that using proctors during exams “significantly diminishes the incidence of cheating” (p. 70). However, when the institution has a lack of deterrents (i.e., few students caught and held responsible for their actions), it does not appear to

provide support for the faculty who may choose to report allegations of academic dishonesty (Hardy, 1982, p. 70).

Hardy (1982) also listed the “fear of bureaucratic encounter” as a reason why faculty may not address or report incidents of academic misconduct (p. 71). Simply put, “the cracking down on academic dishonesty can be a very time-consuming and horrendously complicated situation” (Hardy, 1982, p. 71). When faculty also encountered a “lackadaisical attitude” from administrators who may be responsible for investigating and adjudicating such matters, they may be unwilling to report academic dishonesty for fear it will be addressed poorly, improperly, or not at all (Hardy, 1982, p. 72). This would appear to be of even greater concern should the academic misconduct concern graduate student behavior. While the article does not address that issue specifically, this study hopes to discover, in part, if these reasons apply when faculty are confronted with graduate student academic misconduct.

Aaron (1992), in a study that seemed to address some of the faculty concerns reported by Hardy (1982), surveyed chief student affairs officers on how their institutions address incidents of academic misconduct. Specifically, it asked if the institutions have policies and procedures to address academic misconduct, how those policies are disseminated to students and faculty, and how the effectiveness of those policies has been assessed. The surveys were disseminated to “a random sample of 257 chief student affairs officers [listed in] the *Higher Education Directory* (1989) and then supplemented to ensure including [sic] at least one institution from each of the fifty states and the District of Columbia” (Aaron, 1992, p. 108). The results showed that over 95% of the respondents did have policies to address academic misconduct, and 98.3% had specific

procedural guidelines in place, but the faculty had to find out about such policies and guidelines through their faculty manuals, and only 43.4% of the respondents had those references there. Additionally, 21% of respondents had no method whatsoever to communicate to faculty the information on how to address academic misconduct at their institution. Aaron (1992) also pointed out that faculty discussed academic misconduct in a “limited extent...in their syllabi or class” (if at all) (p. 112). It is research results like these that provide a clearer picture of why faculty may choose to ignore academic misconduct if they cannot get solid support or information from their institutions.

Kibler (1994) also took an institutional perspective in his survey of a large sample of college judicial officers regarding intervention policies and practices for academic misconduct. The author constructed a framework that had three main means of intervention: “ethos, policies, and programs” (Kibler, 1994, p. 93). From these means of intervention, the author devised seven components and within those components he developed intervention strategies that formed the basis for the survey questions (Kibler, 1994, p. 93-94). The institutions surveyed were members of the Association of Student Judicial Affairs (ASJA), with 191 of the 300 institutions responding, 111 of them public institutions and 80 private institutions (Kibler, 1994, p. 94).

The results of Kibler’s (1994) study were grouped by the seven components of intervention: Honor Codes, Communication, Training, Faculty Assistance, Disciplinary policies, Disciplinary process/programs, and promotion of academic integrity (p. 94). Of the responding institutions, only one-fourth of them had an honor code (Kibler, 1994, p. 94). The nature of communication about academic integrity and any related policies varied greatly among the responding institutions. One consistent source of



communication the author found was that the institutions largely used new student orientation to communicate its policies regarding academic integrity, followed by policies outlined in the student catalog and handbook (Kibler, 1994, p. 94-95).

To help faculty address incidents of academic misconduct, the survey asked about training provided for them, and “less than half the institutions offered any kind of training on academic dishonesty” (Kibler, 1994, p. 96). However, “almost 90% reported providing case assistance or consultation to faculty members” when incidents of academic misconduct arose (Kibler, 1994, p. 96-97). Most institutions also provided their faculty with the policy in writing, but that does not mean that faculty read it or understood it, or found it helpful (Kibler, 1994, p. 97). It was also found that while “only 38.2%” of institutions involved students in helping to promote academic integrity, 67% of them involved faculty (to what extent it is not clear) (Kibler, 1994, p. 99). These survey results indicated that institutions may have a long way to go in making faculty feel more comfortable and confident in addressing and reporting incidents of academic misconduct. If faculty are not trained in how to address it and how to prevent it, if institutions are not communicating with faculty about the policies and how to use them, and if institutions do not provide supports to help deter academic misconduct in classrooms, it is little wonder why faculty may choose to not address academic misconduct at all.

McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino (2003) sought out faculty feedback specifically to explore the influence of honor codes on how faculty address academic misconduct. The faculty were surveyed in 1999-2000. From the original study, faculty survey responses from six schools with traditional honor codes and eight schools without honor

codes were utilized for analysis. Overall, honor codes were found to influence faculty behaviors and attitudes about academic misconduct. They “significantly influenced faculty attitudes and behaviors even after controlling for a number of other relevant institutional characteristics” (McCabe et al, 2003, p. 379). Faculty at honor code institutions had more faith in their systems than faculty at noncode institutions (McCabe et al, 2003, p. 380). The authors stated that this analysis “suggests that institutions without formal honor codes have to work harder to demonstrate to their faculty the fairness and effectiveness of their policies and to encourage faculty to follow these policies” (McCabe et al, 2003, p. 381). What the study did not address was if there were any differences in how faculty addressed academic misconduct by undergraduate students versus graduate students. Do honor codes play a role at the graduate student level? Faculty may not consider an honor code to play a role at the graduate level as much as their discipline’s code of ethics or some other similar document or credo. No study to date has been found to examine that particular issue.

Similar to McCabe et al (2003), Simon, Carr, McCullough, Morgan, Oleson, and Ressel (2003) conducted a survey of faculty to look at faculty confidence in university processes that address academic misconduct to determine how that influenced faculty’s decision to utilize those processes. The survey administered was at only one mid-sized institution in the west. All faculty were invited to participate, and the response rate was 47%. The main findings that resulted from this survey were that faculty who were ‘more trusting’ of institutional processes were “more likely to exercise the full range of options open to them in dealing with cases of suspected academic dishonesty” than faculty who were ‘sceptical’ [sic] of such processes (Simon et al, 2003, p. 201). Additionally it was

discovered that female faculty overall were more 'sceptical' of institutional processes and therefore would not use those processes to address academic misconduct. The study, like McCabe et al (2003) also did not differentiate between faculty responses for undergraduate and graduate student misconduct and utilization of institutional processes. This current study hopes to uncover, in part, what role institutional policies play in how faculty address graduate academic misconduct.

Bertram-Gallant and Drinan (2006) also considered the institutional perspective through a study that analyzed institutions' perceptions of academic integrity as part of the culture on their campus. A survey was sent out to a representative sample of 4-year, nonprofit institutions nationwide (25%). The response rate was 43%. The results found that "the majority of institutions (91%) are implementing procedures, such as policies and codes, to support academic integrity" (Bertram-Gallant & Drinan, 2006, p. 66), but most are on the reactive side rather than the proactive side. Doctoral institutions were more likely than baccalaureate or masters institutions to have staff to promote academic integrity, but it was less than half of the doctoral institution respondents (Bertram-Gallant & Drinan, 2006, p. 68). Additionally, over half of the respondents found that there were four obstacles to the institutionalization of academic integrity:

1. Difficulties in educating the community on the policy
2. Peer culture that supports cheating and plagiarism
3. Faculty nonenforcement
4. Gap between policy and practice (Bertram-Gallant & Drinan, 2006, p. 69).

The survey also indicated that 63% of the respondents indicated that faculty would be the primary champions of academic integrity, and 51.3% said that faculty would be the

primary catalysts for “strengthening academic integrity on campus” (Bertram-Gallant & Drinan, 2006, p. 72). This study, while large in scale, only asked administrators to respond without seeking feedback from faculty who may have a different perspective on the academic integrity culture on campus, especially as they are at the “front line” in promoting academic integrity and detecting academic misconduct.

### **Summary**

Most of the previous studies in examining how faculty perceived, defined, addressed, or responded to academic misconduct were quantitative in nature. They asked how often, how many, how severe, or how addressed, but very few asked the “why”: why do faculty think this one behavior is severe (and another is not), why do faculty address academic misconduct in that way; or why do they not address it at all? Additionally, the majority of the studies focused on undergraduate academic misconduct behaviors and not the behaviors of graduate students. Faculty may respond differently to graduate students engaging in academic misconduct and that issue was not explored in any of the studies.

To get at the heart of these answers, to truly understand the faculty perspective, one has to ask them! Some quantitative work was done to obtain these answers, conducted by Jendrek (1989) and Pincus and Schmelkin (2003). Qualitative dissertation work was more recently conducted by Marcoux (2002), Henderson (2007) and Austin (2007) in seeking to understand various aspects of faculty perceptions on academic misconduct. Limitations on Marcoux (2002) and Henderson (2007)’s research include that their studies were conducted with faculty at one institution, and focused on undergraduate student behaviors. Austin (2007) expanded their work by utilizing faculty at three separate institutions that potentially taught undergraduate and graduate students.

This work will expand on Austin's by also interviewing faculty at three separate institutions, but all of the same Carnegie classification and with faculty from the same disciplines at the graduate level to allow for cross-institutional comparisons.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

What are faculty's perceptions of academic misconduct by graduate students and how do faculty address that misconduct when it occurs? To best answer these questions, qualitative interviews were conducted addressing the research questions on faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct. This chapter will review the source of the research questions through the positionality of the researcher, the method for selecting the research sites, and the rationale for selecting the academic field of focus for this research. The research procedures are detailed next, including participant recruitment, data collection through individual interviews, and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the study's validity, limitations, and an overall summary.

Understanding faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct has only been given cursory attention at best in the literature. As noted in the literature review, more research has been done on quantifying faculty definitions of academic misconduct, how often they have encountered such behavior, and the ways in which they responded. Less research has been conducted on why faculty addressed academic misconduct in the way they did, if they addressed it at all. This study fills this gap in the literature by exploring through qualitative research faculty perceptions of academic misconduct, how they address it at the graduate level, and why faculty may choose to either ignore or report academic misconduct by their graduate students.

It is the “why” that is of interest to this study. Understanding the faculty perspective on academic misconduct can provide guidance on how to help faculty address academic misconduct and be part of the larger institutional context in creating a culture of academic integrity (Creswell, 2009, p. 18). Faculty are just one part of an institution’s responsibility to create a culture of academic integrity and to combat a culture of academic misconduct, but they are an important part.

### **Positionality of the Researcher**

I previously worked as the Director of Academic Integrity at a large, southern research university. That position provided me with many questions about why people engaged in the behavior they did. I agree with Dennis Bricault (2007) who wrote that, “Academic dishonesty undermines fundamental educational goals” (p. 16). Certainly wondering why students engaged in academic misconduct, considering its counterintuitive nature to the goal of higher education, formulated the first line of questions. However, as I further explored the topic, I developed questions about the faculty who typically were the first ones to respond to students’ academic misconduct. I pondered why faculty reacted the way they did, why they chose the academic penalty they did, and particularly why they would choose to report or not report academic misconduct to the university. Of particular interest was how faculty addressed incidents of academic misconduct with graduate students. Working full time and pursuing an advanced graduate degree part time simultaneously, I was personally intrigued by graduate students who engaged in academic misconduct as I did not understand why those students would engage in such behavior at that level of education. Further, the

range of responses from faculty who addressed these matters were equally perplexing and begged for further exploration and explanation.

Thus to try and find out the “why” and gain a better understanding of the faculty perspective, the research needed to be qualitative in nature. “Qualitative research starts from the assumption that one can obtain a profound understanding about persons and their worlds from ordinary conversations and observations” (Sankar & Gubrium, 1994, p. vii). It also “seeks to understand the multifaceted and complex nature of human experience from the perspective of subjects” (Sankar & Gubrium, 1994, p. viii; Creswell, 2009), for truly these research questions are all about perspective as is the majority of qualitative research (Sankar & Gubrium, 1994, p. xiv). Depending on the discipline, the tenure status, and the length of time teaching, perspectives on academic misconduct may be different for each faculty participant.

To further define the type of qualitative research undertaken, the social constructivist worldview supported the research questions. In constructivist research, “the researcher’s intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Important in making sense of participants’ meanings is the context in which they reside (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). To fully understand faculty’s perspectives on academic misconduct, a phenomenological approach to this study was appropriate. Phenomenological research “describes and clarifies fundamental aspects of human experience” (Kaufman, 1994, p. 135). Utilizing a smaller number of faculty participants, instead of conducting a large survey, provided the opportunity to dig deep into understanding the “why” of faculty decisions behind how they address academic misconduct.



As stated earlier, the researcher's previous work drove the research questions and from that work the researcher developed her own meanings about academic misconduct from her perspective. However, to ensure that the most honest answers were provided, phenomenological research calls the researcher to "bracket or set aside his or her own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). Due to the researcher's own biases, it was important to set those aside and approach this study as objectively as possible. To minimize bias, the researcher assumed the role of student (which she is) ready to learn from the faculty participant. This meant following the interview protocol rather closely, deviating when appropriate for follow up questions to better understand or clarify what the participant said. Following the protocol also prevented any preconceived notions from previous interviews influencing the next interviews. Additionally, there was no mention of the researcher's previous role before or during the interview. This was done to prevent any possible influence on the participant's answers and avoid the "social desirability" effect. The researcher also avoided making any judgments or comments on faculty responses that would imply there was a "right" or a "wrong" answer to any of the interview questions. The researcher sought honest answers that were accurate for each participant in an environment that allowed for those responses.

### **Research Questions**

To understand faculty perceptions of academic misconduct at the graduate level, this study sought to answer the following four research questions:

1. How, and to what extent, do faculty, who teach graduate students at large, public research institutions, define academic misconduct for their graduate students?

2. How, and to what extent, do these faculty discuss academic integrity and misconduct with their graduate students?
3. How, and to what extent, do these faculty address incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?
4. When academic misconduct is discovered, what factors influence these faculty members to report or not report incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?

### **Research Sites**

To best answer the research questions to allow for better comparability across participants, a single institution type was used: large, public, research institutions with high research activity. Faculty participants at the graduate level are more likely to work at large, public, research institutions. Additionally, standardizing the type of institution sought to reduce its influence on the outcomes of faculty perceptions and experiences. To find comparable institutions, the Carnegie Foundation Classification website was utilized, as it “has been the leading framework for recognizing and describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education for the past four decades” (Carnegie, n.d., para. 1). Its framework “represents and controls for institutional differences” and has six classifications that comprise the institutional description (Carnegie, n.d., para. 2). The six classifications are:

- Basic Classification
- Size and Setting
- Enrollment Profile
- Undergraduate profile

- Undergraduate Instructional Program
- Graduate Instructional Program (Carnegie, n.d., para. 2)

The descriptions in these six classifications were used for the basis of comparison.

The base institution utilized to establish the research site characteristics was Institution RI, the pseudonym given to that institution. To identify its characteristics, the institution's name was searched on the Carnegie Foundation Classification website, <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>, by clicking on "Institution Lookup" from the menu bar. Once on that page, [http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup\\_listings/institution.php](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup_listings/institution.php), the institution's name was typed into the search bar under "Search by institution name." When the name of the base institution, RI, was listed, it was provided as a hyperlink to then click on and pull up its classifications under the categories listed above. To the right of each category, a checkbox is provided, and at the bottom of the page, instructions read: "To find similar institutions, check the dimensions of interest and click the Find Similar button" (Carnegie, n.d.). This tool was utilized to find the other two participating institutions.

The researcher first checked all of the dimensions for Institution RI to see what other institutions were an "exact" match on all of the six classifications. Only one other institution was listed, an institution in the Mid-West. The researcher decided against using this method of finding an "exact" match in selecting two other institutions from which to recruit participants as the exact match only produced one other institution and the cost to travel there to conduct faculty interviews for the research would have been prohibitive. As the research questions were focused on faculty who taught graduate

students, the researcher revised her matching dimensions on the list and only selected the following on which to find similar institutions: Level, Control, Basic, Size and Setting, Undergraduate Profile, and Graduate Instructional Program. The researcher tried to keep as many dimensions as possible in the comparison and removed only two, Enrollment Profile and Undergraduate Instructional Program. Filtering that list produced thirteen similar institutions, two of which were in the same geographic region as the base institution, the South. The full criteria utilized are outlined in Table 3.1 found on the following page.

Each institution was given a pseudonym to keep them anonymous, identified hereafter as Institution RI, Institution RII, and Institution RIII. This also keeps the faculty who participated from each institution anonymous in this report. The faculty are identified with their institutional name, e.g. RI, and then assigned a letter to differentiate them from other faculty participants at their institution, e.g. RI-A.

### **Academic Field of Research Focus**

The academic field from which faculty participants were selected was narrowed to business to reduce the influence on the research outcomes. This allowed for better comparisons between faculty to explore if similar academic misconduct issues occurred within the same academic field despite being at different institutions. The same academic field of business was utilized at each institution in an effort to keep the study manageable due to fiscal and time constraints. However, the academic field was not narrowed to a specific discipline within the field as it would have reduced the amount of faculty participation in this study. Each of the institutions selected have graduate business programs. This particular academic field has been found, in previous research, to exhibit

Table 3.1. Institution selection criteria and descriptors

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Institution I (RI)</b>	<b>Institution II (RII)</b>	<b>Institution III (RIII)</b>
Level	4-year or above	4-year or above	4-year or above
Control	Public	Public	Public
Student Population	28,482	34,885	29,934
<b>Classification</b>			
Basic	RU/VH Research Universities (very high research activity)	RU/VH Research Universities (very high research activity)	RU/VH Research Universities (very high research activity)
Size and Setting	L4/R: Large four-year, primarily residential	L4/R: Large four-year, primarily residential	L4/R: Large four-year, primarily residential
Enrollment Profile	HU: High undergraduate	HU: High undergraduate	MU: Majority undergraduate
Undergraduate Profile	FT4/MS/HTI: Full-time four-year, more selective, higher transfer-in	FT4/MS/HTI: Full-time four-year, more selective, higher transfer-in	FT4/MS/HTI: Full-time four-year, more selective, higher transfer-in
Undergraduate Instructional Program	Prof+A&S/HGC: Professions plus arts & sciences, high graduate coexistence	Bal/HGC: Balanced arts & sciences/professions, high graduate coexistence	Bal/HGC: Balanced arts & sciences/professions, high graduate coexistence
Graduate Instructional Program	CompDoc/Med/Vet: Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary	CompDoc/Med/Vet: Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary	CompDoc/Med/Vet: Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary

Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; Institution profile; [classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup\\_listings/institution.php](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/lookup_listings/institution.php)

the highest levels of self-reported cheating among undergraduate and graduate students. If these students consistently self-report engaging in academic misconduct at the highest levels, then it is more likely that the faculty who teach these students will have encountered academic misconduct and have to address it in some way making it appropriate to select faculty from this academic field for this study.

