Our charge: "investigating PCC's current practices and values as related to issues of student academic integrity, with the goal of promoting and sustaining a culture of academic integrity at the college"

Introduction

Higher education in the United States is built on several key values, including academic freedom, responsibility and authority of the faculty in the classroom, and academic integrity. Integrity has been identified as far back as Aristotle as a key characteristic of the ideal person, and academic integrity is key to being a model scholar. Faculty members at Portland Community College value academic integrity.

College students in our system of higher education must learn to recognize, value and respect the intellectual property of others, in the various forms in which they are presented. Becoming ethical participants in education, the workplace, and society requires that college students understand and practice academic integrity.

In order for students to understand and value academic integrity, faculty must teach -- and assess -- standards of academic integrity in the context of their discipline, and faculty must guide students to understand and accept the challenges presented in meeting these standards. Institutionally, this means having and supporting clear and consistent policies and expectations of academic integrity, so that the integrity of the courses completed, and degrees and certificates awarded, is assured.

This task force began with a few faculty members who were interested in improving the academic dishonesty reporting process. Administrators, APs, and students brought additional perspectives. At the same time, we began to see that academic integrity involves everyone. Concerns identified through our task force process include: lack of understanding of PCC’s reporting and sanction system for academic dishonesty, worry that reporting a problem would
result in retaliation via instructor evaluations, uncertainty about how students would be affected if dishonesty was reported, and a general belief that reports gathered dust in a file drawer and would not be used to identify patterns of behavior. The results of faculty and student surveys conducted for PCC by the International Center for Academic Integrity are attached.

In order to build a culture of academic integrity with clear expectations and consistent practices at PCC, we make one major recommendation and identify four key areas of concern to faculty. In making this recommendation, we acknowledge that academic integrity is a joint responsibility. We know that many diverse places in the organization are working on this, but the efforts are fragmented, siloed, and not well understood. The Priorities listed under the major recommendation are immediate points of concern that have been raised in our research efforts and need specific attention.
Recommendation:

**PCC should establish a single point of responsibility for Academic Integrity, whether an Office of Academic Integrity or another centralized entity.**

**Statement:** At present, responsibility for creating and enhancing a culture of academic integrity at PCC is distributed among faculty, students, staff, and administrators. No leader is responsible for ensuring that the entire PCC community receives the education and support to grow a flourishing academic integrity culture, exemplified by the Integrity Pyramid model task force members learned about at an International Center for Academic Integrity Conference:

![Integrity Pyramid Diagram](image)

A single responsible entity would work with faculty and students to promote and develop a culture of academic integrity through education and outreach, be a resource for faculty interested in preventing academic dishonesty, and support faculty and staff dealing with violations and process issues. Most Oregon community colleges appear to assign this responsibility to Student Affairs. At PCC, the ongoing work to update student conduct policies and processes includes conduct related to violations of academic integrity rules.
Priorities: As the task force has looked into these issues, several concerns have surfaced repeatedly. We identify these four priority areas of concern for PCC’s academic integrity efforts.

Priority 1:
PCC should formalize the academic integrity violation process into an online form similar to the students of concern form.

Statement: The academic integrity violation process is confusing and rarely followed to completion; faculty members express concern about the many steps necessary and the lack of a visible result. The college may be unaware of repeat violations or the frequency or extent of violations because the process is disconnected, confusing, and relies on multiple areas of the college to complete. The Student Code of Conduct Review Workgroup is currently working on policy and procedure improvement, and is in agreement that the reporting form should be easy to use, and that reports should be integrated into the same system used for student conduct reports.

Implementation Issues: A process flow chart was developed by former Cascade Associate Dean of Student Development Joe Fischer, which has been implemented to some extent. This flowchart has been shared with the Student Code of Conduct Review Workgroup, and it is our hope that an online form for academic integrity violation reporting will become available in the near future.

Priority 2:
PCC should add options for educational responses to academic integrity violations.

Statement: According to PCC’s current academic integrity policy (as described in the PCC Student Rights and Responsibilities website, http://www.pcc.edu/about/policy/student-rights/#academic-integrity, instructors have only the following options when a violation of the academic integrity policy occurs:

- confer with the student and close the matter,
- issue a verbal or written warning, a grade of “F” or “NP” for the assignment,
or (after a hearing with the division dean) issue a grade of “F” or “NP” for the class.

An additional option for the instructor to require a student to rewrite a paper for a lower (but non-zero) grade or to require some additional learning and reflection about academic integrity would provide important learning opportunities and would reflect a pyramid approach to academic integrity. This is one example of an educational response policy which better meets PCC’s needs:

The following academic penalties may be assessed at the instructor’s discretion upon determination that academic honesty has occurred. Admonitions and educational assignments are not appealable:

- Admonition: The student may be issued a verbal or written warning.
- Assignment of Educational Coursework: The student may be required to perform additional coursework not required of other student in the specific course.
- Partial or no credit for an assignment, assessment or course grade: The instructor may award partial or no credit for the assignment or assessment on which the student engaged in academic dishonesty, to be calculated into the final course grade.
- Adjustment of final course grade: The instructor may assign a lower course grade.


Implementation Issues: The Student Development Committee (SDC) will need to discuss and as appropriate adjust the Student Code of Conduct, which is contained within the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. Within that framework, individual instructors can use their judgment, and/or certain SACs may want to set particular guidelines, taking into account their own discipline’s needs and standards. Very strong sanctions (such as a failing grade for a class) should be reserved for students showing a pattern of repeated offenses, and subject to due process.

Priority 3:
PCC should provide professional development opportunities for faculty and educational opportunities for students related to academic integrity.
There is a sizable literature on best practices for promoting academic integrity and preventing academic dishonesty. Better understanding of academic integrity in theory and in practice will help PCC’s integrity culture flourish.

**Priority 4:**
**PCC should evaluate and pilot plagiarism detection software.**

**Statement:** PCC should identify a work group and commit funds to (1) pilot plagiarism detection software and (2) evaluate how the software can be used to support the improvement of student scholarship and writing and to allow instructors to assess student work more effectively. At present there is not consensus among the faculty regarding the value of such software; thorough evaluation and trial might lead to better understanding of whether and where such software might be appropriate.

**Implementation Recommendations:** Software should be evaluated by a cross-functional team in a number of classes where the instructors and students have received training in the use of the software as well as education about the issues surrounding academic integrity. The evaluation should provide an opportunity for faculty and students to utilize the software and provide feedback on the experience. The evaluation should also ensure that the software complies with all federal, state and institutional laws and requirements. The evaluation should also identify institutional ownership of the software, including licensing, support, and ongoing training in a possible enterprise adoption.