

## **NTC Committee on the Oversight of Academic Integrity Report, Fall 2019**

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### **Academic Integrity Activities 2018–2019**

During the past year, Newcomb-Tulane College undertook several initiatives around academic integrity. In January, the newly-appointed Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (J. Celeste Lay) created the position of Faculty Chair of the Honor Board and appointed Prof. Chris Rodning to the office. This position oversees academic integrity and the Honor Board system. The Faculty Chair of the Honor Board serves as chair of the NTC Committee for the Oversight of Academic Integrity and, with help from the Senior Associate Dean, manages academic integrity issues for undergraduates, recruits and advises student and faculty members of the Honor Board, manages reports and allegations of academic misconduct, issues formal charges as appropriate, and manages the process of scheduling and conducting Honor Board panel hearings.

Together, they:

- Handled cases that were still pending when Dean Andrew Martinez retired at the end of 2018;
- Directed efforts by NTC staff members to digitize the paper archives of Honor Board cases since 1980 and clean up a database of cases;
- Along with staff members from the Office of Student Conduct, they developed and implemented an online reporting mechanism (Maxient) for honor board cases;
- Met with members of the Undergraduate Student Government to discuss proposed changes in the Code of Academic Conduct during Spring 2019;
- Discussed academic integrity at orientation events for new faculty members and new undergraduate students, and asked instructors of TIDES courses and Freshman Honors Seminars to discuss academic integrity during introductory class meetings at NTC orientation;
- Conducted training sessions for new Honor Board members late in Spring 2019 and early in Fall 2019.
- Revised form letters for Honor Board communications with Complainants and Respondents.

Staff members at NTC have been involved in compiling data and also in scheduling, communications, preparations, and documentation of Honor Board proceedings. Thanks to Eva Silvestre and Nadine Al Zumot for compiling and preparing the data that are summarized in figures and tables included with this report.

Members of the Committee for the Oversight of Academic Integrity are charged with making recommendations on policies and procedures pertaining to the Code of Academic Conduct to the faculty and convening appellate panels as needed.

## **Recent Changes to the Honor Code and Honor Board Proceedings**

During the NTC faculty meetings held in Spring 2019, the NTC faculty and the USG considered and discussed proposed changes to the Code of Academic Conduct. Both groups voted to approve the proposed changes at the last NTC faculty meeting of Spring 2019.

Some of the major changes are summarized here:

1. The “old” Code included some inconsistencies in the sequence of steps taken in processing and adjudicating allegations of academic misconduct, and those inconsistencies are now corrected.
2. As before, the burden of proof rests upon the Complainant (the course instructor), not on the Respondent (the accused student), but the revised Code makes explicit that “preponderance of evidence” is the standard of proof for finding respondents responsible or not responsible for alleged academic misconduct. This standard is consistent with the case management system of the Tulane Office of Student Conduct. It is consistent with the standard of proof in honor code protocols at many other colleges and universities.
3. The new code permits digital communications as official correspondence in honor board proceedings.
4. As before, the ideal timeline for adjudicating allegations of academic misconduct is prompt, but the revised Code stipulates that university holidays (winter break, summer break, and so on) and summer months (between the end of spring term and start of classes in the fall term) are not counted in timeframes for handling cases.
5. Appeals of Honor Board decisions and sanctions will now be considered by appellate panels composed of members of the Committee for the Oversight of Academic Integrity, rather than by panels of Honor Board members, and the appeals process will focus on whether the correct procedures were followed in a hearing, or whether a new hearing is warranted.
6. The new code specifies the penalties associated with “honor board probation” and defines “permanent records” as transcripts and “Newcomb-Tulane College records” as NTC’s internal files that record the outcomes of all cases.

Another major change in Honor Board proceedings is that formal allegations are now made through an online system known as Maxient. This system makes it easier to manage cases and relevant case files, improves our ability to track data about cases in the aggregate and to archive data about individual cases, makes it easier for us to recognize individuals involved in multiple cases, makes case files easily accessible to appropriate persons in NTC administration and staff, and eliminates the need for keeping paper records of Honor Board proceedings.