The research conducted on students, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, consistently showed that business majors tend to self-report engaging in academic misconduct at the highest frequencies. Roig and Ballew (1994) conducted a study asking

faculty and students about their attitudes toward cheating and their perceptions of the others' attitudes toward cheating. In general, business, economics, and accounting majors were found to be more tolerant of cheating than other majors (Roig & Ballew, 1994, p. 8). McCabe and Trevino (1995) conducted a survey of junior and senior undergraduate students at 31 institutions in the Fall of 1990 and found that of the students who reported business as their intended occupation (though not necessarily their major), 76% of them self-reported engaging in cheating (p. 209) and "cheated with the greatest frequency" (p. 210). Of the student respondents who were actually business majors, 87% of them self-reported engaging in some form of cheating at least once (McCabe & Trevino, 1995, p. 209). McCabe (2005) continued his 1995 work with Trevino in a later survey and found that the undergraduate business student respondents "self-report among the highest levels of the more serious forms of test and exam cheating" compared to the rest of the undergraduate student respondents (p. 4).

Further studies that explored academic misconduct of students support the findings that business students self-report engaging in academic misconduct more than other students. Chapman, Davis, Toy & Wright (2004) surveyed undergraduate and graduate students in business classes at one mid-sized Western university. Based on definitions provided, the authors found that "74.9% have cheated in some way" (Chapman et al, 2004, p. 242). When asked about potential cheating opportunities in the future based on scenarios provided by the authors, "75% of the students indicated they would cheat in the future" (Chapman et al, 2004, p. 243).

McCabe, Butterfield, and Trevino (2006) utilized data from over 5,000 graduate students (business and non-business) collected via survey in 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 at

32 higher education institutions in the United States and Canada (p. 294). Due to previous research findings that undergraduate business majors self-reported cheating at higher rates than their non-business major peers, the authors hypothesized that graduate business majors would continue the trend and self-report engaging in cheating behaviors at higher rates than their non-business major graduate students (McCabe et al, 2006, p. 296). The authors found that “Graduate business students self-reported more cheating than their nonbusiness peers” (McCabe et al, 2006, p. 298). Even though the majority of the studies explored cheating at the undergraduate level, McCabe et al’s (2006) hypothesis about the continuation of cheating at the graduate level supported a further look into students and faculty responses at that level.

Other anecdotal evidence of academic misconduct abounds in popular media sources. For example, in 2007 Duke University found itself embroiled in a cheating scandal involving test cheating by 34 graduate business students engaging in unauthorized collaboration on a take home exam (Finder, 2007). Those students were first year students in a masters’ of business administration program (Finder, 2007). In 2010, the University of Central Florida had its own cheating scandal involving hundreds of undergraduate business students allegedly obtaining the answer key to a midterm exam in a senior level business course (Zaragoza, 2010). There are also the more well-known corporate misdeeds the media shared, including the World Com disaster in which the company “improperly booked \$3.8 billion in expenses” (Beltran, 2002). There was the Enron scandal where the company claimed a “storied financial performance since 1997” that was finally revealed to be “an illusion”, eliminating \$600 million in “previously reported profits” and leading to its downfall, filing for bankruptcy in December of 2001

(Eichenwald, 2002). More recently, JP Morgan provided quite a lot of fodder for news media outlets, including Money Morning whose headline read, “Five Scandals that Made JP Morgan Wall Street’s Worst Villain” (Zeiler, 2013). Of the five scandals listed, one that is more likely to be recognized is JP Morgan’s position as Bernie Madoff’s bank for decades, yet claimed that “it never noticed anything worth reporting to regulators” (Zeiler, 2013). Incidents like these provided support for exploring the perspectives of business faculty on graduate student academic misconduct.

As mentioned previously, students who engage in academic misconduct at the graduate level are perplexing but it is unknown how faculty perceive them. In general, few studies have been found that examine graduate academic misconduct, but what has been found warranted further exploration, particularly from a faculty perspective. McCabe in some of his quantitative research studies provided some information on academic misconduct from graduate students (McCabe, 1997; McCabe, 2005; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2006). Specifically, McCabe (2005) found that one quarter of the graduate student respondents indicated they had engaged in various forms of plagiarism such as poor paraphrasing, falsifying bibliographies, and “cut and paste” plagiarism (p. 5). Other specific behaviors of academic misconduct included 26% of the graduate students self-reported “working with others on an assignment when asked for individual work,” 25% of the graduate students self-reported “paraphrasing/copying a few sentences from written source without footnoting it,” and 24% of the graduate students self-reported “paraphrasing/copying a few sentences from Internet source without footnoting it” (McCabe, 2005, p. 6). What these studies did not report was the faculty perspective on this behavior.



Additional research by Wadja-Johnston, Handal, Brawer, & Fabricatore (2001) also provided evidence that graduate students engage in academic misconduct. Their survey indicated that of the graduate student respondents (which was a low response rate at one institution, but across all graduate programs), 75% self-reported engaging in at least one academically dishonest behavior in their graduate career (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001, p. 301). This study also reported on faculty perceptions of the prevalence of academic misconduct and their approaches to addressing it, but as a survey study it did not allow for in-depth exploration of these topics. Given these initial findings, the researcher explored how faculty respond to academic misconduct at this level of education and sought to understand their responses to that misconduct.

### **Research Procedures**

To gather the most information possible to best answer the research questions, individual interviews with faculty participants were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were utilized and viewed as most appropriate for this study as the researcher only had one interview opportunity with each participant (due to fiscal and time constraints). However, the format still allowed for participants to respond in their own way without the researcher “exercising excessive control” over their responses (Bernard, 2000, p. 191). Additionally, in-depth interviews are helpful “when the goal is to collect detailed, richly-textured, person-centered information from one or more individuals” (Kaufman, 1994, p. 123). Utilizing open ended questions in the interviews gathered information that was more accurate to each person being interviewed, and allowed the participants “to describe the research topic in their own ways” (Kaufman, 1994, p. 125).

## **Participant Recruitment**

Faculty participants were recruited by gathering their information on each institution's website and contacting them by mail and email. To provide one piece of the audit trail to help establish consistency of the findings, these procedures are detailed here (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 102). Faculty in graduate business programs at each institution were solicited for interviews utilizing mail and email requests. The faculty names were collected from each institution's website along with their contact information and put into a spreadsheet. The data in the spreadsheet was used to mail the initial invitation letter to the faculty in each institution's School or College of Business. The invitation letter, provided in Appendix A, gave a brief description of the study and let the faculty know a follow up email inviting them to participate in the study would be sent in approximately one week.

To participate in the study, faculty had to meet specific participation criteria.

They were:

- Faculty must be full-time, either tenured or tenured-track, or non-tenure track
- Faculty must have teaching or advising responsibilities in graduate programs
- Faculty must have a minimum of three years teaching experience
- Faculty must have encountered at least one incident of academic misconduct by a graduate student in a course they taught or in their capacity as an advisor to a graduate student.

These criteria were established to create some consistency in the background and experiences of the participants. Additionally, participants must have encountered at least one incident of academic misconduct to participate in the study to be able to speak

accurately about how they feel about graduate student academic misconduct and how they would address it when it occurs.

Institution RI was the first institution to which letters were sent as it was first to grant Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this study. The letters to 154 business faculty were mailed on October 23, 2013. After the initial invitation letters were sent to the RI business faculty, a follow-up email, found in Appendix B, was sent to approximately half of the faculty on October 29 and to the remaining faculty on October 30, 2013, asking if they were interested in participating in the study. The initial response from the follow-up email only garnered three faculty participants who met the study participation criteria and were willing to participate. The researcher found that determining if faculty at Institution RI met the participation criteria resulted in several emails back and forth with potential participants as the criteria were not listed in the follow up email. This was not efficient and may have cost the researcher some qualified faculty participants. A second follow up email, sent on November 4, 2013, was sent to the 95 RI business faculty who did not respond to the first follow up email. It did include the study participation criteria and that email resulted in three more faculty participants, bringing the total number of faculty participants at Institution RI to six.

Institutional IRB approval to recruit faculty participants was slower to come from Institutions RII and RIII. Institution RII provided approval first, and the initial invitation letters were mailed out to the 123 RII business faculty on January 11, 2014. The follow up email, modified to include the study participation criteria and provided in Appendix C, was sent to RII faculty on January 17, 2014. That follow up email resulted in six (6) faculty who met the study criteria and were willing to participate in the study.

Institutional IRB approval to recruit faculty participants at Institution RIII was last to be given and the initial invitation letters were mailed out to the 120 business faculty on February 1, 2014. The modified follow up email provided in Appendix C was also used for Institution RIII faculty and was sent on February 6, 2014. The follow up email at Institution RIII also resulted in six (6) faculty who met the study criteria and were willing to participate in the study. Tables 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 provide the full demographic data on the participants by institution and individually which are found below and on the following page.

Table 3.2 Participant Demographics by Institution

<b>Demographic categories</b>	<b>Institutions</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>RI</b>	<b>RII</b>	<b>RIII</b>	
<b>Male</b>	3	5	3	11
<b>Female</b>	3	1	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Tenured/Tenure Track</b>	6	6	2	14
<b>Non-Tenure Track</b>	0	0	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Average Years Teaching of Participants (by institution)</b>	21.5	26.17	13.7	20.44

Table 3.3 Level of Graduate Students Taught

<b>Level of Graduate Students</b>	<b>Institutions</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>RI</b>	<b>RII</b>	<b>RIII</b>	
<b>Masters' students only</b>	1	0	3	4
<b>Doctoral students only</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>Masters' and Doctoral students</b>	5	6	2	13

Table 3.4 Individual Participant Demographics

Faculty Pseudonym	Gender	Status*	Years of teaching experience
RI-A	M	T	32
RI-B	M	T	11
RI-C	F	T	13
RI-D	F	T	29
RI-E	F	T	27
RI-F	M	T	17
RII-A	M	T	28
RII-B	F	T	34
RII-C	M	TT	3
RII-D	M	T	38
RII-E	M	T	25
RII-F	M	T	29
RIII-A	F	N	6
RIII-B	M	T	15
RIII-C	F	N	5
RIII-D	F	N	17
RIII-E	M	TT	9
RIII-F	M	N	30
<b>Average Years of teaching experience</b>			20.44

\*T = Tenured; TT = Tenure-Track; N = Non-Tenure Track

Tables 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7 compare the participant population to the full population of their College or School of Business by Institution, found below.

Table 3.5. Institution RI Faculty Comparison: Study Participants vs. Full College

Institution RI	Study Participants	College or School of Business
<b>Male</b>	3	110
<b>Female</b>	3	39
<b>Total</b>	6	149
<b>Tenured</b>	6	69
<b>Tenure-Track</b>	0	33
<b>Non-Tenure Track, Full &amp; Part Time</b>	0	47
<b>Total</b>	6	149

Table 3.6. Institution RII Faculty Comparison: Study Participants vs. Full College

<b>Institution RII</b>	<b>Study Participants</b>	<b>College or School of Business</b>
<b>Male</b>	5	106
<b>Female</b>	1	49
<b>Total</b>	6	155
<b>Tenured</b>	5	56
<b>Tenure-Track</b>	1	41
<b>Non-Tenure Track, Full &amp; Part Time</b>	0	58
<b>Total</b>	6	155

Table 3.7. Institution RIII Faculty Comparison: Study Participants vs. Full College

<b>Institution RIII</b>	<b>Study Participants</b>	<b>College or School of Business</b>
<b>Male</b>	3	97
<b>Female</b>	3	46
<b>Total</b>	6	143
<b>Tenured</b>	1	68
<b>Tenure-Track</b>	1	22
<b>Non-Tenure Track, Full &amp; Part Time</b>	4	53
<b>Total</b>	6	143

To maintain confidentiality of the researcher's records and anonymity within the body of this document, each faculty participant was assigned a pseudonym. The participants are identified with their institutional name, e.g. RI, and then assigned a letter to differentiate them from other faculty participants at their institution, e.g. RI-A. All quotes from faculty participants will have their institutional designation and their alphabetic designation associated with their quote.

### **Data Collection**

Data was gathered by conducting individual interviews with the faculty participants on their campus. To provide another piece of the audit trail to help establish

consistency of the findings, these procedures are detailed here (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 102). Once the faculty participants were secured at an institution, individual interviews were then scheduled. These interviews were arranged primarily via email, with one faculty interview arranged via telephone. The interviews at Institution RI were conducted between November 5, 2013 and February 11, 2014. The researcher traveled to the campuses of Institutions RII and RIII, so those interviews were arranged during a two – day visit to each campus. The interviews at Institution RII were conducted February 3-4, 2014, and the interviews at Institution RIII were conducted February 24-25, 2014.

When scheduling the interviews, the researcher let each faculty participant know that the interview should only take thirty to forty-five minutes of their time and would be conducted in a place of their choosing. The average interview time across all participants was forty-three minutes, twenty-four seconds. The longest interview was seventy-seven minutes (one hour and seventeen minutes) and the shortest interview was twenty-five minutes, forty-three seconds. Most faculty participants selected their offices as the site of their individual interview, with two faculty participants reserving conference rooms near their offices for their individual interview site.

Prior to the start of each interview, the faculty participants were provided with an Informed Consent Letter (see Appendix E) which outlined the guidelines of participating in the study. It required no signature for the researcher; it was for the records of the participants. The participants remain confidential to the researcher, but are anonymous in this report. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym used for recording, data analysis, reporting and documentation. The researcher created a password protected spreadsheet of the faculty who agreed to participate and their corresponding pseudonyms which

allowed for appropriate (and accurate) follow up to interviews. Each participant's interview was audio recorded with their consent to provide the researcher with an accurate record of the interview to use for data analysis. To continue to maintain confidentiality, the audio-recording used the participants' pre-assigned pseudonym so the actual identity of the participant was not part of the recording. Additionally, the researcher asked faculty participants to not use names of any students in connection with any information relayed to the researcher regarding academic misconduct. The researcher did not divulge to any faculty participant the names of other faculty participants (at their institution or other institutions) to protect the confidentiality of all participants in this study.

For the interviews, a semi-structured protocol was created using the research questions as a basis for the interview questions. To establish rapport, the participants were first asked some basic background questions about themselves before delving into the subject matter of the interview. The full interview protocol is found in Appendix F. At the end of each interview, participants were given the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about the study.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim by the researcher to allow for a more in-depth familiarity with the content of each interview and to continue to protect the faculty participant's identity and confidentiality. When the participant used information that could identify themselves or others, such as institution names, cities, or student names, the researcher made that information generic to continue to protect confidentiality and maintain overall anonymity of the participants and institutions. Once an interview was transcribed, the researcher sent a copy via email to the faculty participant to review the



transcript and to make any comments or corrections prior to use for analysis. Doing member checks by allowing the participants to review their transcript for accuracy helped contribute to the internal validity of this study (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 102).

### **Data Analysis**

Initial data analysis began as the researcher conducted the participant interviews. Alternative themes that consistently emerged from the different interviews were noted by the researcher though they initially appeared to be unrelated to the research questions. The researcher, over the course of the interviews and transcription, found six such themes. After interviews were conducted and faculty participants sent back their approval (with small edits or without) of their interview transcripts, the transcripts were loaded into NVIVO for coding and analysis. Each transcript was read and coded initially for themes directly related to the four research questions. Those themes were “Define misconduct,” “How and when discuss misconduct,” “Addressing misconduct,” and “Decision to report.” Then the interviews were re-read and coded for the six alternative themes that emerged across interviews. Those themes were “Feelings,” “Academic misconduct an issue,” “Masters students,” “PhD students,” “International students,” and “Plagiarism.” Upon review of the coding reports (“node reports”) generated by NVIVO on each of the ten themes, the researcher determined that seven of the major themes had sub-themes in them. This included three of the four themes for the research questions (How and when discuss misconduct, Addressing misconduct, and Decision to report) and four of the alternative themes (Masters students, PhD students, Feelings, and Academic misconduct an issue). Each interview transcript was read again to code for the sub-

themes to assist with more accurate analysis. A full list of all themes and sub-themes is found in Appendix G.

To determine which themes and sub-themes to include in the analysis, the researcher used NVIVO software, which provided the number of sources a theme or sub-theme was found in, and the number of references within those sources that related to the theme or subtheme. Two of the themes were not utilized in data analysis because the number of sources, and references within those sources, did not represent a simple majority of the number of faculty participants. Those themes were “International Students” and “Plagiarism.” Another theme that was coded after the sub-theme coding was “Students seeking help.” It first appeared to be another alternative theme that emerged from the interviews, but after coding and analysis, the number of sources that referenced this theme was only one-third of the participants and therefore not included in the final results. Many of the sub-themes were not utilized in the data analysis and results as well because their number of sources and references within those sources did not represent a simple majority of the faculty participants.

The “node reports” for remaining themes and sub-themes, twenty-one in total, were exported into word documents for further coding to refine the participant responses and look for commonalities or disparities. For example, a major theme was that of “Addressing Misconduct,” which was one of the research questions. A sub-theme that emerged was “Penalties,” which were ways that participants addressed misconduct. That particular node report of “Academic Misconduct – Penalties” was exported to Word and then coded by the researcher to look for commonalities of penalties given by faculty, such as failing grades or extra academic work. Each of the twenty-one themes or sub-

themes were refined in this way and enabled the researcher to create a framework through which to view the answers to research questions. The table in Appendix G denotes the themes that were used for data analysis. Other themes were coded later in the process to add more in-depth information to the results. Those themes were “Best things” and “Drew to academia” referencing faculty background information.

### **Document Analysis**

To add to the consistency of the findings, document analysis was done after the interviews were completed. This provided an additional resource to triangulate the findings of the interviews. The researcher requested a “sample” syllabus from each faculty participant, one for a master’s level course that the participant had taught or was currently teaching in the 2013-2014 academic year, to review the language used regarding academic misconduct policies in each faculty participant’s classroom. Sixteen of the faculty participants sent the researcher a sample syllabus. The researcher also documented each institution’s honor code/academic honesty policy along with any sample syllabus statements the institution provided as a resource for faculty. Each sample syllabus and each institution’s honor code/academic honesty policy was loaded into NVIVO for coding and comparison. The researcher started with two basic sub-themes: “Yes” for some statement provided on academic misconduct policies in the syllabus and “No” for no statement provided in the syllabus. Fourteen syllabi included a statement on academic misconduct, two did not. The “node report” for the Syllabus Statement – Yes subtheme was exported into a word document for further coding to differentiate the statements by institution and look for commonalities between the statements and the institutional language.

