Academic Integrity Ambassadorship

Information Booklet 2014

The Academic Integrity in Australia Project

What is the project about?

'Academic integrity in Australia - understanding and changing culture and practice' is an Australian Federal Government Office of Learning and Teaching study that seeks to contribute to improvements in ethos, policy and programs in the important area of student academic integrity in the Australian Higher Education sector. Led by Macquarie University, with project partners Sydney University, Australian Catholic University and Rutgers University (USA), the project will run from November 2012 to April 2014.

Why engage university students in academic integrity?

The focus of this project is to uncover student opinions and experiences regarding the academic integrity environment at their institutions, with the aim of creating novel, peer-led approaches for students to engage more positively with academic integrity processes. An additional goal of this project is to nurture student leadership by establishing grass-root level student groups on academic integrity that will supplement the top-down approach of traditional academic integrity management.

More meaningful student engagement, along with active participation by students in academic integrity processes at university can have many benefits for all stakeholders of academic integrity. These include:

➢ Creating a culture of shared responsibility and ownership of academic integrity
➢ Students identifying more positively with academic integrity rules and policies
➢ Students gaining a deeper understanding of academic integrity rules and policies by virtue of being participants in these processes

> ➢ Greater insights by university staff into student experience and understanding of academic integrity rules and processes

The Project Team

MQ Project Leader – Associate Professor Abhaya Nayak (Dept. of Computing)

MQ team members – Professor Deborah Richards (Department of Computing), Associate Professor Judi Homewood (HDR Dean, Faculty of Human Sciences), Associate Professor Ian Solomnides (LTC Director), Nicholas McGuigan (Faculty of Business and Economics), Meredith Taylor (Research Officer, Department of Computing) & Sonia Saddiqui (Project Manager)

Sydney University – Associate Professor Fiona White & Dr Caleb Owens (School of Psychology)

Australian Catholic University – Dr Roger Vallance & Leanne Cameron (School of Education)

Rutgers University (US) – Professor Donald McCabe (Rutgers Business School)

Project Stages

Stage 1: Online survey of 5538 students across four institutions (Macquarie University, Sydney University, Australian Catholic University and Sydney Institute of Business & Technology)

Stage 2: Student focus groups (40 students)

Stage 3: Interviews with students and staff across 20 Australian institutions (40 interviews)

Stage 4: Launch of Academic Integrity student society

What did the project team learn from the study?

There were many different definitions, ideas and concepts attached to the term 'academic integrity'. Students referred to academic integrity as a mixture of (desirable) values, behaviours, actions and aspirations. Here are a few examples of what students had to say:

"Well, my interpretation of AI values would be fairness, trust, honesty, being responsible for one's own work."

"Respect for other people's work, how you present it."

"I think playing by the rules."

"I think any person who gets their degree or qualification from the university should have actually earned it, that it hasn't been kind of given to them on a platter or like it doesn't come in a cornflakes box….and integrity means that we can be certain that the people coming from university have actually earned their degrees."

What else did students think about academic integrity?

➢ 84% of students selected 'agree' when asked if academic integrity should be the *responsibility of the entire university community* (as opposed to the main responsibility of any one particular group).

➢ Values that students agreed were part of academic integrity were (in order of level of agreement): *honesty*, *fairness*, *respect* and *trust*.

➢ 55% of students agreed that academic integrity is a serious problem at their university.

➢ While most students (69%) felt that there are no special circumstances to be dishonesty, 26% felt there were 'very few' circumstances to be dishonest, 4% felt there were 'some' circumstances and 0.5% felt there were a lot of circumstances to be dishonest.

- Students felt that the main contributing factors to breaches mainly have to do with facing pressures: time pressures, financial pressures, competing priorities and the pressure to succeed.
- There was a substantial number of students who indicated that they would be willing to participate in a student organisation that promoted academic integrity:
  - 1488 students across four institutions supported the idea
  - 491 students supported the idea at MQ

What happens in the absence of academic integrity?

- Program effectiveness and delivery is hampered
- Tutors and lecturers cannot appraise students' work effectively if AI breaches are prevalent
- Good scholarship is undermined.
- Breeds distrust among students and a lack of trust in universities' academic integrity policies
- Damages the reputation of universities, programs and qualifications
- It's unfair

Are breaches of academic integrity a big problem?

- Rates among students in the US have been as high as 64% (McCabe & Trevino, 1996)
- 70% of US college students self-reported breach behaviours (Whitley,1998)
- 55% of the students surveyed in the *Academic Integrity in Australia* project selected 'agree' when asked if breaches are a serious problem at their university (Nayak et al., 2013)

The Academic Integrity Ambassadorship

What is the Academic Integrity Student Ambassadorship?

The *Academic Integrity in Australia Project* team aims to facilitate the creation of a brand new kind of student organisation in Australia – a student society whose goal is the promotion and championing of academic integrity. We have been fortunate to have received an invitation from UC San Diego Academic Integrity Office Director, Dr. Tricia Bertram Gallant, to join an international organisation — IAIMSO (founded in 2009 by Dr. Bertram Gallant). This is the only international student academic integrity society of its kind and as such, provides Macquarie University and its students with an exciting opportunity to be part of an important international endeavour!

A Welcome Message from Dr. Tricia Bertram Gallant

Welcome to the International Academic Integrity Matters Student Organization (IAIMSO).

IAIMSO is a young organization started by students, for students, to spread cultures of academic integrity across the world in schools, colleges and universities. There are 3 chapters in the United States so far (University of California, San Diego; Missouri State University; Bentley University) and we are excited that MQ might become the inaugural Australian chapter!