During AY 2018–2019, Interim Dean of NTC Kelly Grant and Dean Lay were involved in identifying office and conference room spaces on campus (Jones Hall 308) where Honor Board hearings can take place. After renovations and preparations during Spring 2019 and Summer 2019, this suite is ready, and it is equipped with devices and connections for conference calls, for cases and hearings for which people need to appear remotely rather than in person.

## **Plans for AY 2019–2020**

In recent years, this committee has not met regularly, but we plan to resume meeting once per term, with additional meetings, if and when they are necessary, and the following considerations are on the committee agenda for the current academic year:

1. Scheduling Honor Board proceedings—and accommodating the schedules of two faculty members and three student members of the Honor Board, Complainants, Respondents, and (when relevant) material witnesses—is complicated. The Honor Board will experiment during AY 2019–2020 with a docket system in which Honor Board panels are convened on a somewhat regular schedule to hear several cases in succession, although for some cases and some scheduling considerations, individual Honor Board panels can and will also be scheduled at other times.
2. The committee will consider the possibility of developing and implementing a process (perhaps as a module online) through which each incoming undergraduate student will accept responsibility for adhering to the Tulane Code of Academic Conduct.

## **Honor Board Cases, 2008–2019**

For the period from Fall 2008 through the end of Spring 2019, there are records of 676 cases involving academic misconduct. The average number of cases between Fall 2008 and Spring 2017 was 50 per year. This number jumped from 46 in 2016–2017 to 76 in 2017–2018, an increase of 61%. The number of cases then jumped to 107 in 2018–2019, representing the first time in the past 11 years in which the number of cases exceeded 100. We do not know whether this is the result of more academic misconduct, or more frequent reporting, or both.

Faculty in SLA are by far the most likely to report academic misconduct, although in 2018–2019, there were more reported cases from SSE. The three main schools (SLA, SSE & BUS) have about the same proportions of majors, but students in SSE and BUS often take more classes in SLA as they fulfill core requirements. It should be noted that 12 of the 36 cases in SSE that year came from one class. Instructors in SPHTM have rarely reported academic misconduct. The NTC totals refer to TIDES, COLQ, and other courses that do not belong to one of the other schools. Although not included in these data, there was one reported case during 2018–2019 of multiple submissions in an online undergraduate course offered by the School of Social Work (SSW), but this case was resolved without Honor Board proceedings.

Table 1. Number of Honor Board Cases Reported by Year and School

Academic Year	ARCH	BUS	SSE	SLA	SPH	SOPA	NTC	Total
2008_2009	1	3	6	23	0	5	1	39
2009_2010	1	2	27	37	0	4	0	71
2010_2011	4	1	5	22	0	3	2	37
2011_2012	4	3	20	24	0	17	0	68
2012_2013	0	2	14	36	0	9	0	61
2013_2014	3	5	11	31	0	7	2	59
2014_2015	0	10	13	32	1	8	1	65
2015_2016	0	3	7	29	1	7	2	49
2016_2017	0	10	6	23	0	5	2	46
2017_2018	0	37	15	19	0	3	0	74
2018_2019	4	25	36	34	0	6	2	107
Total	17	101	160	310	2	74	12	676

In cases of first-time offenses, many students charged with academic misconduct are offered hearing waivers, by which they accept responsibility for charges and accept sanctions imposed by the Newcomb-Tulane College Dean’s Office. From 2008 through 2019, there were 309 cases in which students signed hearing waivers, and 335 in which they instead requested Honor Board hearings.

Table 2. Number of Honor Board Cases with Hearing Waivers Offered, 2008-2019

	ARCH	BUS	SSE	SLA	SPH	SOPA	NTC	Total
Yes	6	42	64	147	2	35	6	302
No	9	54	73	151	0	37	4	321
NA	0	0	4	3	0	0	1	8
Total	15	96	141	301	2	72	11	638

Including cases resolved by waivers or by hearings, students were found responsible for the charges against them in 94% of the cases. The most common sanction has been a withdraw fail (“WF,” which is recorded permanently on student transcripts) (50%), followed by lowering of course grade (46%). Other sanctions have been used relatively rarely. The 11 letters of reprimand issued to students in the Business school were all issued in 2018-2019.