## **Validity**

No study is immune to threats to its validity, but a researcher can take precautions in her approach to minimize those threats. In this study, as mentioned previously, the primary threat to validity could be seen as the researcher's preconceived notions of academic misconduct and how to best address it, as informed by her previous work. However, the researcher has been removed from her previous work for over two years, reducing the immediacy of that environment and position on the study's approach. During the participant interviews to reduce any appearance of judgment on the faculty's perceptions or decisions around academic misconduct, the researcher's previous work was not mentioned unless the faculty participant directly asked. In those occasions, that information was shared after the interview was over. In the course of any interview, the researcher expressed sympathy or understanding with faculty who described situations that were challenging or troubling for them, but refrained from offering advice or judgment when listening to participants' answers as that would be inappropriate and not relevant to the study.

Another threat could be that faculty responded to questions in ways that would seem socially desirable; that they sought to provide the "right answer" to be seen by the researcher in the most positive light. However, that was not the case. The participants were open in sharing a variety of viewpoints that could be perceived as positive or negative depending on the listener. Some of the answers given could have been perceived as "wrong" if given in front of their peers or department chairs, or even the administrator responsible for the academic misconduct process on their campus. The answers, in qualitative form, are consistent with responses found in survey studies

mentioned in the literature review (McCabe, 1993; McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Stafford, 1976).

Member checks, also called “Respondent Validation,” done via transcript review, “is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). Supplying the interview transcripts to the participants for review allowed for corrections and provided an opportunity to have the participants feel comfortable with the researcher’s transcription. Only two faculty offered corrections or insertions, and they were minor (two corrections in each transcript). All of the other faculty participants responded that they were fine with the transcription and that it appeared accurate.

Multisite design was another attempt to minimize validity threats early in the study. The researcher wanted to use multiple sites to broaden the scope of the research and to see how much the institution itself influenced faculty perceptions, if at all. By not limiting the study to one institution, it allowed for exposure to different faculty, departmental, college, and institutional cultures and policies. The use of multiple sites in this study was a way to enhance the external validity, or generalizability, of the study (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 102).

Conducting focus groups prior to individual interviews can be one way to enhance the validity of a study. However, focus groups with faculty for this study may have resulted in less open dialogue due to the nature of the topic. If the researcher asked questions about academic misconduct in a focus group, the participants may have been less forthcoming in describing the incidents they encountered, how they felt about them, and how they addressed the situation. Additionally, the participants would have been

surrounded by their peers which could have inhibited some participants from sharing at all. Any answers shared could have resulted in perceived judgment by peers on faculty actions addressing their misconduct incidents. Certainly social desirability would have been in effect and inhibited the researcher from gathering honest, accurate, and in-depth answers from all the participants. As focus groups “should be used for the collection of data about content and process and should not be relied on for collecting data about personal attributes,” this method, even as a precursor to interviews, would be inappropriate (Bernard, 2002, p. 228).

### **Limitations**

As with any research project, there are limitations to this study. Even though faculty participated at three different institutions to help increase the external validity of the study, the institutions are similar in nature and are located in the same geographic region, the South. The findings of this study may not be applicable to faculty at different institutional types or in different geographic regions. Similarly, faculty perceptions within one academic field were explored; the experiences or issues of faculty in other fields or disciplines may not be the same.

The nature of qualitative research in the form of individual interviews also lends itself to other limitations. One such common limitation is “self-censorship by participants” (Sankar & Gubrium, 1994, xv). Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, faculty may not have been completely forthcoming in interviews, despite the researcher’s promise of confidentiality. “Self-censorship by respondents may be a primary reason for inaccurate data” (Fischer, 1994, p. 5). Also of issue is “social desirability” where faculty, even though responses are confidential, may have tried to present themselves in the best

light when discussing a particularly negative and impactful topic (Fisher, 1994, p. 5). One counter to those potential limitations was the use of pseudonyms for the institutions and for the faculty participants from those institutions in addition to not identifying the specific discipline from which the participants came. Adhering to the promise of confidentiality in record-keeping and anonymity in reporting could minimize any self-censorship or the “social desirability” effect.

An additional challenge that could have been encountered during the research, and could compound the self-censorship issue mentioned above, was the building of trust between the researcher and the participant during the interview. The researcher had limited time to build rapport with the participants which could have inhibited the ability to gather “full, honest, and thoughtful answers” to the interview questions (Kaufman, 1994, p. 130). However, based on the length of the interviews and what appeared to be candid responses wrapped in the comfort of confidentiality, that did not seem to be the case.

### **Summary**

Utilizing qualitative methods to ask the questions of “why” faculty address or do not address academic misconduct by their graduate students allows the faculty participants to answer in their own words. Previous studies were quantitative in nature and did not explore the deeper issues regarding faculty perceptions of academic misconduct at the graduate level. Standardizing the institutional type and academic field provided for cross comparisons between participants and allowed exploration of common themes from the participants regarding graduate student academic misconduct. These methods overall provided rich, detailed data to answer the research questions posed.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

How do faculty perceive and address academic misconduct at the graduate level? Almost all faculty participants interviewed for this study believed academic misconduct to be an issue to some degree, but much of their perception was dependent on the level of the graduate student involved. Based on participant responses, masters' students were deemed more likely to engage in academic misconduct, but a few faculty participants pointed out doctoral students were not immune to it either. As one participant stated, "Pretty much anywhere there are people involved" academic misconduct is an issue (Faculty Participant RII-C<sup>1</sup>). That delineation between masters' students and doctoral students shaped much of the participants' perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct and how they chose to address it when it occurred.

Through individual interviews with faculty at three separate institutions, data was gathered to provide a framework for faculty perspectives and answer the four research questions:

1. How, and to what extent, do faculty, who teach graduate students at large, public research institutions, define academic misconduct for their graduate students?

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<sup>1</sup> The letter combination represents the faculty participant from whom the quote originates. For example, "RII" designates the institution, and "C" designates the particular faculty participant from that institution. All quotes from faculty participants will have their institutional designation and their alphabetic designation associated with their quote.



2. How, and to what extent, do these faculty discuss academic integrity and misconduct with their graduate students?
3. How, and to what extent, do these faculty address incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?
4. When academic misconduct is discovered, what factors influence these faculty members to report or not report incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?

A total of eighteen faculty were interviewed at three Research Universities (very high research activity) in the South, six (6) faculty members from each institution. All participants are faculty in their institution's college or school of business, though the departments varied. Across the three institutions, faculty participants came from accounting, management, finance, economics, marketing, management information systems, risk management, and statistics. A total of eleven (11) men and seven (7) women participated, and the average years of teaching experience across all participants was 20.44 years. The range of years of teaching experience started at a low of three (3) years to a high of thirty-eight (38) years. Seventeen of the participants had terminal degrees (PhDs), but not all worked with doctoral students. All but four faculty were either tenured or tenure-track faculty.

The participants responded to interview questions designed to answer the research questions. The full interview protocol is found in Appendix F. Several themes that emerged from the interviews will be discussed in this section, some of which formed the framework through which faculty view academic misconduct. The remaining themes

directly address the research questions and will be examined following the construction of the framework.

### **Framework for Faculty Perspectives**

To provide a framework on faculty perspectives regarding graduate students and academic misconduct, two questions were asked of the participants as part of the interview protocol. They were:

1. How do you view your role in working with graduate students? (*Question 8*)
2. When working with graduate students, do you think that academic misconduct is an issue? (*Question 16*)

The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix F. In gathering answers to the first question to form the first piece of the framework, faculty reported that they delineated graduate students; they were not to be lumped into one single category. Faculty participants classified masters' level students and doctoral level students very differently. This differentiation provided a second piece to the framework through which to view faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct.

A third piece to the framework that influences faculty perspectives on graduate student academic misconduct came out of the answers to the second question, which provided the fourth piece of the framework. Faculty shared how they feel about academic misconduct as a behavior in general, and how they feel once they discover it. All four of these pieces, graduate student delineation, faculty roles with graduate students, is academic misconduct an issue, and how faculty feel about academic misconduct, provide a framework through which the research questions were answered.

## **Graduate Student Delineation**

For some faculty participants, master's students were "advanced undergraduates" (RI-A) utilizing a vehicle (obtaining the master's degree) to further their careers. It was a very practical matter for these students to obtain a master's degree unlike the more scholarly pursuits of doctoral students. One faculty participant observed that, "many of them view the program as a stepping stone for career achievement or career success" (RIII-E). Not all of the participants saw this as a bad thing or perceived masters' students in a completely negative view; they just recognized that these students' goals were different than the goals of a doctoral student. Faculty participants were explicit in their understanding of this, as one succinctly stated, "they're trying to develop business skills and they're ultimately going to be placed with companies" (RII-E).

Some of the faculty participants had positive things to say about the masters' students they taught. Some commented on how those students with prior work experiences shared those in the classroom to make the theories being taught come to life by demonstrating their practical application. One faculty participant who taught MBA students stated that the goal of faculty teaching in the MBA program is that, "we're looking to add value" to the students' current work experiences (RI-D). Another observed that generally he found "that they're highly motivated, and will work harder to...achieve good success in the courses" (RIII-F). These observations and perceptions of masters' students made them a different type of student in the eyes of the faculty participants.

An additional partition of graduate student classification was noted by 14 of the 18 faculty participants as well. For them, masters' students were primarily Masters of

Business Administration (MBA) students. When referencing master's students, whether in terms of their role with them, or more often than not the academic misconduct engaged in by them, faculty specifically stated MBA students. One faculty member directly stated (and many others also in some form or fashion), "MBA students they're...they're advanced undergraduates" (RI-A).

The doctoral students were seen by many faculty participants as colleagues or future colleagues. The faculty participants seemed to take these students seriously or at least take the training of them seriously. Participants' comments on their work with doctoral students took on a much different tone than how they described working with masters' students. One faculty participant stated, "I'm committed to working with PhD's. I just enjoy the whole process" (RII-E). Another continued this thought by commenting that he, "like[s] being able to look at a student and help them reach their full potential" (RII-C). Many talked about the things they enjoyed about working with PhD students, which included one faculty participant saying that "it's fun to talk about intellectual ideas" (RI-C), and another who "enjoy[s] collaborating on research" (RI-F). One faculty participant framed it as "really enjoy[ing] being with them when - when the light comes on. When they transition - how we refer to it in economics - from consumption to production" (RIII-B).

This graduate student delineation was a by-product of asking the faculty participants how they viewed their role with graduate students. Many of the participants responded by seeking clarification from the researcher, asking if she meant masters' students or doctoral students because, as Professor RI-A stated, "there's a difference." As they were clear to separate their role with masters' students and doctoral students, the

same will be done here. Understanding how faculty view their role with these students helps to provide a framework for their view on academic misconduct by these students.

### **Faculty Role with Graduate Students**

Faculty participants were clear that they had two distinct roles with graduate students: one of practical application through a traditional lecture model for masters' students and one of mentorship through one-on-one relationships with doctoral students. For the four faculty participants who only taught masters' students, some of that mentoring they discussed came through intentional teaching efforts in the classroom for their masters' students, but the focus on practical application for those students was still there. Only one faculty participant who taught both levels of students viewed his role as the same due to the discipline that he taught. Professor RIII-F stated, "I'm gonna teach them the stuff that they're gonna need to know in order to do their research if they wanted to use statistical methods." He viewed his role with both masters' and doctoral students as very application oriented. The remaining 13 participants saw their roles as distinct between the two groups of graduate students.

For the masters' students, primarily MBA students, faculty participants saw their role in terms of practical application of material, not research-focused. Their goal in sharing knowledge was very much geared toward assisting the students in their careers. Some faculty participants talked about their interactions being limited to the classroom and focused on lecturing. Many shared that the bulk of the MBA students they taught were working full time and taking classes part time, so "you don't get a whole lot of foot traffic through your office from MBA students" (RII-C). Faculty participants, because of

the nature of the MBA curriculum and program and the nature of the students, felt their role was to “work with them on the application of material” (RIII-E).

Faculty participants saw their role with doctoral students very differently. One faculty participant seemed to summarize the answers given by all participants when she stated a faculty role with doctoral students “it's very much on kinda training them to be like us” (RI-D). Another faculty participant stated that doctoral students are engaged in “a different type of learning” where faculty serve as a source of answers to their questions, but framed it in the context of one-on-one teaching and learning (RI-A). He said, “There are things that they want to know... and then they look to you as somebody that potentially can help them to understand it” (RI-A). Several participants used the word “mentor” in describing their role with doctoral students, as one faculty participant elaborated that it included to, “try to lead by example...but try to also give them the latitude that they...need to follow their own interests and it's up to them to chart their path” (RI-C). Another participant shared that by working with doctoral students on research he was “showing them how to do what I couldn't do at the start of my career” (RI-F). Professor RIII-E stated that,

I love doctoral students as a rule of thumb...they're eager to learn...anything you give them, they really appreciate, you know, in terms of time, research collaborations, these kinds of things. So...there is an inherent respect because they're signed up to do exactly what you're doing.

This type of sentiment was shared by other participants as part of how they viewed their role with doctoral students.

A few participants commented that their role with doctoral students is not only that of a mentor, but a colleague as well. They shared how they maintain connections with the doctoral students even after the students have finished their degree, working as co-authors on publications. Professor RII-E expressed his enthusiasm for working with doctoral students by sharing, “I like to help see someone...get through, get...placed, get publications, and I continue to interact with my PhDs even after they get placed.” One faculty participant deemed it a “continuity of connection” (RII-F). It was through this type of continuous, consistent interaction that participants saw part of their role with doctoral students as developing colleagues.

#### **Academic Misconduct: Is it an issue?**

Do faculty participants feel that academic misconduct is an issue among graduate students? The answer to this question was an overwhelming yes, but with many qualifications. Primarily, the faculty participants differed on the occurrence of academic misconduct, ranging from, “It happens, but it’s very rare” (RIII-F), to “I mean it’s fairly rampant I think” (RI-A). The faculty participant who offered the first quote of academic misconduct being “very rare” actually stated that he did not believe that academic misconduct was an issue with graduate students, but modified his answer with that follow up statement.

This question, instead of truly establishing whether or not academic misconduct was an issue, as all faculty participants had to have encountered graduate student academic misconduct to participate in this study, was to determine how bad or “rampant” faculty participants perceived academic misconduct to be among graduate students. That was where the disparity was observed. Of the eighteen faculty participants, ten (10) felt

more certain of the severity and regularity of academic misconduct by graduate students, while seven (7) minimized the behavior, indicating that they do not think, "...that it's a big issue" (RI-D) or that "I don't think it's a widespread problem" (RIII-A). One faculty participant took a more humorous perspective and stated, "I honestly don't think I had that much cheating...But I mean I had enough cheating that it, that it, you know, I continued to invest the time. I never came to the conclusion, 'Gosh these angels don't cheat'" (RI-E).

In establishing if academic misconduct is an issue and the pervasiveness of it, the faculty participants once again distinguished between masters' students engaging in academic misconduct versus doctoral students doing the same. One faculty participant stated that "at the masters' level in particular, yes" he felt academic misconduct was an issue, indicating that masters' students "trend toward whatever is efficient, and that can mean academic misconduct" (RIII-E). Another faculty participant had a similar perspective on masters' students, particularly MBA students, stating, "Some people will cut corners when they get under pressure, and these students are under pressure" (RIII-D). Participants were asked to share one incident they encountered of academic misconduct by a graduate student(s), and seventeen of the eighteen examples involved masters' students, MBA students in particular.

The results were more mixed regarding doctoral students. When asked about doctoral students and academic misconduct, one faculty participant stated that, "at that level I do not believe cheating is an issue" (RI-B). Three other faculty participants at the other two institutions also specifically stated that they had not encountered academic misconduct with doctoral students. However, four other faculty participants, at least one



from each institution, mentioned potential misconduct issues with doctoral students mainly related to writing and plagiarism concerns or falsification of data.

One participant mentioned an incident of suspected plagiarism or written misconduct on a paper required for the doctoral program. Some suspected that the student “used words and constructed sentences and developed arguments that were unlike anything he'd ever written, stated, or presented ever. And there were questions virtually among all who had read his work that it was not his work” (RI-F). Another faculty participant made a more broad statement about doctoral students, stating, “Sometimes they wanna take shortcuts that they shouldn't take, right? They're - they're desperate to get published” (RII-D). Participant RIII-B also mentioned issues where doctoral students “mentioned something from the literature without citing the proper source” and the need to sit with those students and instruct them on proper citation and why it is critical. This faculty participant also encountered a potential issue of misconduct with an allegation of falsified data in a dissertation. Overall the general consensus, based upon interview answers, was that doctoral students were less likely to engage in academic misconduct than the masters’ students, though it was still a possibility and manifested itself differently.

### **How Faculty feel about Academic Misconduct**

To say that the faculty participants had strong feelings about academic misconduct would be an understatement. For sixteen of the participants, this secondary theme evolved from discussions on academic misconduct as an issue among graduate students. Some of the descriptors related to the behavior and some were in the context of their position as faculty. All of them agreed there was nothing positive about academic

misconduct. Four faculty participants in particular spoke about the fairness aspect of it in relation to other students. Professor RI-A summarized those feelings by saying, “I don’t think it’s fair to everybody else; kids that work.” These four faculty participants recognized that academic misconduct has an impact beyond the student who does it. Many of the faculty participants used other descriptors for academic misconduct, such as “dishonest,” “disappointing,” “negative,” “disturbing and discouraging,” and “frustrating.” One faculty participant described academic misconduct as “deplorable behavior” and another talked about how engaging in academic misconduct “violated a trust” between the faculty and the student.

Some of the participants also talked about how they felt about academic misconduct in the context of their job. One faculty participant stated that after many years she realized that when students engage in academic misconduct, “it’s nothing personal. It’s just a bad choice on the part of the student” (RII-B). She realized that the students were not necessarily engaging in this behavior as an attack on her as a professor, but rather they did it for their own self-interests. Another faculty participant did not have as much separation from the behavior when he stated, “I’ve struggled professionally with - first understanding that cheating happens” (RII-A) as he never understood the behavior, as a student or as a professor, to begin with. Other faculty participants were more direct about the impact that academic misconduct has on their job, stating that it is “not a fun part of my job” (RI-F) or even that it is “sort of the ugliest part of my job” (RII-A). Professor RIII-E commented, “I think academic misconduct is a highly salient, very negative aspect of this job.” Gaining a better understanding of how faculty feel about

academic misconduct as a behavior adds important information to their framework through which they view the behavior and how it is addressed.

