



**Final Summary Report of the
Academic Integrity Task Force
2020-2021 AY**

*"Academic Integrity is a shared responsibility
among UNT faculty, students and staff."*



The Academic Integrity Task Force (AITF) was charged by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to assess the current state of affairs regarding academic integrity at the University of North Texas by obtaining comments and concerns from faculty, administrators, and students, reviewing extant data, benchmarking peers, and to ultimately make recommendations for change in policy, processes, and practices regarding academic integrity. The AITF undertook the following to fulfill its charge:

Resources Reviewed

- Current policy 06.003 Student Academic Integrity (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>)
- Historical data from 2017 AY to present day regarding violation of the Academic Integrity Policy

Data collected

- Surveys taken of the faculty body as well as undergraduate student population, while focus groups of concentrated graduate students were conducted.

Benchmarking Policies and Practices

- **Texas Peers** – University of Houston, University of Texas – Arlington, Texas Tech University.
- **Comparable Peers** – University of Oklahoma, George Mason University, University of Wisconsin Madison
- **Aspirational Peers** – Arizona State University, Georgia State University, University of California – Santa Barbara

Aggregating Resources

- Canvas Modules – prefabricated modules for academic integrity available in the Canvas Commons.
- Library Resources – educational seminars and workshops for students instructed by library faculty.

Following a collective review of the aggregated information, the AITF has made the following determinations:

The addition of the graduate assistant in the Office of Academic Integrity this academic year has been a great success. It has aided in the expediency and accuracy of processing cases, conducting necessary research, and facilitating communication. It has allowed for AI Officers to focus more directly on meeting with students and to offer assistance faculty and administrators. This practice should continue.

We believe the overwhelming majority of our students engage in their academic pursuits with the earnest intention to learn, grow, and prepare themselves for the professional world following life at the University. Yet despite good intentions, it appears that personal, social, and academic pressures create situations in which some students opt to engage in acts of academic dishonesty. The following are among the primary reasons for this behavior:

- Difficulty understanding the concepts
- Struggles in accessing the material in a meaningful way
- Overly full and busy schedules, sometimes involving work and family responsibilities
- A lack of interest in the course material (e.g. out of line with professional pursuits)
- Increasingly easy access to illicit materials and decreasing stigma around engaging in academic dishonesty

We believe the overwhelming majority of our faculty are passionate about student learning, as well as promoting the academic rigor of the University as an R1 institution. However, due personal, social, and academic pressures, faculty feel a lack of support, training, and incentive to promote the academic integrity policy as put forth by the University. The following are among the primary reasons for this behavior:

- Ignorance of the expectations put forward in the policy
- Inadequate training regarding academic integrity procedures
- Lack of departmental/college level support for accountability
- Concern regarding “blowback” from students or colleagues

In consideration of the work done over the last year, the AITF offers the following recommendations be implemented at the University of North Texas.

AITF Recommendations

1. Newly structured office, staffed with a full-time position to oversee academic integrity issues. Much of the rest of the advised changes hinge upon the ability of an FTE 1.0 member of the University taking up the mantle for academic integrity work. In addition to a practical necessity, this recommendation is also in line with our status as an R1 institution of rising caliber. The threat that academic dishonesty poses to the forward progress of our university is grave.
2. Clear statement of best practices and guidance from this office for how to prevent academic dishonesty issues before they happen, e.g., modify assignments, tutorials on plagiarism, etc. A resource for best practice should be developed with a focus on handling cheating in online classes; e.g. alternative types of exams and assessments that can be offered, such as critical thinking, rotating exam questions, timed exams, exams that are more difficult and allow students to have some notes or even open-book.
 3. Clear illustration of policy (e.g., creation of FAQs) so participants (students, faculty, administrators) better understand the process.
 4. Academic Integrity liaisons from each college/school; larger colleges would have more than one with a recommendation of at least one liaison per 100 faculty members. These liaisons would be
 - a. Appointed by the Dean to serve as a resource to college faculty with AI processes, able to answer basic policy/process questions while serving to connect faculty to resources in the Academic Integrity Office when appropriate.
 - b. These duties would count as service toward annual faculty requirements.
 - c. This appointment could be non-tenure or tenure track faculty.
 - d. Training would be conducted initially by the AI team (Full-time staff and Academic Integrity Officers currently serving).
 - e. Liaisons would meet each semester with the AI team and as needed during the semester.
 - f. Estimated annual time commitment for such a position would be 7-12 hours depending the level of AI activity in the college.
 5. Increase the college and departmental awareness of the availability of Academic Integrity Officers to collaborate with, and present to, faculty regarding the academic integrity policy and processes.

6. Ensure that faculty are aware of resources regarding the training of academic integrity available for students and that these should be included in the design of the course. Listing policy in the syllabus is not enough. In addition to these suggestions, syllabi need to have greater depth of specificity on what is needed to address AI issues in each particular class.
7. Ensure that international students in particular understand AI policies, which may be different in their home countries. This needs to extend beyond detail on syllabi. A partnership between the International Students Office and the Office of Academic Integrity must be established and maintained.
8. Faculty require further education around the rights and responsibilities of students, such as how the AI Office cannot inform them of the outcome of meetings with students and the reasons (FERPA, due process, etc.) these outcomes are confidential.
9. The AITF recommends the adoption of a universal honor code statement for UNT students. Additionally, one possible method faculty can use is to get students to sign individual or specific honor code or an agreement that they will not cheat/plagiarize/facilitate/etc.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY TASK FORCE

CONVENED ON BEHALF OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE FACULTY SENATE

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