Table 3. Sanctions Administered in Honor Board Cases, 2008–2019

	ARCH	BUS	SSE	SLA	SPH	SOPA	NTC	Total
WF	8 53%	16 17%	74 54%	160 53%	2 100%	51 70%	8 72%	319 50%
Zero on assignment	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Expulsion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
HB probation	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Lowering of grade	6 40%	67 71%	60 44%	136 45%	0	20 27%	2 18%	291 46%
Letter of reprimand	0	11	1	2	0	0	0	14
Suspension	1	0	2	3	0	1	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>635</b>

There are some reported cases in which formal charges are not made, or are dropped, but from a workload perspective, these cases still involve efforts by instructors and staff members in terms of case management and processing. The most common charge has been plagiarism (N=340) followed by cheating (N=277). Cheating is more common in SSE and BUS: 67% of all cases in SSE and 64% in BUS involve cheating. Plagiarism is more common in SLA: 65% of all cases in SLA involve plagiarism. (See Table 4)

Table 4. Charges of Academic Misconduct, 2008–2019

	ARCH	BUS	SSE	SLA	SPH	SOPA	NTC	Total
Cheating	4 24%	65 64%	107 67%	77 25%	0	16 22%	3 25%	272 40%
Plagiarism	13 76%	20 20%	29 18%	201 65%	2 100%	55 74%	5 42%	325 48%
Fabrication/false information	0	1	4	4	0	1	2	12 2%
Facilitation of acad misconduct	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4 1%
Unauthorized collaboration	0	11	2	8	0	0	2	23 3%
Unfair advantage	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Multiple submissions	0	0	0	11	0	1	0	12 2%
Multiple infractions	0	4	15	5	0	1	0	25 4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>676</b>

## Honor Board Proceedings in AY 2018–2019

During AY 2018–2019, there were 107 formal allegations of academic misconduct by Tulane undergraduates. There were seven cases in which formal charges were not issued, because it was determined through administrative review that there were no honor code violations. Formal charges were issued in 89 cases, and as of September 1, 2019, students were found responsible in 79 of those cases (89%). Of the other 10 formally reported cases, seven cases were still pending as of this writing, and charges were dropped in the others, because it was determined that the respondents in those cases were not responsible for academic misconduct. In most cases (89%), students formally charged with academic misconduct signed hearing waivers and thereby accepted responsibility and sanctions. During AY 2017–2018, there were 11 Honor Board panel hearings held, and students were found responsible for academic misconduct in eight (73%) of those cases.

Table 5. Types of Alleged Academic Misconduct, 2018–2019

	ARC H	BU S	SS E	SL A	SOP A	NT C	Tota I
Cheating	3 75%	11 44%	16 44%	10 29%	2 33%	0	42 39%
Plagiarism	1 25%	12 48%	2 6%	12 35%	2 33%	1 50%	30 28%
Fabrication/false information	0	0	2	1	1	1	5 5%
Facilitation of academic dishonesty	0	0	2	1	0	0	3 3%
Unauthorized collaboration	0	0	0	5 15%	0	0	5 5%
Unfair advantage	0	0	0	1	0	0	1 1%
Multiple submissions	0	0	0	1	0	0	1 1%
Multiple infractions	0	2 8%	14 39%	3 9%	1 17%	0	20 19%
Total	4	25	36	34	6	2	107

### Quantitative Data and Qualitative Perspectives

It is vital that we collect, compile, analyze, and archive quantitative data about academic misconduct and case management, but it is also important that we remember that every individual case has its own unique characteristics, and every case has significant implications for respondents, complainants, witnesses, and potentially others. Emotions and reactions to honor board cases range widely, including

frustration, anger, defiance, disappointment, sorrow, remorse, depression, exhaustion, confusion, and resignation. Some students do apologize sincerely for what they have done and commit themselves to doing better, but some students do not. In some cases, students do not sufficiently understand the process in spite of being provided a list of advisors and communications from NTC. Instructors often do not know how to report cases, and we do have anecdotal evidence about reluctance to report alleged academic misconduct because of the effort involved in doing so.