### **How Faculty feel about Discovering Academic Misconduct**

Disappointment abounds when faculty participants discovered academic misconduct, particularly by graduate students. Beyond just calling academic misconduct unfair or frustrating, faculty participants also described how they felt when they actually discovered it, all of which was in negative terms. Some of the participants shared that they had a physical reaction once they discovered academic misconduct by their students. Professor RI-C stated, “I will get very physically sometimes stressed about having to deal with it...you don't realize the tension that's built up because you're so nervous about having to - to confront that situation.” Professor RIII-C shared a similar sentiment expressing that, “so when I find it, it always feels like a big shock... Usually my heart rate goes way [up]... emotionally it's really tough on me...because I don't want it to be true, you know.”

Other faculty participants shared their emotional reactions to discovering academic misconduct, with Professor RI-F saying, “I felt betrayed” and RII-B shared that “It was disheartening” when it was discovered. Professor RIII-A remembered that she “Sat in my office, shaking my head in disbelief for a while.” Professor RII-C was very direct about his feelings, stating that making that kind of discovery, “Makes you miserable, too. At least for me, I mean I'm just a - I'm just a grumpy old man when I'm having to deal with this stuff. It's - I hate it.” One participant viewed it as an intellectual challenge, stating that when he discovers academic misconduct by graduate students “I feel offended...that I'm not going to notice is an affront to my, my intelligence” (RII-A).

Another faculty participant captured humor and frustration in his answer to how he felt when he discovered academic misconduct by exclaiming, “Damn! Here we go again...it's difficult for everybody” (RIII-F). When asked to elaborate he stated, “You gotta confront somebody, you know, and they're probably not going to answer honestly from the very beginning, so, you know nobody really wants to do this, but you got to” (RIII-F).

### **Faculty Perspectives Framework Summary**

The framework for faculty perspectives on graduate student academic misconduct, established by part of the interview protocol, is composed of four parts. First, the distinction between masters’ students and doctoral students is important for these faculty participants as these students are viewed differently, with the context that masters’ students mostly meant MBA students. Second, because of that distinction faculty participants view their role with masters’ and doctoral students differently. Faculty participants largely saw themselves as deliverers of information to masters’ students, while they viewed themselves as mentors to doctoral students. Third, because of that distinction, these faculty participants looked separately at misconduct by masters’ students and misconduct by doctoral students and how often they perceived it occurred. Fourth, how faculty participants feel about academic misconduct and discovering it shapes their response to it. It is through this framework that the four research questions sought answers.

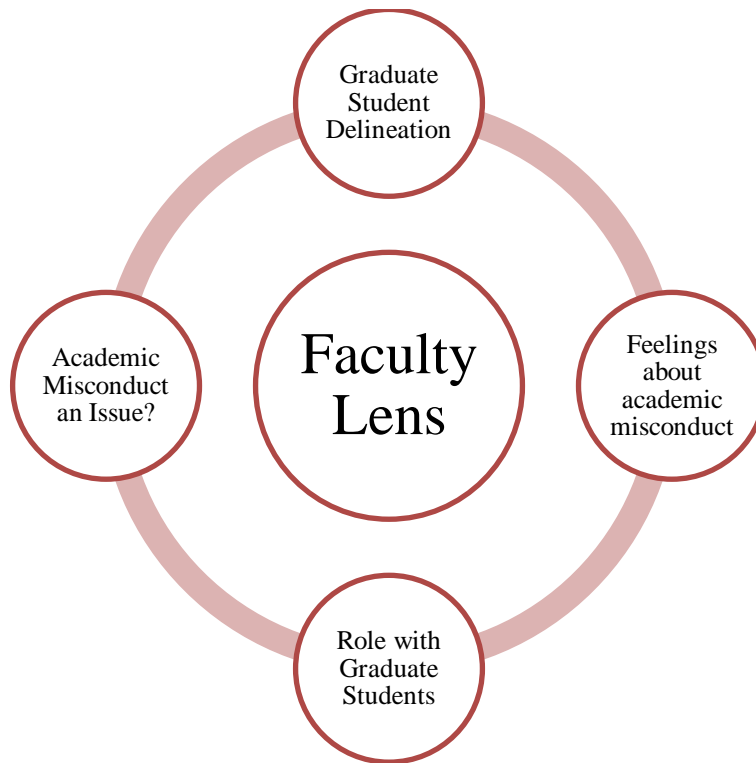


Figure 4.1 Framework for Faculty Perspectives on Academic Misconduct

### **Defining Academic Misconduct**

How, and to what extent, do faculty, who teach graduate students at large, public research institutions, define academic misconduct for their graduate students? The answers to this question provide an understanding of what behaviors and actions faculty consider as academic misconduct at the graduate level, and in the context of the framework, if the definitions differed for masters' students and doctoral students. Based upon the answers provided by the participants, the definitions of academic misconduct did not differ between masters' students and graduate students, but emphasis was given on different areas based upon the level of the student and the context of the course. The definitions for doctoral students were largely framed in the context of writing their dissertations and little, if any, emphasis was given on their coursework.

## **Unauthorized Assistance**

Many faculty participants, ten in all, focused on defining what the researcher calls “unauthorized assistance” for their masters’ students. The participants had variations on this definition given by one of the faculty participants, who stated that it was, “Giving or receiving help or assistance at a time where the measurements of an individual's own knowledge is being obtained” (RI-F). More simply put, another faculty participant stated students would “collaborate in a way...that’s inappropriate” (RII-A). Some of the participants mentioned that this particular misconduct issue arose because so often in MBA programs, team work is emphasized or is the way that courses are structured and may lend themselves to inappropriate sharing of information or collaboration. Many participants referenced this in relation to exams specifically and they found themselves reminding students that “this is an individual exercise and you are not to collaborate with anyone else” (RII-F). Another faculty participant lamented that, “I think sometimes they think that it's okay to collaborate when you say you can't collaborate” (RIII-D). Overall faculty felt frustrated by students who seemed unwilling to do their own work and be assessed on their own efforts.

## **Cheating**

Another type of academic misconduct defined by faculty participants was the generic term of “cheating.” The definition of “cheating” in this form mostly referred to masters’ students engaging in this behavior on exams and assignments. In defining cheating for his masters’ students before an exam, one faculty participant stated that, “Cheating is taking material from someplace other than your brain” (RI-A). Another participant stated, “I think of it as purposefully breaking the rules” (RIII-A).

One faculty participant tells his doctoral students, “do your own work. Don't ask me to do it, don't ask anybody else to do it, don't cut a corner” (RIII-B). This particular category overlaps with the previous one of “unauthorized assistance” in that students are using outside sources, typically intentionally, to complete their work.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism was the one area where faculty participants defined it for both masters' and doctoral students. One participant spoke of defining it for the masters' students stating that, “it's stealing to take other people's intellectual products...and not give them appropriate attribution” (RI-D). Another faculty participant was more specific in the misconduct by masters' students stating that there is a “misunderstanding with students about proper citation and use and paraphrasing of material” so it was important to define it and point the students towards resources that would assist them (RII-C). Other faculty participants also mentioned similar issues of plagiarism they encountered by doctoral students. Participant RII-B stated that some errors were “something as simple as not citing a source where they lifted up a direct quote,” and participant RIII-B stated that doctoral students are told that “you have to document every single thing.”

Overall, most of the faculty participants do not necessarily come up with their own definitions of academic misconduct and its associated behaviors, but rather utilize their university's definitions or statements that they include on their syllabi and simplify those definitions to make them relevant to the academic situation. As one faculty participant pointed out, “And I tell them to go to the university; the university says what academic misconduct is” (RI-A).

## **Discussing Academic Misconduct**

To let graduate students know there are expectations of academic integrity and rules against academic misconduct, faculty need to talk about it. In addition to knowing how the faculty participants define academic misconduct, it is important to know how and to what extent they discuss academic misconduct with their graduate students. Participants described several different methods and avenues for discussing academic misconduct. A few mentioned they reviewed academic misconduct in the context of class assignments. Some participants discussed academic misconduct one-on-one with students, primarily doctoral students, in the context of their writing. One participant mentioned that academic integrity and misconduct were discussed in the MBA orientation program. The top three methods participants mentioned as ways they discuss academic misconduct with their graduate students were via the course syllabus, through in class conversations, and right before giving an exam.

### **On the Syllabus**

The majority of the faculty participants, twelve of the eighteen, specifically mentioned discussing academic misconduct on their syllabi which included definitions of what misconduct was. Two faculty participants specifically mentioned that it was a university requirement to include this information, one of them stating, “we are required in our syllabi to put the... academic honesty policy statement” (RII-B). Another faculty participant stated that because of the misconduct of previous graduate (masters’) students, “Now I have clearer rules in my own syllabus about what I will tolerate and what I won’t” (RIII-A). In introducing his students to the rules regarding academic misconduct, Professor RII-F states,



What I've had as a philosophy across all the courses I teach is that I try to be as explicit as possible, as to how I would define what is acceptable and unacceptable collaboration...and I have, you know, standard language on all my syllabus -any syllabus I use -that reflects the university's statement about the academic...honesty policy here...that admittedly, is the official language of the university and I don't depart from that because I certainly think...that's what the university defines, here's the link, you're expected to be aware of that.

Many of the participants referenced that they used what they termed “standard language” or “standard statements” from the university defining academic misconduct as the language in their syllabus.

To supplement the interview findings, a document analysis was conducted of the participants' syllabi. Sixteen faculty participants sent the researcher a sample syllabus. Fourteen of the syllabi had a statement about academic integrity or academic misconduct included on them; two did not. The two syllabi that did not have any type of statement on academic misconduct were from faculty participants who did not state that they included such information on their syllabi, so their syllabi would be congruent with their interview statements. Of the fourteen other participants who provided syllabi, eleven of them specifically stated in their interviews that they do include a statement on academic misconduct or integrity in their syllabi. What they provided for review matched what they stated in their interviews. The remaining three faculty participants who provided syllabi for review did not state in their interviews that they included a statement on academic misconduct or integrity in their syllabi. However, upon review, their syllabi did include a statement on academic misconduct or integrity. This finding does not

directly contradict their interview statements; they simply did not name their syllabus as one means for discussing academic misconduct with their graduate students.

The language content of the academic misconduct or integrity statements in the sample syllabi was also reviewed for consistency with interview information. Five of the sample syllabi used the institution's honor code as the statement on academic integrity. Three of the sample syllabi, one of which is in the previous category, used a sample syllabus statement provided by the institution as the statement on academic integrity. Eight syllabi, one of which also used the institution's honor code statement, all had individual language to express any academic integrity or misconduct standards. Of those eight, five of them were from Institution RII and they used the exact same language, which may be standard language for their college but were not statements provided by the institution. These findings are consistent with the information provided in the participant interviews.

### **In Class Conversations**

A second means of discussing academic misconduct with graduate students was through in-class conversations. Eleven (11) of the faculty participants specifically mentioned doing this as a means to communicate their expectations and definitions of academic misconduct. Many of those were faculty who also specifically mentioned academic misconduct in their syllabi and accompanied that syllabus review with discussion in class, typically on the first day. One faculty participant detailed her speech that she gives to her masters' students as follows:

We get to the section on academic dishonesty and I put the syllabus down and talk to them and say, look - in this class, most of your projects are going to be, you tell

me about real things that are going on in life, but we will have exams. If I catch you cheating, my quote is, “I will throw the book at you as hard as I'm allowed to do.”...If I catch you cheating, that's just - it's just deplorable behavior. And I will throw the book at you as hard as I'm allowed to throw it. (RIII-A)

Another faculty participant also discusses academic misconduct at the beginning of the semester, stating, “I do mention what the sanction is and what's considered cheating and I ...will continue to do that in any graduate courses” (RII-B). Professor RII-A took a slightly different approach in his conversation with his masters’ students stating, “I do mention that...there have been incidents in the past and I - I frame it as an insult to my intelligence. You know, basically say, if you cheat I will know.” While this approach may come across as a bit harsh, another faculty participant stated that he tried to introduce it in a humorous way with the following spiel:

From day one...I make a joke that...there are four things that will run afoul of me in class...terrorism, bad driving, being a fan of Duke basketball, and academic misconduct. Those are the four things that I just can't tolerate in class (RIII-E).

This participant does follow this introduction up with a little more serious conversation about the impact of academic misconduct, but this approach actually follows the suggestion offered by another faculty participant. She states, “I think it's more effective to be upbeat and positive and say what we all gain from a fair playing field” (RI-E). This faculty participant believes academic misconduct is an issue and takes away the element of fairness in the classroom, but does not want to be a harbinger of doom in communicating that message. She prefers a much more positive approach that students are more likely to be receptive to.

## **On Exams**

An additional way faculty participants communicated their expectations about academic misconduct was right before an exam. About half of the participants indicated they had some conversation with their students right before distributing an exam, and typically the exam had some sort of accompanying statement directly on it regarding academic misconduct. One faculty participant showed me his exam and explained:

So I have some boilerplate stuff that we're all required to put in there...it's at the top of my exams in red. I even say I have a system for detecting...identical works and stuff like that. Now...so it's there [pointing to his head], it's just a system for detecting it, but you know, because I deal with computers, they might think I have something else there. So I remind them...that my exams are open book, open note, they can use anything except another person, right?...I don't want you getting someone else to do it. You do it yourself, right? (RII-D)

Another faculty participant had a similar method for discouraging academic misconduct on exams, “Every exam that I give, like I gave an exam last night, ‘On my honor I will neither give nor accept aid in completing this exam’...I have that line on every exam that I give” (RIII-D).

One of the faculty participants described the measures she took to prevent cheating on exams in addition to discussing it before the exam was given:

I also talked about cheating in every class before I would, like I would have all students turn their baseball caps around, put their notes away, put all electronics away, I would walk up and down the aisles even in classroom of 30 people (RI-E).

While the approach may seem extreme, she explained her reasoning:

What it did is it let them know that I was paying attention...and I tell them up front, you know, the reason I'm vigilant is not for the - not because I think you cheat but because I think you deserve a fair playing field (RI-E).

A few of the participants mentioned that they articulated their definitions and expectations of academic misconduct through assignment requirements in a fashion similar to what participants did for exams. Some of the participants mentioned that while they may discuss, however briefly, their standards for academic misconduct, a more in-depth discussion on definitions and standards was done through the orientation program for the MBA students. A few of the faculty participants also mentioned utilizing one on one conversations to discuss academic standards with their doctoral students, which included defining what academic misconduct was. One faculty participant explicitly stated that he told his doctoral students, "I don't want you to ever fudge your data" (RI-B).

### **Addressing Academic Misconduct**

Once faculty participants have defined and discussed academic misconduct, the question now becomes how, and to what extent, do faculty address incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students? The interview results showed that every faculty participant did address academic misconduct that they discovered in some form, whether it was through extra academic work, a grading penalty, referral or notification to the program director/department head, referral to their university process, or some combination of these options.

Some of the themes that emerged from the interviews in how faculty participants addressed misconduct included how their personal perspectives influenced their actions in addressing misconduct, and whether they sought advice from others in deciding how to address it. Those themes will be introduced first and then how faculty participants actually addressed academic misconduct will follow. At the end of the section, examples of the types of academic misconduct faculty participants encountered will be provided.

### **Addressing Misconduct as Influenced by Personal Perspectives**

Faculty participants' personal perspectives appear to influence how they address misconduct overall. While this particular theme overlaps into the next research question on what factors influence faculty to use a university process, some of those same perspectives influence how faculty address academic misconduct. Some faculty participants mentioned that they don't like dealing with academic misconduct, because, "I think it goes from the basic human nature of not wanting confrontation" (RII-C). However, they also keep the students' interests in mind when addressing academic misconduct by letting their students know that, "I don't monitor this [cheating], you don't have a fair playing field" (RI-E). Other faculty participants were more generous to the graduate students who engaged in the misconduct, saying,

So I don't wanna destroy them for the rest of their life, I wanna give them a chance to say, yeah, we learned from this, this is not the way to do it. If you're under pressure, then you just live with the consequences (RII-D).

Another participant expressed it more directly by saying, "My rationale is this - they're graduate students. I'm not out to wreck careers" (RIII-F). Some participants were more open minded to the circumstances of the incident and the student, saying, "There's certain

assumptions that go into what you believe about their behavior that may or may not really be warranted” (RII-E). This participant seemed to view the potential incident as a teachable moment for graduate students.

Other faculty participants shared their personal perspectives on academic misconduct that influence how they view it and address it. Professor RII-A shared that, My view on - on these issues has been affected by my career trajectory...so I can distinctly remember as a faculty member what I thought was appropriate and that what I sort of learned...given other constituents' expectations about this issues...kind of evolved in one step and then, you know, getting even further in...learning about what university policy is on this has now changed, for me, my response now when students come to me with an issue.

Professor RII-C’s perspective came from a more personal point of view, “my personal makeup, my personal DNA, I will follow through and I will throw the book at you if I find misconduct. I won't put up with it, period.” All of these personal perspectives influenced, in part, how faculty participants chose to address graduate student academic misconduct.

### **Seeking Advice About Addressing Misconduct**

If you have never dealt with it before, how does a faculty member know how to address academic misconduct? Seeking advice from others was another theme that emerged that guided faculty participants in deciding how they address academic misconduct. Ten (10) faculty participants mentioned that they have sought or would seek advice from their colleagues on best practices when addressing misconduct by graduate students.

One participant stated that early in her career, she sought advice from colleagues and “your perspective on how you handled came from your colleagues who were - who'd been here and were more experienced” (RI-E). Another faculty participant stated that early in his career, “I would seek advice from others in the department on how to handle it” (RII-A). One faculty participant who is early in his career stated,

And I remember talking to the faculty - there was...somebody in [our] department at the university where I was that sat on the Academic Integrity review board, and it was a resource you could go to when you were dealing with issues (RII-C).

Professor RIII-E indicated that when faced with academic misconduct issues, “yeah I talk to colleagues, my department chair” to get perspectives on how to best address the situation. Each participant then made decisions on how to address their particular misconduct situation, whether on their own or through their university’s process, and typically through academic penalties, all of which will be discussed next.

