

# Higher education sees rise in dishonesty

By JUSTIN POPE, AP Education Writer *Sat May 19, 6:28 PM ET*

There were historic breakthroughs, such as the selection of Harvard's first woman president, and there was tragedy — the horrific shooting spree at Virginia Tech.

But if the academic year now winding down had a theme, it was a more subtle one: dishonesty.

Consider:

- Nine MBA students at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business faced expulsion, and 25 others lesser punishments, for their roles in an exam-cheating scandal — the most high-profile of several this year.

Nine students were dismissed and another 37 given lesser punishments for cheating on an exam at Indiana University's dental school. At the U.S. Air Force Academy, 18 were expelled and 13 placed on probation. And Ohio University continued to deal with the fallout of a report that found "rampant and flagrant" plagiarism by graduate students in its mechanical engineering department.

- Marilee Jones, a popular and admired dean of admissions at MIT, resigned after admitting she had fabricated her resume when she first applied to work at MIT in the 1970s and never corrected the record. Jones was a prominent campaigner to help students reduce their anxiety about impressing and applying to top colleges, and the revelations stunned the admissions community.

- An investigation by New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo called into question whether students really get honest advice from college officials who are supposed to help them navigate the maze of financial aid. Cuomo's investigation and The New America Foundation, a think-tank, have exposed conflicts of interest among a handful of financial aid officers and loan companies.

Several officials at prominent schools have been suspended while their stock ownership in loan companies is investigated. On Monday, the University of Texas fired its financial aid director, Lawrence Burt.

Why do these cases matter in a higher education universe where America has more than 17 million college students at 4,000 schools? Aren't some people bound to dishonesty for the sake of wealth or prestige?

Perhaps, but scholars say there is still reason to be concerned.

"Yes, we ought to hold people to those kinds of standards, and higher education ought to be scrutinized around that agenda," said Marvin Kaiser, dean of liberal arts and sciences at Portland State University in

Oregon and executive director of the Society for Values in Higher Education.

Because colleges are the training ground for future leaders, "we have to be role models ourselves," said Kaiser. "We have to create expectations about what it means to be ethical and honest. It's about our behavior and how we run our own institutions, but also what kind of a populace we're creating for the future."

Even cases of simple human failings — like the Rutgers senior class president who was recently charged in a string of dorm burglaries — are an embarrassment.

Kaiser said many colleges are talking seriously about the teaching of values. But he acknowledges there is a big difference between talking about values in a curriculum and instilling them in students.

Cheating is a case in point. While a number of colleges have instilled honor codes in recent years, overall there is little instruction about cheating or systematic attempt to combat it. It is very difficult to measure, but clearly widespread, with one study reporting as many as 70 percent of undergraduates admit at least one instance of cheating.

"I think the ... more frightening figure is the fact that 20 (percent) to 25 percent admit to five or more (instances of cheating)," said Tim Dodd, executive director of the Center for Academic Integrity, which is based at Duke. "The fact that we have a quarter of more of our students admitting they've engaged in serial cheating does not inspire a lot of confidence about the credibility of their degrees."

After the Enron scandals, business schools in particular rushed into the curriculum and heavily publicized a wave of courses designed to prepare students for the ethical dilemmas of the business world. But students don't seem to be getting the message about ethics while they're still in the classroom.

A study published last fall by Donald McCabe, a Rutgers professor who has studied cheating for decades, and two co-authors found 56 percent of MBA students admitted cheating, along with 54 percent of graduate students in engineering, 48 percent in education, and 45 percent in law.

McCabe emphasizes the difficulties of measuring trends in cheating, but the undergraduate numbers at the same 32 universities he studied appear even worse: 74 percent of business students, and 68 percent in nonbusiness fields admitted to some form of cheating.

"I'm past the 'epidemic' language," McCabe said in a telephone interview. "I've been looking at this so long I'm used to it."

The concern is that some schools are used to it, too. Aggressive action against cheating stirs up lawsuits, bad publicity, and — if a student is expelled — costs money in lost revenue. Tuition for the nine students facing expulsion at Duke amounts to about \$370,000 per year.

That's why McCabe and Dodd both commended Duke for its response. MIT and Texas also took tough stands, insisting that two veteran administrators lose their jobs.

But Dodd wants a much wider range of college leaders to stop tiptoeing around issues of honor and honesty on campus.

"It has to happen at the presidential level," he said. "You don't see presidents gathering at their conference and their symposia, saying, 'We need to take a hard look at this.' The way they embraced multiculturalism years ago, the way they embraced internationalism, they need to come together and embrace integrity."

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