### **Best Practices for the Prevention of Academic Misconduct**

1. The frequency of academic misconduct is reduced when course instructors discuss academic integrity with students and offer guidance about how to prevent it, how to avoid it, and why academic integrity is important.
2. Academic misconduct is often related to: fear of failure; lack of preparation; lack of time management; emotional distress; health problems; apathy towards learning or towards academic integrity; or combinations of these and other factors. Encourage students to trust in their own abilities and to achieve their own potential. Remember the stresses that students and young adults experience as undergraduates.
3. Academic misconduct is more prevalent (and, perhaps, more difficult to document) in online exams and in settings in which electronic devices are permitted. That does not mean that instructors cannot use those tools or allow students, as appropriate, to utilize calculators and computers for exams and assignments. Instructors should be mindful of how students may be using those devices in the course of those assignments or exams. Remind students to turn off and put away all electronic devices before exams are given. Remind students to put away any notes and books before exams are given.
4. Have students sit with spaces between them, if possible, in order to minimize opportunities to copy from exams by neighboring students.
5. Discuss citation practices with students, including when and how to cite ideas and datasets from other sources.
6. Remind students that papers can be and will be examined through Turnitin or other plagiarism checkers available to Tulane course instructors.
7. Clarify expectations about group projects, and the extent to which individuals are responsible (or not) for other group members.
8. Remind students that multiple submissions and encouragement of academic dishonesty are forms of academic misconduct.

Some web sites that may be of interest in thinking about how best to reduce the occurrence of academic misconduct in our courses include the following:

1. promoting academic integrity
  - <https://integrity.mit.edu/>
2. preventing plagiarism
  - <https://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/resources/teachers/prevent-plagiarism/>
3. preventing academic misconduct

- <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/how-to-stop-cheating-in-college/479037/>
- <https://www.washington.edu/cssc/facultystaff/tips-for-preventing-cheating/awareness-of-academic-ghostwriting>
- <https://www.chronicle.com/article/An-Academic-Ghostwriter-Comes/133904>
- <https://thebestschools.org/features/david-a-tomar-interview/>
- <https://thebestschools.org/resources/detecting-detering-ghostwritten-papers-best-practices/>
- <https://thebestschools.org/resources/ghostwriting-business-trade-standards-practices-secrets/>

Books of interest for discussions of the culture of academic misconduct in college and what can be and should be done about it include the following.

*Cheating in College: Why Students Do It and What Educators Can Do about It*, by Donald L. McCabe, Kenneth D. Butterfield, and Linda K. Treviño. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 2012.

*Cheating in School: What We Know and What We Can Do*, by Stephen F. Davis, Patrick F. Drinin, and Tricia Bertram Gallant. Wiley, New York, 2009.

## **Recommendations**

The committee makes the following recommendations for consideration by the NTC faculty and the NTC dean:

1. The committee proposes that the NTC faculty consider an amendment to the NTC constitution and its definition of the committee, and, specifically, that the committee should be composed of the Faculty Chair of the Honor Board, one representative from each of the schools at Tulane University involved in undergraduate education, and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ex officio). The schools involved in undergraduate education currently include NTC, SLA, SSE, SSW, SPHTM, Business, Architecture, and SoPA. Each school has interests in and responsibilities for academic integrity among its students, and there are forms of academic misconduct that are unique to each school, and the committee therefore benefits from having members from each of these schools.
2. The committee recommends that the NTC dean consider assigning duties related to honor board case management and the scheduling and conduct of honor board panel meetings to one or more full-time members of the NTC staff.
3. The committee recommends that New Student Orientation should include a segment or segments about academic integrity – what it is, why it’s important, and how to avoid it.
4. The committee recommends that faculty, especially FYS instructors and others teaching classes predominantly made up of first year students, should be encouraged to include a statement about the importance of academic integrity and the possible penalties for violating it.
5. The committee recommends that NTC publish a report annually with statistics about outcomes of the academic integrity process. This information should be available on the website for students and faculty to view.