### **Addressing Misconduct through Penalties**

The primary theme that emerged in addressing academic misconduct was the academic penalty. Almost all the faculty participants (16) discussed the type of penalty they would impose on those students who engaged in academic misconduct, and 13 of those 16 referenced some type of grade penalty, typically a failing grade. The failing grade could be on the exam or the assignment where the misconduct occurred, or it could be for the class. One faculty participant stated that he made sure his students knew what their penalty would be for engaging in some type of academic misconduct by telling them, “I will flunk you in this course and nobody can change that” (RI-A). Another faculty participant took a slightly different approach with the grading penalty option and



said he typically offers this outcome for students who engage in academic misconduct, “You withdraw from the course, and I never wanna see you again my life. Or I'll just give you both F's. Your choice” (RIII-F). This participant said typically students will withdraw to avoid the failing grade.

Some other faculty participants have been a bit more creative in the grading penalty, particularly when they discovered students worked together on a project or paper that was to be individual work. Their penalty to the students was, “You split the work, you get half the points each” (RII-B). At least two other faculty participants, using a similar tactic, assigned the students one grade and allowed them to determine how to split the grade between them.

Other academic penalties that faculty participants indicated they have used included making students redo their work for lesser points, or doing extra work beyond the course requirements. One faculty participant, who utilized the university process as part of addressing the misconduct, had this discussion with the program director on the academic penalty he wished to levy on masters’ students who had cheated on a test involving database coding:

So I went and had a talk to the director of the program. I said, you know, I don't want to throw these guys out. They made a mistake...they can benefit from being allowed to continue this program, I don't think they'll do it again...so...we made them do additional work...the following year...I made them write sixty queries.

(RII-D)

So while the faculty participant still had a university outcome for the students, he also utilized an educational outcome for these students in the form of extra work.

## **Addressing Misconduct Through the University Process**

Eleven faculty participants talked about using their university's process as one means to address graduate student academic misconduct. Not all participants chose this as a method for addressing misconduct, and this will be discussed further in the next section. For those that chose this option, it was interesting to note that one set of faculty participants from one institution consistently stated that they did. Five of the six faculty participants from Institution RII seemed to be able to articulate their university's process on how to address incidents of academic misconduct, stating they were required to use it, and that they chose to utilize that process, not seeming to mind the "required" mandate. Those participants consistently chose one word to describe the process and its outcomes: fair. The faculty participants also knew exactly who they should contact in the university process to report an incident of academic misconduct, most providing the person's name. The sentiment about the process among those participants was summed up well by Professor RII-B: "I must go through the process, and I believe in the process...now it's extremely fair."

Other RII participants provided their own take on their university process. When asked if he would continue to utilize the university's process, Professor RII-A stated, "Oh absolutely. I...feel like, especially in my role as an administrator, I'm...absolutely required to follow the rules... that's there to ensure that process and fairness is - is in play." Professor RII-C, in answering the same question, stated he would use the process because it:

Protects me. That's the main thing...the last thing I want to have happen is um, you know I - I don't ever wanna be accused of, Oh you managed these integrity

issues yourself and you were lenient on that person and not on this person, right?

So, no, I'm gonna report it.

Professor RII-D expressed similar sentiments when asked about using the university's process. He stated that, "it offers all protection. You don't want to go off unilaterally deciding what to do. It works really well, and...the woman who runs it... she does a good job" (RII-D). According to a few of the faculty participants, the system in place is a newer system, and RII-D stated that he uses this new system now because,

I just think it's well designed, right?...in my experience, it works. I've not had any poor outcomes from it, I think they've been good for both parties...I've had a few undergraduate cases as well as graduate cases...I still have a lot of power...I think it's fair, it's well moderated, and...I see good outcomes for everybody, right?

Professor RII-F, who serves in a leadership position as well as being a faculty member, stated that, "Certainly that's been always my advice to our faculty is to be sure to make – to take advantage of this system. I think the program - system is worked pretty well from what I've observed the last few times." When asked to clarify what he meant, he elaborated by saying,

There's some consistency, not only because that's good to protect them legally and the university but also I think it works to the advantage of the students to not have like, well this situation is handled this way, this situation is handled another way...So I think what I've seen the faculty gain some confidence in, and therefore I share that...usually it's one telling me, 'I think that worked out reasonably well, I thought that was a good resolution to this case.' When the next one comes along that may have had absolutely no experience before, I would say that's the number

one reason that I mention it, is it does seem like it's worked reasonably well in facilitating an outcome that is fair to everyone (RII-F).

As indicated by the interview responses, the faculty participants at Institution RII utilized their university's process because they felt it was fair, consistent, and well run. While some of the faculty participants at the other institutions did indicate they utilized their institution's process, they seemed less sure of how the process worked, unclear if it was available for them to use for graduate students, or would utilize the process as a means for addressing subsequent incidents by students, not necessarily for what they believed to be first time incidents.

Not all participants were keen to use their institutional process however. It is important to note in particular the dissention of Professor RII-E in choosing to not use the university's process. His perspective, first and foremost, is that he "tr[ies] to maintain a positive mindset and I don't assume that someone's cheated" (RII-E). Additionally, he looks at all the information and listens to all information from the student, and views the potential misconduct as a "learning experience" for the student(s) involved (RII-E). Overall he stated that based on experiences from previous institutions, the penalties for academic misconduct were too severe and he favored giving students second chances before sending them through the university process.

### **Addressing Misconduct on Their Own**

There were four faculty participants who indicated they would not utilize their university's process. One professor explained her choice in this way:

I think about dealing with these things myself because...I don't really know how things are today...but when I had problems with students when I was younger, the

university, the college was just not particularly supportive - you know they just want it all to go away...so more likely I just think about handling it internally (RI-D).

Another faculty participant was more straightforward in describing why she chose to not use the university's process stating, "I didn't go through judicial because what every colleague told me was that I never wanted to go through judicial - I'd lose a year of my life, and there would be no better outcome" (RI-E). For this participant, the outcomes for academic misconduct by her masters' students were, "the choice is to be thrown out of the program for cheating or you take the zero...and frankly...that's how they all ended" (RI-E). Professor RI-E further elaborated on her choices, stating,

They all ended that way because...I had the power to stop the behavior. Was what I did the right thing? Probably I wasn't following policy...but...the problem was there was no information from the Dean's office or from the faculty department chair; there's no information about academic integrity then, no,...it's never discussed...So, faculty members - the vast majority - come here and no one says... If you find cheating, this is the policy, these are the choices... So...what I did stopped the behavior, did not cost me a year of my life, and it did not - I didn't even know there were policies. And you know, when people would say, you don't want to follow the policy, I guess you could say, "Well, didn't you know there was a policy and you could be curious?" Not really...there's plenty of information that you get in that way but you survive....you know, informal information sharing...you don't check it all out. Especially if it looks expensive to check it

out. If someone tells you it's going to cost you a year of your life, that's pretty expensive.

While this response was particular to this participant's experience at her institution, two other faculty participants talked about handling incidents of academic misconduct by graduate students themselves, outside of the university process and for reasons that were somewhat similar.

Three other participants shared that they were unsure if they would utilize their institutional process for addressing misconduct. One faculty participant described how he believed that masters' students had engaged in unauthorized assistance during tests in his course. The tests were given online and students were allowed to use their notes, but they had to work alone. Given that students did not have to take the tests in a classroom, they could have worked together to take the tests, which is not allowed. However, he felt these instances were difficult to prove and that he did not have enough evidence to send it to his institution's process to review. Another participant shared that while he believed the institution absolutely should play a role in holding students accountable for academic misconduct, he felt that sometimes they did not hold students appropriately accountable and therefore resolved matters himself. The third participant attempted to send an incident through the university process, but no action was taken by the administration, which makes her hesitant to utilize that process again.

### **Examples of Misconduct Addressed by Participants**

As mentioned previously, participants were asked to share one incident they encountered of academic misconduct by a graduate student(s). Seventeen of the eighteen examples involved masters' students, MBA students in particular. Many of those

examples included test cheating by masters' students. Some of the examples of test cheating were more traditional in-class cheating, such as copying another student's test, or two or more students sharing answers during a test. Other examples of in-class test cheating included looking at class notes during the test when it was prohibited, or taking frequent bathroom breaks during the test to look at class notes hidden in the bathroom (and this example was provided more than once). One example of test cheating also involved a clear abuse of power. Two employees, one a supervisor and the other his supervisee, were in a class together that had a take-home exam. The supervisee completed the exam, and the supervisor made the supervisee give him the exam to copy and turn in. Another particularly interesting example shared by a participant involved a student first lying about the need to take a make-up exam, and then proceeding to cheat on the make-up exam by taking frequent bathroom breaks during the test to look at class notes hidden in the bathroom in the bottom of the trash can, underneath the trash bag in the can.

Online exams also presented opportunities for masters' students to cheat. One example a participant shared involved a timed online exam. It had a set time frame within which to take it, and then had to be completed in a certain amount of time. A student during that test contacted the faculty participant stating that their "internet doesn't work" as means to get extra time to take the exam. Other faculty participants shared that because of the nature of online exams, they would make the exam open note and open book in hopes of dissuading cheating, but the work was to be done individually. Students would extend the open note and open book permissions to "open for discussion with

classmates.” This usually resulted in identical exams, or more often, exams that had identical mistakes, making it easy for the faculty participants to catch the cheating.

Faculty participants also encountered plagiarism by masters’ students. Some plagiarism cases were standard copying and pasting of information without attribution. One example shared by a participant was team plagiarism. Four students were on a team for a project that had a written assignment to which they all contributed. Unfortunately, two of the four students contributed work found on the internet without any attribution or citation of that work. A variation on plagiarism described by some participants involved two people writing the same assignment together when the work was to be individual, not collaborative. A few examples involved plagiarism and unauthorized assistance. It would typically be masters’ students assigned to work in groups on a project and the parameters of the project included no information sharing between groups on the project. Some groups would share information and use it in their projects, resulting in similarities; other groups obtained one group’s work and shared it with other groups who copied the project verbatim and submitted it as their own work.

Three final examples of academic misconduct are deviations from the more common ones provided above. One example was a master’s student forging the signatures of two faculty members on institutional forms for the graduate school. Another example involved a doctoral student who may have had a major writing requirement for the program written for them. The final example of academic misconduct involved an allegation of a doctoral student falsifying data in their dissertation.



## **Summary of Addressing Misconduct**

Faculty participants all addressed the academic misconduct they encountered in some way. Some participants were influenced by their personal perspectives on academic misconduct in how they addressed it, and others sought advice from colleagues to help guide how to best address academic misconduct. Most of the faculty participants addressed the misconduct through some type of penalty, whether it was a grading penalty or extra academic work required of the student(s). In addition, the majority of faculty participants chose to also utilize their institutional processes to report academic misconduct in addition to the penalty they assigned. The remaining faculty chose to simply address it on their own without involving institutional processes. The next section that addresses the fourth research question on utilizing institutional processes addresses this choice in depth.

### **To Report or Not Report: That is the Question**

All of the faculty participants in this study encountered graduate student academic misconduct, and each one shared at least one specific incident. All of the participants addressed it in some way, but the question remains, what factors influence these faculty participants to report or not report incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students to their university process? Many different themes emerged from the participants' answers, but the top themes were the faculty's perception of their university process, their knowledge of their university process, and then their prior experiences with academic misconduct that influenced whether they utilized their university process or not. Other themes that emerged will be discussed after these main themes.

## **Knowledge of the University Process**

A faculty participant's knowledge level about their university process influenced whether they utilized the process to report incidents of graduate student academic misconduct. Some faculty knew about their university's process, some did not, and some did not know but were later informed about the process. Thirteen of the faculty participants spoke to this particular theme, and some of their responses covered more than one category within the theme. Seven of the faculty participants discussed how they did not initially, or currently do not, know what the process is for addressing academic misconduct at the university level. Not knowing about the process, or if there is one, certainly makes it hard to report an incident of misconduct. Some of the faculty who did not know about the university process mentioned it in the context of being new to an institution or just not having the need or option to utilize such a process where they currently are. One faculty participant mentioned that early in her career, "I would say that the academic policy wasn't well understood, it wasn't widely read; I really didn't have any knowledge of it" (RI-E). Two other faculty participants, at two separate institutions, acknowledged that they had been made aware of some process, but if they needed to use it, one summarized it by stating, "With respect to what happens if something happens and what that process is, I don't know" (RI-C).

Ten of the faculty participants currently know about their university process, and some of those learned about it because of a need to utilize it or was told they must utilize it. Knowledge of the university's process, however, does not mean faculty will use it. One faculty member knows about her university's process, and early in her career when she attempted to utilize it, she stated that, "the college was just not particularly supportive

- you know they just want it all to go away” (RI-D). However, eight of the faculty participants who know about their institution’s process seemed more positive about utilizing it to address academic misconduct. One faculty participant articulated his institution’s policy this way, “The policy's pretty clear in that faculty have the authority and the responsibility to follow up on these things and report” (RIII-B). Another participant stated, “but our department's policy...is that you must - it's a mandatory issue - you must report it to the Office of Academic Integrity” (RI-F). Knowledge of the process, again, does not mean utilization of it, but faculty cannot even consider the option of utilizing their institution’s process if they do not know about it.

The next two themes about faculty’s prior experiences with academic misconduct and their perception of an institution’s process are somewhat intertwined. It can be that a faculty participant’s prior experience in addressing a graduate student’s academic misconduct shapes their perception of their institution’s process, whether positively or negatively. A faculty participant’s prior experience with academic misconduct or some type of cheating in general can also shape their perception of an institutional process, whether positively or negatively, and the importance or need for using such a process. Therefore the theme of prior experiences will be discussed first, followed by a discussion on the faculty participants’ perceptions of the process.

### **Prior Experiences with Academic Misconduct**

Prior experiences with academic misconduct, or misconduct in general, were divided in two categories based on faculty participants’ responses. Some faculty talked about their prior experiences in addressing academic misconduct by their graduate students, and other faculty participants talked about their prior experiences with

misconduct that directly impacted them or that they observed. Both types of prior experiences had some influence on whether faculty participants chose to report graduate student academic misconduct to their university process.

Faculty participants who spoke about prior experiences of addressing academic misconduct by students had more negative than positive things to say about those experiences with university processes. Participants spoke about a lack of support for them in the process or not giving any credence to their situations. One faculty participant stated, “As soon as somebody drops the word ‘I’m hiring a lawyer’ the university does not care what the file says any longer and whatever the...faculty people involved said all of a sudden becomes very unimportant” (RI-D). Some faculty participants felt discouraged by the university’s lack of action on situations where the faculty participants felt there was clear information that showed wrong-doing on the part of the student. As one participant stated, “They decided to look the other way and do nothing” (RIII-A). Another participant felt that the process was not transparent and did not include them all the way through, stating, “And I wrote everything up and sent it along, but - but actually I never heard anything after that. I never got a notice of what happened...It’s kind of like a black hole” (RIII-D).

A few of the faculty participants shared more positive experiences they had utilizing their university’s process. One participant shared that once he made the referral, “they made everything actually really, really easy... and so I am happy to have them do that, and feel kind of absolved of having to deal with it as much as possible” (RI-F). Another participant stated, “I’ve not had any poor outcomes from it” (RII-D), while another commented, “it does seem like it’s worked reasonably well...in facilitating an

outcome that is fair to everyone” (RII-F). All three of these participants later indicated they would continue using their institution’s process to address academic misconduct because their previous experiences were positive.

Other faculty participants had prior experiences with academic misconduct, or misconduct in general, that were more personal in nature, but they still seemed to influence their decision in part to utilize their university’s process for addressing graduate student academic misconduct. One professor shared that during his time as a graduate student, he had his written dissertation work and related data stolen and subsequently published by a well-known faculty member in his field while he was still working on that dissertation. As he put it, “I’ve been burned. I’ve been absolutely burned at a time when I really needed not to be burned” (RIII-B). One unfortunate outcome is that the faculty member who appropriated that work suffered no consequences. However, the faculty participant shared how he was able to recover from that, but the outcomes are that he no longer shares anything with anyone until after it’s published, and he is extremely vigilant with his own doctoral students about the quality of their work, particularly when it comes to citation, and discourages them from sharing their work prematurely.

Another participant spoke of a time in a previous career that he lost out on an opportunity to advance in that career due to cheating by the person who ultimately did get to advance. He shared, “So I use that as a backdrop just to emphasize to the students, listen, I’m serious about this stuff; I don’t wanna have to deal with it, but my personal makeup, my personal DNA, I will follow through and I will throw the book at you if I find misconduct. I won’t put up with it, period” (RII-C).

A third faculty participant talked about an incident that occurred when she was working on her MBA. Two students had apparently engaged in some type of academic misconduct and “were...dismissed from the program over it” (RIII-C). She said that as a result,

as a class, we had a great of respect for the fact that...validated that our degree was worth something...it did...make a statement, that says, hey, we're serious, and, you know, when you leave here, you - you should feel good about what you've done and the work that you've accomplished (RIII-C).

She said because of that experience as a student in a program in which she now teaches, she would not have a problem utilizing the university process to address academic misconduct.

### **Faculty Perceptions of the University Process**

Faculty participants’ perceptions of their university process provided varied results. Whatever those perceptions were influenced the faculty participants’ decision, in part, to report academic misconduct at the university level. As mentioned previously, the participants’ perceptions of the process could be influenced by their level of knowledge about the process and their prior experiences, whether with the institutional process or not. Seventeen of the eighteen participants commented on their perceptions of the process, and their opinions varied widely, some positive, some negative, and some were mixed.

Based on the interview responses, faculty perceptions of their institutional process did depend on the institution to a degree. How the institution communicated its policy and process to faculty, and how it carried that process out, which included the level of

involvement of faculty, seemed to contribute to faculty's perception of the institution's process. One institution that had a process in place for approximately 10 years, and its administrator who made a point to go and speak to faculty about the process and their role in it, was given very positive feedback by those faculty participants. As stated in the earlier section, "Addressing Misconduct," faculty at Institution RII believed that the process to address academic misconduct was fair, consistent, and protected both students and faculty without an undue burden on the faculty to utilize the process. Professor RII-D shared that, "I think we had an older system that was really not working well, and they introduced the new one and I think they came around and spoke to faculty...it's a good process. It works. Makes it easy." Professor RII-F offered similar thoughts indicating, "there's some consistency...it works to the advantage of the students," and, "I would say my observation has been that the faculty have felt like it was pretty effective."

