

Academic Behavior Code
Survey Results and Recommendations
Executive Summary
Fall 2010

During the 2009-2010 academic year the Academic Judicial Board (AJB) implemented a study that intended to gauge student and faculty perceptions about the efficacy of the current Academic Behavior Code (ABC). The AJB administered a survey and pre-survey focus groups to gather and analyze information in the Spring semester of 2010 and prepare a report in the summer of 2010. AJB members conducted two student and two faculty focus groups in April 2010. Twenty-three students and fifteen faculty/staff participated in the Focus Groups. Additionally, a separate faculty and student survey was created following feedback from the Focus Groups. Both surveys yielded a good response rate of 516 (38%) students and 96 (50%) faculty. A summary of the results are reported below. In general, the results suggest that the faculty do not consistently implement or enforce the ABC, which results in a lack of clear expectations among students.

1. Over 65% of student respondents to the survey said they were very aware of the ABC at Muhlenberg. The most frequently cited source of this information was from faculty (46%), followed by First Year Orientation (25%) and FYS/Writing Assistants (20%). Conversely, 72% of students said they learned “little to nothing” from the campus website or through Deans or other administrators.
2. Faculty, on the other hand, were most likely to cite Deans or other administrators as their source for information about the ABC (57%), followed by other faculty (45%) and the faculty handbook (41%). Only 6% said they learned about the ABC from the campus website, and only 13% learned about it from their Department Chair.
3. Faculty and students disagreed regarding the extent to which specific ABC violations are discussed in class. Regarding cheating, 42% of students reported that faculty “never” or “very seldom” discuss these policies. However, 87% of faculty reported that they do discuss cheating during exams. 21% of faculty said they do not discuss cheating with their classes while only 9% of faculty said cheating during exams is not relevant to their courses.
4. Similar results were found for the violation of collusion; 56% of students reported that faculty “never” or “very seldom” discussed collusion while only 15% of faculty for whom collusion is relevant to their classes said that they do not discuss collusion with their classes.
5. Less than 50% of students reported that faculty “often” or “very often” discuss plagiarism – about 35% of students stated that faculty “seldom” or “sometimes” discuss plagiarism. Conversely, only 2% of faculty said that they do not discuss their policy on plagiarism at all with their classes.
6. About 61% of students reported that faculty “never” or “very seldom” discuss their policies regarding helping or hindering other students in class; while only 36% of faculty reported that they do not discuss these policies with their classes, with 7% noting this was not relevant to their courses.
7. Falsifying information was the least discussed by faculty with students. About 70% of students and 46% of faculty reported that they do not discuss this policy in class.
8. Regarding ABC compliance, while 72% of faculty respondents said that they “often” or “very often” require students to state that they are in compliance when taking exams or completing assignments, only 40% of students reported that faculty always require them to sign that they are in ABC compliance in such circumstances.

9. As a safeguard against ABC violations 67% of faculty change their exams regularly, 67% closely monitor exams, and 76% note clearly their expectations on how work is to be completed on their syllabi.
10. Faculty and students differed on their perceptions of the frequency of ABC violations. Faculty were most likely to believe that plagiarism occurs “very often” to “often” (41%) followed by collusion (39%). Students were more likely to perceive that collusion occurs (33%) followed by helping or hindering other students (31%).
11. Data on actual witnessing (“evidence”) of violation of ABC also showed discrepancies among faculty and students. While about 6% of faculty responded that they saw student(s) cheat during exams several or many times, 27% of students also responded so. Faculty were more likely to have witnessed plagiarism (29%) versus 14% of students. On the other hand, students were more likely to witness students helping or hindering others, (13% of faculty versus 38% of students).
12. When students knew of a violation of the code, 56% of them stated that they would not report a fellow student.
13. 37% of faculty have ignored a suspected incident of ABC violation in his/her course. The primary reason cited (78% response) was a lack of evidence/proof. The secondary reason (31%) was that the cheating was trivial/not serious. 57% of faculty respondents referred a suspected case of ABC violation to his/her Chair, Dean or someone else. Of those that did report, 84% were satisfied or very satisfied by the way the cases were handled.
14. 71% of faculty respondents indicated that their “most likely reaction” to a student violating the ABC in their course would be to “fail the student on the test or assignment.” Additionally, 64% of faculty respondents would “report the student to the Dean of the College for Academic Life” for such a violation. Only 3% would “do nothing about the incident.”
15. Students and faculty diverged on what they deemed to be appropriate sanctions for students after a first violation of the ABC. 83% of faculty suggested that the student should fail the assignment, while only 58% of students agreed with this sanction. Only 20% of faculty and 3% of students felt that violators of the ABC should fail the course.
16. For a second violation, 69% of faculty and 51% of student respondents felt that failing the course was the appropriate sanction while only 35% of faculty and only 12% of students recommended a semester’s suspension. Finally, 17% of faculty and only 2% of students deemed that expulsion was an appropriate sanction for a second violation.
17. 32% of students were somewhat aware while about 20% were not aware of the College Academic Judicial Process. The most commonly cited sources of information where students “learned some” about the Academic Judicial Process are First Year Orientation (46% response), other students (45%), student handbook (37%), faculty (36%) and FYS/Writing Assistant (33%). Only 16% learned “some” from the campus web site.
18. Regarding perceptions of the Academic Judicial Process, 49% of students and 42% of faculty respondents were not sure whether the Academic Judicial Process is fair and impartial while 37% of students and 42% of faculty responded that they think the judicial process is fair and impartial. 44% of students and 53% of faculty are not sure whether faculty members are vigilant in discovering and reporting suspected cases of academic dishonesty.