

Academic Integrity Is Not a Moneymaker

Clips Guest Commentary

Our guest author tags universities that support big-time football and basketball as enablers of academic cheating.

By Frank G. Splitt, Drake Group, 3-3-09

Kudos to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for its attention-getting commentaries on academic integrity—beginning with Katherine Mangan's coverage of Donald McCabe's report that business-school students cheat more than students from any other discipline.¹ This was followed by pieces by Chris Bates,² who discussed why cheating matters from a student's perspective, and Susan Blum,³ who says that: "students have only a vague sense of what is meant by the moral quality termed "academic integrity.""

Unfortunately, all of the authors focused on students as the violators of academic integrity—missing the greatest and most consequential violators of academic integrity: the colleges and universities that support big-time football and men's basketball programs. These schools appear to have an even vaguer sense of what is meant by academic integrity. They have learned long ago that if you don't cheat, you don't win—there is no money in academic integrity—payday comes with invitations to football's BCS bowl games and to basketball's NCAA sponsored *March Madness*.

Taking the lead from the NCAA, most of these schools have become masters of rationalization and quite skilled in the arts of deceit, deception, and disingenuousness.^{4, 5} Not lost on their students are the facts that these skills are not only used to recruit and maintain the eligibility of professionalized teams for their school's sports entertainment businesses, but also used to maintain the tax-exempt status of these businesses. This modus operandi not only corrupts academic integrity, but seriously compromises institutional credibility as well.

For sure, academic integrity is not a moneymaker and it is not a slippery concept as sometimes alleged. It means being honest, adhering (being true) to a code of honor that does not allow cheating, corruption, taking credit for what is not yours, and not bending the rules to deceive others in the pursuit of fame and fortune. .

With this definition in mind, it would be of great interest to the Senate Finance Committee and the IRS if the authors of the *Chronicle* commentaries and others were somehow able to direct their attention to the determination of the extent to which schools cheat to allow academically-challenged and time-strapped athletes to be passed off as

legitimate degree-seeking students that are maintained as an integral part of the student body as required by their tax-exempt status.

The determinations could begin by casting a critical eye toward the athletes-only academic facilities at their own universities. Unfortunately, faculty determinations of this sort are not about to take place as they would likely attract various measures of administrative retribution—perhaps even career-ending retaliation. Given this circumstance, institutional academic integrity will continue to be sacrificed on the altar of moneymaking sports entertainment unless and until the government intervenes to force the NCAA cartel to live up to the requirements of its tax-exempt status. Absent this intervention, the government will continue to subsidize the corruption of academic integrity at America's colleges and universities.

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NOTES

1. Mangan, Katherine, "Lessons Business Graduates Apply to the Real World May Include Cheating," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Online), Feb. 10, 2009.
2. Bates, Chris, "A Student's View: Why Cheating Matters," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb. 20, 2009.
3. Blum, Susan, "Academic Integrity and Student Plagiarism: a Question of Education, Not Ethics," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Feb. 20, 2009.
4. Splitt, Frank G., "Cheating in College Athletics: Presidential Oversight Notwithstanding," http://thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_Cheating.pdf.
5. _____, "College Athletics and Corruption," http://thedrakegroup.org/Splitt_College_Athletics_and_Corruption.pdf.