Faculty participants at the other two institutions did not express a consistent understanding of or as positive feedback on their institutional processes. Not all of the participants were sure what the process was called, who they could contact for assistance, or what the process involved. One faculty participant shared thoughts on figuring out the process when an incident of academic misconduct arises: "Dealing with it is often just the time and the pragmatics of having to figure out what to do and it's frustrating and annoying" (RI-C). Another faculty participant at the same institution gave an alternative reason for utilizing the process: "I think the honor court really comes up only when you really don't have any other way of punishing the person" (RI-D). A third faculty participant gave a different perspective on how the university views addressing misconduct in terms of costs and benefits. He stated, "I kind of think we are running the

university as a business...Because you want to minimize costs” and his view was that kicking a student out of school for academic misconduct was a cost due to lost tuition money so the university wanted to avoid that (RI-B).

At the third institution, some of the faculty participants also had a slightly more negative view of the university process for addressing academic misconduct. One faculty participant expressed disappointment and frustration at a decision made regarding a student who engaged in academic misconduct. Professor RIII-A stated, “I felt that - factors that had nothing to do with the rules and the behavior were driving the decision” when the university did nothing to hold the student accountable for her actions. Professor RIII-D expressed a similar sentiment in more broad terms, stating, “Sometimes you don't get supported or perceived as supported at the levels you have to go through to make a case. And so you feel like you are spinning wheels.”

The frustrations do not seem to be limited to just outcomes of incidents referred to the process. Some of the frustration comes from the faculty participant's perception of how the university process functions overall. Professor RIII-E commented, “I do not feel that the institutions deal harshly enough with academic [misconduct],” and that when an incident is referred to them, the university acts like, “it's an inconvenience, it's a hassle for the university, and anytime that I have ever brought something up, like they really view it as just like, oh - another work demand.” Professor RIII-D stated, “There is - there is verbal support, everybody says the right thing. You get the words, and you don't get the actions.” If faculty perceive that the university does not support them in addressing academic misconduct, they will not use the process at all. Instead, many faculty will resolve the matter themselves. One participant shared that colleagues indicated, “there's a



lot of faculty who just don't want the headache, and they - they handle it internally” (RII-C). Other participants offered that by addressing the matter themselves is immediate, it stops the behavior, and both faculty and student can move on.

### **Summary of To Report or Not Report**

Faculty participants, in determining how to address graduate student academic misconduct, could choose to report the incident to their institutional process as a means of addressing the misconduct. Three main factors that influenced these faculty participants to report, or not report, incidents of graduate student academic misconduct to their institutional process included the participants’ knowledge of their institutional process, their prior experiences with academic misconduct, and their perceptions of their institutional process. Whether faculty participants knew about their institutional process or not influenced whether they choose to report the academic misconduct to that process. As stated previously, if the participants did not know about the process, they cannot utilize it as a means to address the misconduct.

Prior experiences in addressing academic misconduct by their graduate students or prior experiences with misconduct that directly impacted faculty participants also had some influence on whether faculty participants chose to report graduate student academic misconduct to their institutional process. Some participants had negative experiences in handling previous incidents of misconduct and therefore are wary of using any institutional process in the future. That did not apply to all participants as some had positive experiences in utilizing institutional processes to address graduate student misconduct and stated that because of those previous experiences would continue to use that process.

Finally, participants' perceptions of their university process could be influenced by their level of knowledge about the process and their prior experiences, whether with the institutional process or not. Additionally, this perception for faculty participants seemed somewhat driven by the institution. One institution had five of six participants consistently provide positive feedback on their perception of their institutional process which influenced them to continue to use that process as a means of addressing academic misconduct. The participants at the other two institutions had more varied responses on their perceptions of their institutional processes and therefore varied responses on utilizing those processes to address graduate student academic misconduct.

### **Additional findings**

After addressing the research questions, the findings were examined to explore any differences in the experiences of the faculty participants in addressing and reporting academic misconduct based on gender, experience level, and tenured versus non-tenured participants. These differences were explored based upon participants' interview answers related to how they felt about academic misconduct, how they addressed academic misconduct, and their decision to use or not use their institutional process as one means of addressing the misconduct.

The participants consisted of eleven males and seven females, and very few differences were noted in how the participants felt about academic misconduct based on gender. Only two of the seven females described how they felt about academic misconduct in a physical context as described in the framework section previously in this chapter. All other participants, the remaining five females and eleven males, used what seemed to be consistent language and descriptors in describing how they felt about

academic misconduct. How male and female participants addressed academic misconduct did not appear to be different from each other as well. As mentioned under “Addressing Academic Misconduct – Penalties”, sixteen of the eighteen faculty specifically mentioned giving a failing grade and/or extra academic work to students who engaged in misconduct. The two faculty that did not specifically address this area were male. When choosing to use their institutional processes to report academic misconduct, three males and three females indicated that they would not choose to use the process, leaving eight males and four females who would. Any differences in the overall experiences of participants with academic misconduct, as it relates to the participants’ gender, are minimal at best.

The level of experience of the participants, meaning the number of years they have been teaching, does not seem to have much of an impact on the faculty participants’ experiences with academic misconduct either. All participants, regardless of experience, had only negative things to say about how they felt about academic misconduct. Additionally, sixteen of the eighteen faculty participants addressed academic misconduct in very similar fashions when it came to penalties. Their years of experience ranged from three years to thirty-eight years. One of the faculty participants who did not mention this specifically had nine years of experience; the other participant had eleven years of experience. When it came to choosing to use their institutional process to report graduate student academic misconduct, there was no difference based on experience level. For the twelve faculty participants who did use or would use their institutional process, their average years of teaching experience was twenty years. For those six participants who

would not use their institutional process, their average years of teaching experience was twenty-one years.

The one classification that seems to show some difference is the tenure status of the faculty participants. Twelve of the participants were tenured; six were either tenure-track or non-tenure track. As mentioned previously, all of the participants spoke in negative terms about how they felt about graduate student academic misconduct so that demonstrated no differences. Additionally, sixteen of the eighteen participants all mentioned similar ways to address graduate student academic misconduct either through grade penalties or extra academic work. One of the faculty participants who did not address this issue was tenured, the other was not. The difference, when it comes to tenure status, seems to be in the choice to use the institutional process to report graduate student academic misconduct. Nine of the twelve tenured faculty have used or will use their institutional process for reporting misconduct, with only three of the tenured faculty participants choosing not to use the process, based largely on previous negative experiences and advice from colleagues. For the non-tenured faculty participants, they were evenly divided on using or not using their institutional processes for reporting graduate student academic misconduct. Two of the three participants who would not use institutional processes for reporting misconduct based that decision on prior negative experiences (in part) while the other participant simply found it easier to address the misconduct on his own.

These additional findings are only a reflection of this study's participants and their accompanying experiences and backgrounds. They are certainly not conclusive but

can aid in providing a different viewpoint through which to process the overall findings of this study.

### **Summary**

Faculty participants' perspectives of graduate student academic misconduct were shaped by the framework through which they view it. This framework, derived from their interview responses, has four parts: faculty participants' delineation between masters' students and doctoral students, faculty participants' role with masters' and doctoral students, participants' perception of the prevalence of academic misconduct by master's students and doctoral students, and faculty participants' feelings about academic misconduct and discovering it. This framework shaped the responses to the four research questions.

Faculty participants did define academic misconduct for their graduate students, but emphasized different aspects of misconduct for masters' students and doctoral students. Two types of academic misconduct that participants emphasized for their masters' students included unauthorized assistance and cheating. Plagiarism was noted for both masters and doctoral students by faculty participants. Definitions used by the participants were mostly definitions provided by their university. Faculty participants also discussed academic misconduct with their graduate students in three primary ways: on their syllabi, through in-class conversations, and on or right before exams. Here again, most language used on syllabi or on an exam were statements their universities crafted for use by faculty and overall discussion on the definitions of academic misconduct seemed to get cursory attention.

All faculty participants did address graduate student academic misconduct and how they chose to do so seemed to be influenced by their personal perspectives and the advice they sought from colleagues. The primary way participants' addressed academic misconduct was through some type of academic penalty such as a grade penalty or additional academic work. Some faculty participants chose to utilize their institutional process as an additional means of addressing academic misconduct while others chose to address it on their own.

Factors that influenced faculty participants to report, or not report, graduate student academic misconduct to their institutional process included their knowledge of their institutional process, their prior experiences with graduate student academic misconduct, and their perceptions of their institution's process. Participants who did not know about their institutional process or had a negative perception of their institutional process did not utilize their institutional process (or use it anymore). Participants who did know about their institution's process and had a more positive perception of that process did choose to utilize the process to report misconduct. Participant's prior experiences with academic misconduct were largely negative, but depending on the context of that experience, it influenced participants' decisions to report misconduct in different ways.

The participants shared their perceptions on academic misconduct, and on graduate students who engage in it, but now – what does all this mean?

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Overview**

Graduate students cheat, and faculty know it. Faculty participants, in describing their perceptions on graduate student academic misconduct, made sure to differentiate between masters' students and doctoral students on this issue. These two classifications of students were very different for the majority of participants and therefore any academic misconduct at these levels was addressed very differently by the faculty participants. This distinction between masters' students and doctoral students, and how the faculty addressed academic misconduct by those students, was the most surprising finding for the researcher as it shaped the framework through which faculty answered the research questions more than any other piece of the framework.

Faculty that teach and advise graduate students encounter academic misconduct by those students. While faculty may not be consistent in how or what they define as academic misconduct for their graduate students, or spend explicit time outlining expectations for academic integrity, there are consequences graduate students will face should they engage in, and faculty catch, academic misconduct. How faculty chose to address that misconduct differs, in part, based on the level of the graduate student and the institutional resources available to them.

This qualitative study explored faculty perceptions of academic misconduct at the graduate level and how they addressed it when it occurs. Eighteen business faculty from

three different institutions participated in individual interviews and provided insight into this topic. What they shared confirmed that academic misconduct is an issue at the graduate level. The framework that provides the lens for faculty perceptions of academic misconduct is composed of four parts formed by responses to the interview questions: graduate student delineation, faculty roles with graduate students, is academic misconduct an issue, and how faculty feel about academic misconduct. This framework was used to answer the four research questions on how faculty address graduate student academic misconduct.

Graduate student delineation was an important piece of information that most faculty participants emphasized. Overall, they viewed masters and doctoral students differently which provided better insight into how faculty saw their roles with each level of graduate student and how they addressed misconduct at each level when it occurred. As previously mentioned, participants also agreed that academic misconduct was an issue at the graduate level and that it is a negative aspect of their job.

The good news is that the faculty participants did not ignore academic misconduct, but depending on the level of the graduate student, they addressed the matter differently. Additionally, the choice of faculty participants to use an institutional process as one means of addressing academic misconduct is dependent on several factors, including knowledge of the process, support and resources provided to faculty, and the effectiveness of the process.

The findings that the faculty participants do encounter academic misconduct at the graduate level are consistent with previous studies' findings that ask graduate students if they have ever engaged in academic misconduct (Baldwin et al, 1996; Brown, 1995;



Brown 1996; Dans, 1996; McCabe et al, 2006; Rabi et al; 2006; Sierles et al, 1980; Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001). These previous studies found that it happens at the masters' level (Brown, 1995; Brown 1996; McCabe et al, 2006, Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001) and at the doctoral level (Dans, 1996; Rabi et al; 2006; Sierles et al, 1980; Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001). This study also suggests that academic misconduct is more prevalent among masters' students than doctoral students, which is supported by the findings in Wadja-Johnston et al's study (2001).

What this study uncovered that contradicts previous studies is that faculty participants did not completely ignore academic misconduct. Each faculty participant described some means of holding a student accountable for such behavior, or at least attempting to do so. Not all participants utilized their institutional process in holding students accountable, but they did not outright ignore or dismiss the issue as found in studies done by Graham et al (1994), Jendrek (1989), Keith-Spiegel et al (1998), McCabe (1993), or Tabachnick et al (1991). The method of accountability depended on factors such as faculty participants' previous experiences, personal perspectives, and advice they received from peers.

### **Peering Through the Faculty Lens: Their View of Academic Misconduct**

Faculty are a treasure trove of information and opinions on any topic you ask them about, and the participants had plenty to say about academic misconduct particularly by graduate students. Where those opinions are largely missing is in the literature. There is room in the literature for this study as part of laying the foundation for future research in this area. As stated previously in the introduction and literature review, the bulk of other studies have looked at academic misconduct among

undergraduate students and faculty responses to that (Graham, Monday, O'Brien, & Steffen, 1994; Hard Conway, & Moran, 2006; Jendrek, 1989; Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick, Whitley, & Washburn, 1998; McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Nuss, 1984; Singhal, 1982; Stafford, 1976; Wright & Kelly, 1974). Only one study found to date explored graduate student academic misconduct and faculty responses to that, and that study was a quantitative survey study that did not explore the questions asked here (Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001). This research examines in depth the faculty perspective of academic misconduct at the graduate level, their responses to it, how they choose to address it, and finally, what factors influence faculty utilizing institutional processes as part of addressing misconduct.

**How, and to what extent, do faculty, who teach graduate students at large, public research institutions, define academic misconduct for their graduate students?**

Faculty participants do define academic misconduct for their students, but they focus on different types of misconduct depending on the level of the student. Typically when faculty participants are teaching masters' level students, they focus on defining test cheating and on what constitutes unauthorized assistance. This is consistent with previous survey studies that asked faculty what they considered to be cheating, though with undergraduate students (Graham et al, 1994; Nuss, 1984; Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003 Stern & Havlicek, 1986; Wright & Kelly, 1974). However, it was discovered through this study that the faculty participants in large part considered masters' students, particularly MBA students, to be advanced undergraduate students, so perhaps the previous studies can be viewed as supportive of these current findings.

The bigger issue that faculty participants fixed on for masters' students was the "unauthorized assistance" problem. As a few of the participants stated, the MBA programs tend to emphasize team work, so when individual work is required, the students work together when they should not. Whether that behavior is intentional or not is up for debate, but it certainly has not gone unnoticed by the faculty participants. This particular behavior can overlap with test cheating, but the participants also noted it as a problem on projects, homework assignments, and case studies.

Since the faculty participants did delineate between masters' students and doctoral students, they typically focused on defining two different types of academic misconduct with doctoral students: plagiarism and fraud regarding their research data. The plagiarism focus here is not inconsistent with previous studies that surveyed faculty, though those studies were undergraduate-student focused. However those studies found that faculty typically rated some form of test cheating higher on their list of academically dishonest behaviors than some form of plagiarism (Graham et al, 1994; Nuss, 1984; Pincus & Schmelkin, 2003; Stern & Havlicek, 1986; Wright & Kelly, 1974).

The focus of a doctoral student's education tends to be largely about doing some type of research and writing. Therefore, it is not surprising that the graduate level faculty participants would choose to concentrate on defining those two types of academic misconduct as they are most germane to the doctoral level of education. Based on the interview responses, participants seemed most concerned about addressing this behavior early on in a doctoral student's career to avoid potential future pitfalls. Some of the faculty participants mentioned the danger of plagiarism going unchecked as students could continue that behavior into their own faculty careers, specifically as pressures

mount to publish and to obtain tenure status. This same concern was expressed in the potential to falsify or fabricate data. Participants expressed concerns that to get a study published, there must significance to the study, and without that, publication chances diminish. For future faculty seeking to build their vitae and improve their hiring chances, falsifying or fabricating data could be a temptation. Therefore, faculty participants felt it critical to spend one on one time with their doctoral students defining these behaviors and identifying appropriate boundaries.

**How, and to what extent, do these faculty discuss academic integrity and misconduct with their graduate students?**

The faculty participants discuss academic misconduct with their graduate students, but not always in depth. These findings are in contrast to most of the previous studies' findings where faculty did not discuss academic integrity or misconduct at all with their students (largely undergraduate). In Wadja-Johnston et al's (2001) study that asked faculty this question regarding graduate students, the greatest percentage of faculty that did anything was 35.9% who discussed academic misconduct on the first day of class (p. 300-301). There were others that had other ways of discussing misconduct, but that particular method received the highest amount of responses. All of the participants in this study did discuss academic misconduct in some way, whether it was on the course syllabus, instructions on assignments, right before a test, or through an in-class discussion. No matter the method, the participants communicated in some way either their standards for integrity or their consequences for misconduct. However, the amount of time spent on those discussions did not seem to be significant based on the

participants' interview answers which may be perceived by graduate students as downplaying the importance of that message.

The primary method most of this study's participants used to discuss academic misconduct was putting some sort of statement on their course syllabus. As revealed in the document analysis the majority of the participants included a statement, but most of them were generic, preformatted, and brief. While important to have standards stated in the syllabus, the generic format could be perceived as faculty making sure they simply had all the required syllabus content as dictated by their institution, rather than providing their personal standards for integrity. However, as one participant noted, "that admittedly, is the official language of the university and I don't depart from that because...that's what the university defines" as academic misconduct (RII-F). Certainly one could argue that faculty would feel more supported in pursuing a case of academic misconduct if they had the university's statement on their syllabus rather than something they created on their own. For fourteen faculty participants, they included an academic integrity statement on their syllabus, but very few were much more than a few sentences indicating that there was an institutional honor code and a link where the students could find it.

The next method almost as many of the participants used to discuss academic misconduct was in class conversations. For those that used this method, they stated this typically occurred on the first day of class as they reviewed the syllabus. Only a few participants mentioned directly in their responses that they took time to really discuss academic misconduct and the importance of not engaging in it. Most participants seemed to indicate that they mentioned academic integrity or misconduct as an institutional

requirement but did not elaborate further. Almost all of the participants who used in class conversations shared that beyond the first day, there were typically little reminders at test time or when projects or assignments were due about not engaging in academic misconduct. About half of the participants put some type of warning statement or an honor pledge on their exams. While it is good that these reminders were provided, and largely to the masters students, this type of cursory review or passing mention could again downplay the importance of the message faculty are trying to communicate.

A select few participants shared that they discuss academic misconduct, and what the appropriate standards are, one-on-one with their students. This typically occurred with doctoral students when they were engaged in some type of writing, whether for a course or for dissertation work. Many participants seemed to think that doctoral students “got it” and did not need a reminder, or at least as in-depth a reminder, that they should not engage in academic misconduct. However, some of the participants also acknowledged that doctoral students were not immune to that type of temptation. Conversely, because there is more pressure on a doctoral student to perform at a higher level regarding writing, research, and publication, that would seem to be the ideal environment to have a discussion on what the professional standards are, and how avoiding academic misconduct would be critical to their success in their field.

What was surprising was that a few participants actually stated that discussing academic misconduct was not their role, even though they explained how they discussed their standards for assignments and tests when it came to academic misconduct. Even though it was a small number, it seemed like some faculty participants believed that setting the standards for academic integrity, or at least communicating those standards,

was the responsibility of someone else like an administrator. That seemed to be a bit curious as the researcher presumed that faculty would want to set their own standards in their classroom and not rely on someone else to do that.