Our vision of creating cultures of academic integrity, where integrity is the norm and cheating is the exception, is ambitious. We have to convince students to resist cheating at a time when it is easy and normalized. We also have to convince faculty and our institutions that there is more that they must do.

At times, it feels like we are swimming against the tide.

But with an international network of people who care about academic integrity and are working toward the same goal, we feel a sense of support and unity that motivates us and propels
us forward.

Together, we can do this.

Strong networks of people, joined together in a common cause, have moved mountains. So we too can we move this mountain.

Together, our vision is possible.

With students like you, the future of IAIMSO is bright. Join in the movement, MQ.

Together, we can spread the message that Integrity Matters.

Dr. Bertram Gallant

IAIMSO Website

To visit the IAIMSO website, please go to: http://iaimso.org/

What makes a great Academic Integrity Ambassador?

An Academic Integrity Ambassador is someone who is passionate about the topic of academic integrity. They see the value in promoting and encouraging positive academic integrity cultures, which in turn improves the quality and reputation of the programs at their university, and the student experience in general. Academic Integrity Ambassadors are successful networkers and organisers who take pride in their membership of an international team of likeminded students. They view their university as a community with the same common goals, and they desire to make the educational experience at their university a worthwhile, valuable and enriching experience for students. As this is the first such student organisation of its kind at MQ and in Australia, the founding members of this society will have a great deal of freedom in creating the terms of reference of the group, and the activities they would   like to undertake. Academic Integrity Ambassadors are therefore equipped with a great imagination and leadership potential!

What do existing academic integrity student society members (overseas) have to say?

"When discussing qualities for success, we usually hear things like hard-working, smart, persistent, etc. But what we don't hear as often is integrity, when it really should be one of the main ones brought to our attention. Therefore I wanted to a part of AIM so that I can contribute in promoting academic integrity for its importance not only in school, but also in one's career and life."

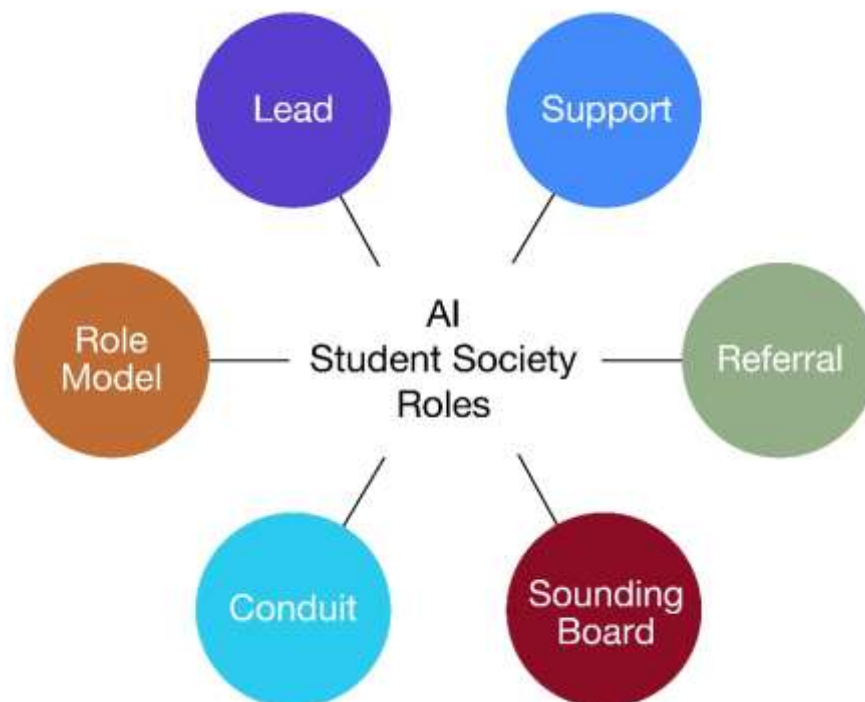*- Shannan Kang, University of California, San Diego AIM Chapter*

"I first joined AIM the summer of my freshman year in college. I was very passionate about academic integrity and noticed a lot of cheating within my high school. I wanted to do something about it during that time, but I didn't really feel like I could do anything. But when I came across AIM at UCSD, I snatched the chance to get involved and was very glad to have an opportunity to do something about cheating in school. Now that I am in AIM, my goal is to spread a culture of integrity up to the point where cheating is frowned upon and thus rejected by students."

- Jane Kim, University of California, San Diego AIM President

What is the role of an Academic Integrity Ambassador?

Some suggestions for roles and activities include:

➢ Provide academic integrity advice

➢ Provide feedback and suggestions to University staff (e.g. provide feedback re. university's academic integrity policies)

➢ Set up info booths of academic integrity during Orientation week

➢ Conduct marketing campaign (e.g. YouTube videos, publications, posters, handouts)

➢ Emphasise the positive aspects of academic integrity (e.g. espouse the benefits of ethical personal and professional conduct)

➢ Reward students for good practice

➢ Invite guest speakers relevant to your discipline

➢ Hold seminars or workshops

➢ Be a guest speaker at introductory lectures for new undergrads in your discipline

➢ Organise social activities and competitions

➢ Outreach - speak at high schools and other universities

What are the benefits of becoming an Ambassador?

➢ You won't be alone – you'll receive guidance and funding!

➢ You'll become an expert in academic integrity issues

➢ You'll gain experience in networking, organisational and event management, and public speaking

➢ Opportunity to build contacts in industry – Academic Integrity Ambassadors make for desirable employment candidates in any industry!

➢ The profile of your university and program is raised – adding value to your degree and qualifications

➢ Opportunity to work on projects with fellow organisation members overseas

➢ All these experiences and achievements go on your CV!

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