Overall, the participants did discuss their definitions and standards of academic misconduct with the graduate students, even though the amount of time spent on it was not significant. The method of communication seemed driven by the faculty participants' perception of misconduct, including how often they thought it occurred, the level of the graduate student, and what the faculty member saw as the most pressing misconduct issue for their graduate student audience.

**How, and to what extent, do these faculty address incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?**

“If you cheat...these are the steps that I'm going to take and I guarantee that I will take them and nothing will change my mind” (RI-A). That statement is one example of how participants address academic misconduct, but at the other end is, “I think sometimes it's a learning experience as much as anything...but...I'm not super hardline” (RII-E). Faculty participants in this study did address misconduct by their graduate students. The methods on how they addressed it varied, but contrary to what previous studies found, none in this study ignored it altogether (Graham et al, 1994; Jendrek, 1989; Keith-Spiegel et al, 1998; McCabe, 1993; Tabachnick et al, 1991). The one common thread found was that all faculty participants did not like dealing with academic misconduct, which is not a surprise. As one participant stated, “I certainly would hate to think that my main role is as the policeman of my class” (RII-F). The general feeling

among participants was that they felt obligated to address the behavior when it occurred, but that was not their primary focus in educating graduate students.

What resulted from this study that was not addressed as much or in great detail in previous studies was how faculty chose to address the misconduct. Some of the previous studies just asked whether faculty would use their university process or not (Hard et al, 2006; McCabe & Trevino, 1995; Wadja-Johnston et al, 2001; Wright & Kelly, 1974), and did not explore if faculty would chose other means of addressing it and if so, what those means were. Faculty participants in this study shared in more detail the ways they address academic misconduct, including grade penalties on the quiz, test, assignment, or project in question, a grade penalty for the course overall, extra academic work, and even referral to the campus process. Some of the faculty participants utilized more than one option to address the misconduct.

The interesting outcome is that faculty participants' tolerance levels for academic misconduct appear different for masters' students and doctoral students. Faculty were more forgiving of errors by doctoral students if they put forth effort on the work in the first place. Faculty participants seemed more willing to address those errors in an educational manner, particularly as it revolved around plagiarism. Participants offered a bit of grace to their doctoral students to forgive the transgression and allowed doctoral students to redo their work. This may be the result of faculty participants' willingness to put more effort into doctoral student training since they see doctoral students as future colleagues. Based on interview responses, doctoral students get more hand holding and more one on one education about academic (and future professional) standards to avoid misconduct.



This was not necessarily the case with masters' students where faculty participants were apt to assign a penalty almost immediately for academic misconduct. Since faculty participants largely viewed masters' students as similar to undergraduates, they were more likely to address academic misconduct punitively. As noted in Results, many faculty participants discussed grade penalties or other academic penalties that they assigned to masters' students who engaged in academic misconduct. There was very little mention of intentional educational conversations about the behavior, why the students should not do the behavior, or the long term impact misconduct could have on their careers. This lack of intentional conversations reaffirms the faculty view of masters' students, many of which were MBA students, as glorified undergraduates with two objectives in mind: "three credits and an 'A'" (RIII-E).

The distinction between the graduate students is a key part of the framework here in influencing how participants address misconduct with each group of students and whether that includes reporting the student to the institutional process. When a graduate student, like an MBA student, is simply passing through on their way to future career glory, faculty may not take that student as seriously or seek to develop a working relationship that could eventually deter or diminish the opportunity for academic misconduct. Faculty are not as likely to maintain a connection with that student or seek out opportunities to do research together and co-author publications like they would with a doctoral student. The level of investment overall is different and so the level of investment in educating graduate students about academic misconduct is different as well. Doctoral students will get more intentional time, and masters' students will not.

**When academic misconduct is discovered, what factors influence these faculty members to report or not report incidents of academic misconduct by their graduate students?**

Personal factors aside, institutions bear the burden of convincing faculty that it is worth their time and effort to use institutional processes to address graduate student academic misconduct. The findings in this study are similar to findings in previous studies (Aarons, 1992; Hardy, 1982; Simon et al, 2003; Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). The faculty participants were divided in their choice to utilize their institutional processes to report academic misconduct by their graduate students. For those that did utilize their institutional process, they stated that they were required to per institutional policy. For those that did not, they listed a variety of reasons why. They included lack of support from the university in trying to utilize the process, minimal outcomes instead of what faculty participants believe should have been more stringent, not knowing about the process or being deterred from using it by their peers; too severe outcomes when faculty participants believed they should have been less; and lack of evidence to submit it to the process. These reasons are supported by findings in previous studies. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2002) and Aarons (1992) both found that a lack of education for the faculty on the process and resources available to them to address academic misconduct was a deterrent to using institutional processes. Hardy's (1982) study found that faculty did not use their institutional process when the administration did not support them in doing so or did not enforce their own policies when faculty referred incidents. Simon et al (2003) found that faculty who were "sceptical" of the process will not use it. Much like the faculty participants who attempted to use the process but were shut down or

unsupported, they will not use a process that views faculty reports as an inconvenience because it takes precious time from the faculty to pursue the misconduct matter through these channels. Time they could have spent resolving the matter within the confines of the classroom and have moved on could be extended due to cumbersome or unfriendly institutional processes.

The faculty participants at Institution RII who chose to use their institutional process did so because they knew about the process, who to contact about the process, and how the process worked. The administrator responsible for the process also took the time to go and speak with faculty about the process, how it worked, and made herself accessible to faculty as a resource. Communication about the process seemed to be key to faculty utilization. They considered the process to be relatively “new”, which turned out to be approximately ten years old. However, in institutional years, that can be considered “new.” The key factors for the participants here seemed to be communication, effectiveness, and fairness.

Based on information they shared, participants used the process because they felt it was fair to both faculty and students, consistent in outcomes for faculty and students, and easy on faculty to report. While the outcomes for the students may not be completely in line with what they would have done independently, the faculty participants felt there was sufficient accountability to use the process. It is a mandated process at Institution RII, but not all faculty participants used it. So even a mandated process does not mean everyone will use it. The faculty participant who does not use the process provided a rationale that seems to reflect an “innocent until proven guilty” perspective and really approaches situations with an open mind before making any decisions. It is also

important to note this faculty participant did not ignore incidents; he did issue penalties when he felt they were appropriate.

Faculty participants at the other institutions were not as clear on what their institutional options and resources were for addressing academic misconduct. Some knew there was a process, some did not. Learning about the lack of information on how faculty could handle academic misconduct and how the university can help was frustrating for the researcher, and more so for the faculty. The university should be providing information to help faculty define academic misconduct, provide guidance on ways to discuss it with their students, and how misconduct should be addressed. The participants clearly stated that their graduate programs do not prepare them for addressing academic misconduct as faculty, which leaves their institutions to educate them on the prevention of misconduct and addressing misconduct if they want to continue to be institutions of excellence. Despite what appeared to be a dearth of information on how to address misconduct, it was refreshing that the participants did not ignore academic misconduct when it occurred. Even with no training or guidance, some of the ways they handled academic misconduct incidents were quite creative and still served a learning purpose for their graduate students.

There were also some faculty participants who used their institutional process successfully. More, though, attempted to use the process only to find no support by the very process that was supposed to provide it or that the level of accountability in the process was woefully inadequate. Participants shared their frustrations and disbelief through stories about how their university ignored academic misconduct incidents, overturned what appeared to be good findings that allowed students to be free from

accountability for their actions, or just let students finish the course or their program because it was easier than addressing the misconduct. The frustration, and even anger, was very real for the participants. As one faculty participant said, institutions are “ultimately selling a brand: legitimacy...and the quality of the brand is only as good as the people who graduate” (RIII-E).

When institutions choose to minimize or ignore academic misconduct, or undercut faculty who attempt to hold graduate students accountable for academic misconduct, that “brand” of the institution is diminished. Rudolph and Timm (1998) concur with that sentiment stating, “The academic reputation of an institution rests with the accomplishments of the faculty and graduates” (p. 59). As institutions lean more towards a business model, minimizing or ignoring academic misconduct does not help their brand in the market when recruiting new consumers, and certainly would hurt their consumers’ chances of being hired because what business would hire a graduate from a “brand” that is of lesser quality than others? As a business model, institutions would fail from that perspective.

Faculty are on the front line dealing with academic misconduct and from these results, it appears that their universities seem happy to let them muddle through it, or at least that is the faculty perception. These difficult issues are the kinds of things that create a divide between faculty and administration. There are many other areas within which to do that; institutions should not make academic misconduct one of them. Academic misconduct is perceived as antithetical to the mission of the institution and contrary to the objectives of faculty in their role as teachers and mentors. As Keith-Spiegel et al (1998) found, “Professors have stated that dealing with a cheating student is

one of the most negative aspects of the job” (p. 217). While there will always be negative aspects to any job, making the ability to effectively address that negative aspect extraordinarily challenging only compounds the issue. However, these impediments did not deter faculty from addressing graduate student academic misconduct; the faculty simply handled the matters themselves. The problem in that method is that there is no central accountability method for the graduate student who engages in academic misconduct in more than one course. What may seem like a one-time innocuous mistake may actually be one of a string of many such “mistakes.”

All of these factors, communication, support, accountability, and how well they were done, influenced whether faculty used their institutional processes or not. It is clear from the interviews that faculty who got burned by the institution when they reported incidents were not as likely to use that process again. Faculty who were advised against using the process based on others’ experiences also won’t use the process because it takes more time to figure out if the advice is sound instead of just following the advice. However, faculty that have a good experience with an institutional process that is not burdensome on them, is consistent and is fair, share that information and their peers use it! Beyond the “required to” for processes that are mandated, faculty feel comfortable using what they consider to be a good process and do not necessarily feel abdicated in their power in the classroom. Instead, they feel empowered in their role as educator and can focus their energies on students who want to learn.

That is how it should work. Universities should have processes that support their faculty in addressing academic misconduct. As Alschuler and Blimling (1995) state, “powerful support for faculty should be the institutional norm” (p. 125). Not only does it

promote consistency in how academic misconduct is addressed, it provides a measure of protection for both students and faculty and sets a standard of fairness in addition to academic excellence. Institutions should engage faculty appropriately, educate them appropriately, and keep faculty informed, and it works. While faculty do not like that part of the job that addresses graduate student academic misconduct, it makes it less painful.

### **Implications for Practice**

Institutions can affect change for good, towards excellence, on their campuses when it comes to academic misconduct. The findings of this study suggest that there are things to be done that can impact and inform how faculty address graduate student academic misconduct. Based on the findings here, exploring change at the institutional level can be one path to helping faculty best address graduate student academic misconduct. There are many things an institution can do to make the “ugliest part of the job” slightly less painful, but the focus here will be twofold: communication with faculty on policies and inclusion of faculty in policy development or revision. As Kibler (1994) states, “If they [faculty] are isolated from an institution’s efforts to prevent dishonesty, those efforts will likely be ineffective” (p. 101).

### **Communication with Faculty**

Communication of institutional policies, procedures, and resources was one area ripe for improvement as demonstrated by faculty participants’ interview responses. Participants consistently stated that they received little, if any, communication or information in their graduate programs on how to address academic misconduct in their classrooms. That lack of information carried on for some as they started new positions at institutions. Whether it was their first faculty position, or their fifth, the participants

stated that their institution provided minimal if any communication on academic integrity policies or addressing academic misconduct. This is something that can easily be improved by institutions, but it does require effort. As Rudolph and Timm (1998) state, “It is often assumed that teaching faculty are aware of...the institutional policies and procedures” (p. 63). As evidenced in this study, that is not always the case. Kibler’s (1994) study showed that institutions do not do enough to communicate to faculty about academic misconduct policies in an effective and impactful way. If institutions rely only on written faculty handbooks or one-time orientations (Kibler, 1994, p. 95-96) without consistently and continuously communicating to faculty via multiple forums on this topic, then faculty will be uninformed or under-informed about academic misconduct policies and will be more likely to not utilize them to their benefit.

Multiple methods could be employed to effectively communicate policies, procedures, and resources on academic misconduct to faculty. First, as faculty join the community of an institution, they must be informed of the academic misconduct policies and what resources are available to help them in this area. This cannot simply be a brochure or a faculty handbook they are given to read. It should be communicated, by a person (ideally the staff member responsible for administering the policy), to the faculty to allow time for in-depth information sharing and questions to be answered. This type of in-person presentation at faculty orientation allows new faculty members to have a face and a name they know they can contact with questions later, and it communicates that having standards for academic integrity is important to the institution and should be important to the faculty member.



Second, various forms of passive communication can be developed and distributed to faculty on campus. These can be in the form of websites that detail the policy, the resources, and other helpful information for faculty on addressing academic misconduct. Brochures, fliers, or other prominent paraphernalia could be distributed so that faculty can keep them in their offices or other work spaces to be readily noticed and easily accessible to use as resources. These types of passive educational resources allow faculty to learn about the policies on their own time.

Continual communication is also important. A one-time session at faculty orientation will not help the faculty member who has been at an institution for 15 years and may not be familiar any longer with campus resources for academic misconduct. Alschuler and Blimling (1995) state that “expectations for faculty members should be made clear yearly” (p. 125). Offering “frequent in-service presentations, [or] annual workshops” to keep faculty up to date on the current issues in academic misconduct, current resources available to them, and current best practices on addressing misconduct, including the benefits of using the institutional process, are critical to keep faculty informed on the policies and to keep them comfortable using them when faced with this uncomfortable situation of academic misconduct (Rudolph and Timm, 1998, p. 64). Even brief presentations at an already established faculty meeting could be an effective way to keep faculty current on academic integrity policies and procedures.

This type of continual education is also beneficial for others who teach classes that may not get any type of university orientation, like graduate teaching assistants (Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2001, p. 333). Conducting workshops like these are also one way to engage experienced faculty who have addressed academic misconduct, utilized

their institutional process, and felt the outcome was successful, whether that be through education for the student on academic standards or an academic penalty for the student's misconduct. Experienced faculty can facilitate such workshops, serve on a panel to answer questions and share past experiences, or offer to be a resource to newer faculty or graduate teaching assistants in this area.

Communication about institutional support for faculty reporting academic misconduct is also key. Faculty need to know that when they venture into this territory, they will not be rebuffed for doing so. Alschuler and Blimling (1995) concur saying, "powerful support for faculty should be the institutional norm" (p. 125). However, if faculty are unaware that such institutional support exists, then they are less likely to use institutional processes. The results from this study bear that out. Whitely and Keith-Spiegel (2001) support this by stating, "It is important for administrators to make it as comfortable as possible for faculty members to fulfill their duty to maintain integrity" (p. 334).

### **Policy Development and Revision – Count Faculty In**

Bertram-Gallant and Drinan (2006) in their study on institutionalizing academic integrity found that, "high-level administrators perceive faculty support to be both important and crucial for academic integrity institutionalization" (p. 77). Part of institutionalizing academic integrity to combat academic misconduct is either the development of or revision of academic misconduct policies. Whitley and Keith-Spiegel (2001) state that it is "essential that representatives of all interest groups affected by an institution's academic integrity policy – students, faculty, and student personnel administrators – have a hand in its creation and any subsequent modifications" (p. 326).

Many institutions may have some type of policy or even an honor code in place to address academic misconduct so the opportunity to have faculty participate in policy development may not be available. However, policies cannot be static documents; they must evolve as the institution does and therefore must be revised regularly. McCabe (2005) firmly states, “that any campus that has not reviewed its integrity policies for some time is derelict in its responsibilities to students and likely has a degree of discontent among its faculty” (p. 31). Clearly policy development, and policy review and revision, are important and faculty have a role to play in that.

When developing or revising policy, it is important for institutions to keep in mind that the most streamlined policies, which are also user-friendly, may increase faculty usage of those policies. As noted by several faculty participants, trying to figure out the process for reporting academic misconduct issues can be a time-consuming and frustrating process. If faculty make it that far to figure out how to report an incident, they may be deterred or further frustrated by going through a process that is complicated, lengthy, or does not return good outcomes from their perspective. Here is where an institution can provide support for its faculty by “Administrators...in conjunction with faculty...establish[ing] clearly defined and easily understood policies” (Gehring & Pavela, 1994, p. 11). Simple, streamlined processes will most likely promote faculty usage of them for reporting graduate student academic misconduct. Inclusion of faculty in that development or revision process can help accomplish that goal.

Other means to solicit faculty input and opinions on policy development and revision is through campus surveys and focus groups (Rudolph and Timm, 1998, p. 71). Survey methods may provide a way to gather unfettered faculty opinions on academic

misconduct policies and procedures if the surveys are anonymous. While focus groups are not anonymous, it does allow for faculty to state in their own words, rather than via a likert scale on a survey, what they think is important for academic misconduct policies and may also offer up concerns with current policies and suggestions for remedies. Increased faculty participation in the formation and revision of academic misconduct policies may result in increased use of those policies in addressing academic misconduct when it occurs.

### **Overall Institutional Goals: A Good Outcome**

To improve the outcomes of addressing graduate student academic misconduct, suggestions for institutions have been provided that address what they can do to support good outcomes. What, then, is a good outcome from a graduate student academic misconduct incident? It is one that serves multiple purposes to achieve a greater goal: academic integrity as a norm, not the exception, in the academy. A good outcome addresses misconduct proportionately; there is a mix of education and punishment to effect learning within the student. Institutions “would do better to view most instances of cheating as educational opportunities” and “implement strategies that will help offending students understand the ethical consequences of their behavior” (McCabe, 2005b, p. 30). A first time offender that leaves off a footnote is not expelled from the institution but rather educated in proper citation practices but still eligible for an appropriate academic penalty on the assignment. Misconduct incidents are reported to the institutional process so that students who engage in more than one offense are held appropriately accountable; someone who has cheated for the third time in a semester is not simply given a warning – they are suspended or dismissed from the institution. Serious cheating or second offenses

should be dealt with in a much stronger manner than through simple educational tactics. If applied consistently, a good academic integrity policy can serve as a deterrent for students against cheating and as encouragement for faculty for institutional reporting. (McCabe, 2005b, p. 30).

A good outcome to academic misconduct does not need to be complex to have a profound impact. If policy is written well, it can accomplish a good outcome through easy, streamlined processes. Utilization of institutional processes is key because “If...individual faculty members confront incidents of cheating privately...then we may never be able to change the campus culture that causes it” (Alschuler & Blimling, 1995, p. 123). When faculty ignore academic misconduct, or address it on their own, they “prevent the university from identifying repeat offenders” (Gehring & Pavela, 1994, p. 21). Utilization of the policy is important, and so is consistency. “Administrators and faculty need to be consistent in addressing issues of academic dishonesty” (Bricault, 2007, p. 20). Inconsistent use of the policy or application of its procedures creates unfair, imbalanced standards that students are sure to notice. Any institution in striving to achieve this “good outcome” must consider its institutional culture and mission as it is hard to “find the appropriate balance between punishment” and education to “build a community of trust...between students and faculty...where academic integrity is the norm” (McCabe, 2005b, p. 31).

### **Limitations**

There are some limitations of this study, some of which were addressed in Chapter 3. The interview questions were not piloted with a test group of faculty to gather feedback on their appropriateness, wording, and if they gathered the information needed

to answer the research questions. This should absolutely be done in further studies like this. Focus groups could have been used to pilot the interview questions, but given the nature and topic of the study, the dialogue may not have been as open as it was in a one-on-one interview and less information may have been shared. Overall in a focus group the most honest answers may not have been presented as participants may have perceived that their peers would judge them negatively based upon how they answered questions.

While participant observation is a good method to gather additional information and use to triangulate data, that was not considered feasible for this study. Due to the nature of the research questions and the subject matter, it would be hard to predict when exactly a graduate student might engage in academic misconduct, or when faculty might discover it, to then observe a faculty member's reaction. Additionally, observing faculty interact with students in the course of discussing the academic misconduct would certainly create an artificial environment that would lessen the natural flow of the conversation between the faculty member and the students.

In retrospect, one question that this study did not ask, and should have, was how often or how many times the faculty participants had encountered graduate student academic misconduct. Some level of frequency of encountering graduate student academic misconduct could have been deduced from some of the participants' answers, but not all. There are two participants that indicated that they had only encountered one incident of graduate student academic misconduct, but the remaining participants did not provide that information as they were not asked. Obtaining a more complete picture on the frequency of graduate student academic misconduct encountered by faculty participants could have provided some better perspective and context for participants'

answers on how they felt about discovering academic misconduct, how they addressed academic misconduct, and if they chose to report it or not to their institutional process. While not knowing this answer does not negate the findings of this study, having this answer could have enhanced the understanding of some of the participants' answers and added more depth to the findings. Future studies would benefit from knowing this information.

Another limitation of this study that may have enhanced the findings was the researcher failing to ask faculty participants about their satisfaction with the outcomes of their graduate student academic misconduct incidents. In the course of the interview, each faculty participant shared a specific incident of graduate student academic misconduct, the details of what happened, how the incident was resolved, including the outcome or penalty for that incident. What was missing was follow-up on the faculty participant's perception of that outcome; if they felt it was a good outcome or a poor outcome. Additionally, no follow up was done with participants on their perception of the outcome in relation to their use (or non-use) of their institutional process. Did faculty participants, who used their institutional process, feel like they had a better outcome? Did faculty participants who did not use their institutional process feel like they had a better outcome? There was no measure of the faculty participant's satisfaction of the outcome of the academic misconduct incident which could have provided more depth to the findings of the final research question regarding factors influencing faculty to use their institutional process to report academic misconduct.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There is more to understand about faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct, particularly in how they choose to address it and if one of those options is through their university process. The same study could be replicated with business faculty, but at more institutions with less geographic restrictions. This could help determine if geography played a role at all in some of the findings that came from this study. It could also explore different university processes and how faculty perceive them and if they choose to use them.

It would also be beneficial to replicate this study with more than one “type” of faculty. It would be important to know if there are any commonalities among faculty experiences with academic misconduct regardless of their status. One comparison to make would be the experiences of tenured faculty and tenure-track faculty in addressing academic misconduct. Does the tenure process and the requirements that go with it impact how tenure-track faculty address academic misconduct that might be different than how tenured faculty address it? Another comparison would be to compare tenured faculty experiences with academic misconduct to the experiences of non-tenure track faculty. Does that status distinction impact how each of those faculty address academic misconduct? Another group of faculty that could be studied on their own would be adjunct faculty. What are their perceptions of academic misconduct and how do they address it? Does the nature of their employment as adjunct faculty impact how they address academic misconduct? Those findings might be very different than what was found in this study.



To expand on this current study, it would also be important to conduct research with faculty from different academic disciplines. The nature and experiences of graduate students vary from areas within the humanities, social sciences, and the hard sciences like engineering or chemistry. The type of work these students do, and how faculty approach the education of these graduate students, is most likely different in these other disciplines than in business. Additionally, interviewing faculty who teach in professional graduate programs like pharmacy, law, or medicine would be critical to building on this current research to note where the similarities and differences are in the findings.

Along similar lines, the same study could be done, but at other institutional types that offer graduate programs. Research institutions are not the only type of institution to offer graduate programs, but certainly their culture may be different than a Master's College or University (a Carnegie Classification). Even though similar programs may be offered, like a Master's of Business Administration, there might be different environmental factors at play that influence how faculty perceive and address academic misconduct by graduate students at that type of institution.

One area of research that would focus on just one of this study's research questions was further exploring how faculty define academic misconduct, and exploring how graduate students define academic misconduct. The graduate students could be delineated as masters' students and doctoral students to mirror the distinction outlined in the findings here. Comparing the answers of faculty and graduate students could help understand where any gaps may be between faculty and graduate students in understanding what academic misconduct is. Unfortunately, no research has been found

that asked graduate students and graduate faculty how they define academic misconduct to then compare those answers, so this type of study would fill that gap.

There are other variations on future research that could be done based on the findings of this study. What could be considered a tangential study would be one that focused solely on how faculty learned about their institution's process and the resources available to help them address graduate student academic misconduct. Based on this study's findings, there seems to be an inconsistency, even within the same institution, on what the process is and what resources are available to help faculty address this issue. Exploring how faculty are educated about these things could reveal some gaps in institutional process and policy, and provide suggestions for bridging them.

Another tangential study could be exploring faculty preparation programs. Did faculty learn or have an opportunity to learn about addressing academic misconduct in their future classrooms while still a doctoral student? If so, how was that information communicated or what was the opportunity presented? If not, what do faculty feel the impact of that gap in their formal education is as they are dealing with academic misconduct now? Any of these studies would add to better understanding on how faculty feel about addressing graduate student academic misconduct.

One final suggestion for further study is an issue mentioned by a few faculty participants on the problem of doctoral students and subsequently junior faculty plagiarizing in their articles or falsifying data in their research in an effort to get published and establish careers or be awarded tenure. One faculty member called this "perverse incentives" that may lead doctoral students or junior faculty to fall into these temptations in order to obtain that "guaranteed job" for the rest of their lives (RII-C).

Diving deeper into their motivations, or even exploring the tenure process as it relates to this part of it could provide information on how to better deter that type of behavior so faculty do not ruin their careers at the beginning.

### **Conclusion**

Graduate student academic misconduct is an issue, and the faculty participants in this study are addressing it. The way in which they address it varies depending on their personal perspectives and prior experiences, insight and advice from their peers, and the knowledge they have about institutional resources and options. Discovering this information through qualitative interviews adds to the growing body of knowledge on faculty perceptions of academic misconduct and how they address it, particularly with graduate students. Despite this researcher's attempt to gather in-depth information from faculty via individual interviews, there still seems to be some pieces missing to help better understand this topic; something that was not asked. One piece, mentioned in the limitations section, was the faculty participants' perception of the outcome of incidents and their satisfaction with that outcome. Perhaps the issues focused on were not the only contributing factors toward faculty deciding to report academic misconduct to their institutions or not. Most likely there were other factors at play that did not emerge.

This study presented some answers to why faculty address graduate student academic misconduct the way they do and why they may choose to report it or not through their institutional process. This critical "why" fills the gap in the literature that aids in better understanding, in faculty's own words, why they make these choices in addressing graduate students academic misconduct. Perhaps the findings could be generalized to business faculty at other Research I institutions with similar programs.

However, each faculty member brings their own unique experiences that shape how they view misconduct, and how they feel about misconduct, and how they will deal with misconduct once confronted with it. There are too many variables to account for or isolate, but they should not be isolated if an accurate, if not in depth and slightly messy, picture is to be formed of what makes faculty make the decisions they do. Their personal experiences and backgrounds are different, their goals for teaching and research are different, their roles are different, and who they teach is different. All of these things impact their decision making.

However, if this topic is explored further, changes can be made institutionally that help faculty with this “very salient, highly negative aspect” of their jobs. Systems can change. Support can change. Education can change. Outcomes can change. However, one system does not fit all. Each institution’s mission, values, and culture must be accounted for when looking to make changes like that. Faculty must be a part of that conversation as long as they continue to be the ones on the front lines setting standards in the classrooms and finding the misconduct. As Kibler (1994) claimed, “Faculty are the most critical persons on campus in preventing academic dishonesty. They are in the best position to communicate and enforce standards and expectations” (p. 101).

How faculty are included in policy development and how they are communicated the policy and their role and expectations within that is important. Faculty are expected to detail their standards to their students. The institution should be just as explicit with faculty when it comes to academic integrity policies, but not just telling faculty what the expectations are, it also includes faculty in designing what they look like. Additionally, if there is to be a process that requires faculty to report academic misconduct, then the

university must have the supports and resources in place to assist those faculty through that process. This is not symbolic support, but actual support. Addressing graduate student academic misconduct is an “expensive” process in terms of many intangibles like time, effort, emotion, conflict, and resources, but institutions must make the investment worth it.

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## APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER

Study Title: How Faculty Address Academic Misconduct with Graduate Students

Dear \_\_\_\_,

As a graduate faculty member, what would you do if one of your graduate students cheated on their comprehensive exams or plagiarized their thesis or dissertation? Will you help me answer that question?

Hello! My name is Kelly Eifert and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policies at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Educational Administration, and I invite you to participate.

I am studying faculty perceptions of academic misconduct, particularly at the graduate level. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview about your views on academic misconduct at the graduate level and your experiences with it. The meeting will take place on your campus at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 30 to 45 minutes.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or via email at USERID@email.sc.edu, or my faculty advisor, Dr. Christian Anderson, (803-777-XXXX, USERID@sc.edu) if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of South Carolina at 803-777-7095.

Thank you for your consideration. I will follow up via email in one week to discuss your participation in this project.

With kind regards,

Kelly Imbert Eifert  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX  
USERID@email.sc.edu

## APPENDIX B: FOLLOW UP EMAIL SENT TO INSTITUTION RI

**Subject:** Follow up – research study participation  
(*one week after mailing of Invitation Letter*)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Hello! Hopefully by now you have received an Invitation letter in the mail from me regarding participation in my research study on faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct. I hope you have given participation some consideration and are willing to briefly talk or email with me to determine if you are eligible to participate in this study.

Please respond to this email to let me know if you are interested in participating in the study or if you no longer wish to be contacted by me. Please let me know your response no later than (*3 days from date of email*).

Thank you again for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Kelly Imbert Eifert  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX  
USERID@email.sc.edu

## APPENDIX C: FOLLOW UP EMAIL SENT TO INSTITUTIONS RII AND RIII

**Subject:** Follow up – research study participation  
(one week after mailing of Invitation Letter)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Hello! Hopefully by now you have received an Invitation letter in the mail from me regarding participation in my research study on faculty perceptions of graduate student academic misconduct. I hope you have given participation some consideration and I would like to see if you meet my 4 qualifying criteria for participation. They should take one minute to answer and they are:

1. Are you full time faculty (regardless if you are tenured, tenure-track, or non-tenure track)?
2. Do you teach and/or advise graduate students?
3. Have you taught at least three years?
4. Have you encountered any type of academic misconduct by a graduate student (whether in a class or in an advising capacity, such as thesis or dissertation work, or other academic related endeavors)?

If you can answer yes to all 4 questions, then you are eligible to participate in my study – if you are interested. Please respond to this email to let me know if you are interested in participating in the study or if you no longer wish to be contacted by me. Please let me know your response no later than **(3 days from date of email)**.

Thank you again for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Kelly Imbert Eifert  
Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Administration  
University of South Carolina  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX  
USERID@email.sc.edu

## APPENDIX D: CRITERIA FOR FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN STUDY

Faculty must meet the following criteria to participate:

1. Be a member of the business faculty
2. Be full time (either tenure/tenure-track or non-tenure track)
3. Have graduate teaching responsibilities and/or advising responsibilities
4. Have encountered academic misconduct by a graduate student

### Faculty Information:

Contacted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Tenured/Tenure-Track: \_\_\_\_\_ Non-tenured: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Years Teaching: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

Meet Criteria: Y \_\_\_\_\_ N \_\_\_\_\_

If No, reason for exclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Contact Information:

Office phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

### **Dear Faculty Participant,**

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Educational Administration in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policies at the University of South Carolina.

I am studying faculty perceptions of academic misconduct, particularly at the graduate level. In particular, this study will ask questions about your views on teaching graduate students, how you view your role with graduate students, your experiences with academic misconduct by graduate students and how you addressed it.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES**

As a participant, you will be asked to meet with me for an interview about your views on academic misconduct at the graduate level and your experiences with it. The meeting will take place on your campus at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 30 to 45 minutes. This interview will be audiotaped to ensure I capture an accurate record of our discussion. I will be transcribing the interview and will send it to you for review once the transcription is completed. No one other than myself will listen to or have access to the recording.

### **RISKS OF PARTICIPATION**

You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to.

### **BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

Although you may not benefit directly from participating in this study, I hope that others in the academic community in general will benefit by further understanding of faculty perceptions of academic misconduct.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at my home. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason, without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a

confidential manner. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please call or email the Kelly Eifert at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or USERID@email.sc.edu.

You will have a chance to ask questions about this research study and to have them answered to your satisfaction. If you have any more questions about your participation in this study or study related injury, you may contact Kelly Eifert at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or via email at USERID@email.sc.edu.

If you have any questions, problems, or concerns, desire further information or wish to offer input, you may contact Lisa Johnson, IRB Manager, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, Phone - (803) 777-XXXX, Fax - (803) 576-5589, USERID@mailbox.sc.edu This includes any questions about your rights as a research subject in this study.

This letter is for your own records and no signatures are required.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this research study and I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Kelly Imbert Eifert  
Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Administration  
Department of Educational Leadership & Policies  
College of Education  
University of South Carolina  
USERID@email.sc.edu

## APPENDIX F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Researcher will begin with introductions and a review of the consent letter, answering any questions from the participant. Participant will keep the letter for his/her records. Researcher will then gain consent for audio recording the interview.*

I am interested in the faculty perceptions of academic misconduct at the graduate level, particularly in how faculty address it when it occurs. To help me understand faculty perceptions, I am interested in your perception of your role as faculty with graduate students, your expectations of graduate students, and your views on academic misconduct. In sharing experiences, please keep the information of any other persons' involved in the experience/incident anonymous.

I have questions to ask, but please feel free to offer additional information that you think will help me better understand your thoughts and perceptions.

### Introduction

1. How long have you been a professor?
2. What drew you to academia?
3. What are some of the best things about being a professor?
4. What are some of the worst things?
5. What are things you have experienced that you did not feel prepared for (either from your doctoral program or from any orientation/training/mentorship you received)?
6. How do you view your role in working with graduate students?
7. How do you view graduate students – what is their role?
8. What do you enjoy about working with graduate students?
9. What do you not enjoy about working with graduate students?
  
10. What is your institutional policy on academic misconduct/cheating?
11. What is your college's policy and/or practice on academic misconduct/cheating?
12. What is your department's policy and/or practice on academic misconduct/cheating?
13. What is your personal experience with academic misconduct/cheating?
  
14. When working with graduate students, do you think that academic misconduct is an issue?
15. How do you define academic misconduct for your graduate students?
16. How do you define academic integrity/scholarship for your graduate students?
17. How do you communicate each definition to your graduate students?



18. Have you ever encountered a graduate student who engaged in academic misconduct?
  - a. If yes, please describe the incident/nature of misconduct
19. How did you address the behavior?
20. How did that encounter go? What was the student's reaction?
21. Have you reported graduate student academic misconduct per your institutional policy?
22. Describe the process.
23. What was your reaction to the process?
24. What was the outcome like?
25. Would you report it via policy again should you encounter academic misconduct again?
26. Why or why not?
27. What else would you like to share about your experiences with graduate academic misconduct?

Thank you so much for your time and insight today. I will be transcribing our interview and will send you that transcript for review via email within three weeks. Please send me back any comments within three weeks of receipt of your transcript. I may also contact you via phone for a brief follow up to our conversation today. Are there any final questions about this study that I may answer for you?

If you would like to receive the results of this study, please let me know and I would be happy to share them with you.

## APPENDIX G: THEMES AND SUB-THEMES USED IN CODING DATA

Theme	Sub-theme	Number of Sources	Number of References
Masters' students		17	142
	*Faculty perception of their status	13	20
	Enjoy	7	8
	Not Enjoy	1	2
	*Faculty role with them	9	13
PhD Students		16	81
	*Faculty perception of their status	7	8
	*Enjoy	8	9
	Not Enjoy	2	2
	*Faculty role with them	11	14
Feelings		18	96
	*About Academic Misconduct	16	26
	*Discovering Misconduct	10	23
	About University Process	6	10
	Department-College support	3	6
*Academic Misconduct an Issue		18	38
	PhD Students	8	10
	Masters' students	11	18
Drew to Academia		17	30
Best things		17	27
*Define Misconduct		17	67
How and When discuss Misconduct		18	76
	*On syllabus	13	17
	*On or before exams	8	9
	*In class conversation	11	15
	Orientation program	1	2
	Do not discuss	3	3
	On or with assignments	3	4
	One on one with students	2	3

*\*Denotes a theme or subtheme used in the analysis*

Theme	Sub-theme	Number of Sources	Number of References
Addressing misconduct		18	140
	*Penalties	16	31
	*Handle themselves	7	12
	*Use process	12	22
	*Seek Advice	10	11
	Meet with students	6	7
	Perceptions of process	8	24
	*Personal perspectives	11	26
	Lack of proof	3	5
Decision to Report		18	150
	*Prior experiences	9	29
	Required	4	9
	Peer Advice	6	9
	*Perception of process	17	43
	Lack of Proof	3	5
	Program perceptions	4	5
	*Knowledge of process	13	33
	Personal standards	3	5
Syllabus Statement		16	17
	*Yes	14	15
	*No	2	2
Plagiarism		7	12
International students		9	19
Students seeking help		6	12

*\*Denotes a theme or subtheme used in the analysis*