

Assurance of Honesty (AoH) in Traditional and Online Business Programs in an AACSB-Accredited Business School: Insights from Experience

Gerry Nkombo Muuka, Timothy Todd, Bellarmine A. Ezumah
(Murray State University, Murray, KY 42071, USA)

Abstract: Universities worldwide have one unifying core mission and moral imperative: teaching, in such a way that our national and international students can learn relevant content knowledge and skills necessary for them to be confident and competent professional citizens of the world. In pursuit of this overarching goal, students, for their part, have a moral, professional and economic obligation to exhibit academic behaviors that are beyond reproach. This paper discusses one of the most consequential academic issues of our time: academic dishonesty among university students, citing the case of one long-standing AACSB-accredited College of Business in the Ohio Valley Conference. The paper details the school's Academic Dishonesty Policy (ADP), and sheds light on the additional dishonesty challenges encountered in 100% online programs. Key findings include the fact that 351 students have cheated over a 9-year period, most of them disproportionately male; that international students cheat in numbers that are disproportionate to their low enrollment profiles on campus; that a preponderance of cases involve freshmen; and that undergraduates account for the bulk of cheating incidents. The school has dealt with these cases in a variety of ways including warnings; failing students on exams, quizzes and in entire courses; and the dismissal of one undergraduate student in 2007. It includes a warning that if cheating among students is not aggressively addressed by universities, the long-term consequences could be a major moral and ethical failure that would make the 2001 Enron Scandal look like a minor slap on the world's professional and economic conscience. The paper ends with a major recommendation by way of a 10-point framework for dealing with academic dishonesty in colleges and universities. This includes the need for an effective assurance of honesty policy and honor code, ethics education, rehabilitative teaching moments, a customized honor code orientation for international students, and a comprehensive campus-wide all inclusive effort aimed at tackling one of the most consequential issues of our time.

Key words: assurance of honesty; academic dishonesty; plagiarism, cheating incidents; online business courses; undergraduate students; graduate students; assurance of honesty strategy

JEL codes: I210

Gerry Nkombo Muuka, Ph.D., Professor and Interim Dean, Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business, Murray State University; research areas/interests: business strategy, AACSB-accreditation. E-mail: nmuuka@murraystate.edu.

Timothy Todd, Ed.D., Professor and Interim Provost, Murray State University; research areas/interests: quality measures and institutional effectiveness. E-mail: ttodd@murraystate.edu.

Bellarmino A. Ezumah, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Arthur J. Bauernfeind College of Business, Murray State University; research areas/interests: emergent technologies and social media networks and their impact on learning and communication, media effects and news analysis, accreditation. E-mail: bezumah@murraystate.edu.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with one of the most consequential education-related issues of our time: academic dishonesty — commonly referred to as cheating — among students in colleges and universities. The premise of the paper is perhaps a logical one, and invites no real debate: university students should have more pride in accomplishing their academic pursuits the right way, rather than being rewarded for accomplishments soiled by wrong-doing. Universities worldwide have one unifying core mission and moral imperative: teaching, in such a way that our national and international students can learn relevant content knowledge and skills necessary for them to be confident and competent professional citizens of the world. In pursuit of this overarching goal, students, for their part, have a moral, professional and economic obligation to exhibit academic behaviors that are beyond reproach. The need to prevent and potentially eliminate student cheating is perhaps self-evident. There is wide spread agreement, in the literature, that strategies utilized by students in pursuit of a degree are a persuasive predictor of the actions they will take after graduation (Callahan, 2008, among others). In other words, there is a commonsense nexus that students who cheat to get good grades while at the university are more likely to follow unethical paths later in their careers. That is a major reason why such behaviors should be aggressively discouraged in favor of moral and ethical uprightness while the students are still in school.

In the paper, we detail the Assurance of Honesty (AoH) policy and practices in use at one long-standing AACSB-accredited College of Business in the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC). The OVC comprises 12 different universities, namely: Belmont University, Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, Tennessee Tech University, Tennessee State University, Jacksonville State University, Murray State University, Southeast Missouri State University, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, Eastern Illinois University, Austin Peay State University, and the University of Tennessee-Martin. The Ohio Valley Conference College of Business (OVC-COB) has an overall enrollment of some 2,000 students, accounting for 18% of the 11,200 students enrolled at the parent university in Fall 2014. The College has 6 departments, 7 graduate programs, and offers both traditional and some 100% online undergraduate and graduate programs.

Paper Objectives: The paper is unambiguous in its aims and objectives, because it sets out to answer the following important academic-dishonesty related questions:

(a) How many students have been caught cheating (as opposed to the perception of cheating) in the OVC-COB in a specified time frame? The question is vital in getting a glimpse of the magnitude of academic dishonesty in the business school.

(b) What is the nature and profile of offenses committed by students, and what consequences did this unethical behavior bring about? The importance of these twin questions cannot be overemphasized, because detection of student wrongdoing without any corresponding sanctions and penalties would only serve to worsen an already unacceptable state of affairs.

(c) Finally, the paper aims to provide the gender profile of students caught cheating in the College of Business, in addition to providing a breakdown of the offenders by level (undergraduate versus graduate) as well as by nationality — American versus International students.

We believe that answers to the foregoing questions do indeed encapsulate the bulk of the academic dishonesty debate. An attempt is made, ultimately, to provide a checklist of best practices and implications for other business schools and universities generally.

2. Literature Review

Academic dishonesty — commonly called cheating — is a minefield of student negligence, deliberate wrongdoing, unethical promiscuity, and sometimes breathtaking and insufferable inattention to the values and tenets of higher education. Mwamwenda and Monyooe (2000), for instance, go so far as to say that academic dishonesty is not only incompatible with the principles of learning and education, it actually erodes the integrity of the whole educational process.

Two useful questions logically arise at this stage, namely: what accounts for the prevalence of cheating among business students and other students generally? Second, what are the mechanisms and manifestations of this unethical conduct? The literature is both broad and deep with answers to both of these questions. There are suggestions (by, among others, Callahan, 2008) that business students in fact cheat more than other majors. In AACSB's July/August 2011 edition of the BizEd Magazine is an article on the "cheating pandemic" in business schools. Written by Steve Williams, Margaret Tanner and Jim Beard, the article alludes to as many as 87% of undergraduate business students admitting to cheating on exams. "The issue of academic dishonesty is critical for business schools because those who cheat in college are more likely to cheat on the job", the three authors argue. The motivations for cheating are varied. There are students who blame external variables for their unethical behavior. McCabe and Pavela (2000) for instance say that some students justify or rationalize cheating by citing other students who cheat; faculty who do a poor job in the classroom; institutional indifference to cheating; and a society that supplies few positive role models when it comes to personal integrity. A core rationale by students who emulate others in unethical conduct is their perceived need to "level the playing field" by cheating as well.

Callahan (2008) advances other reasons why business students cheat — ranging from the increased time pressures experienced by working MBA students, procrastination, low chances of being caught, "professor-unfairness" and peer-pressure, all the way to the impact of business curricula that emphasize shareholder wealth above all else. Callahan (2008) characterizes these students as having a "bottom-line mentality" that leads them to give greater weight to the potential benefits of cheating including, but not limited to: higher grades, admission to better graduate schools, and more financially rewarding employment opportunities. There is, additionally, a huge literature on student perceptions of cheating. Premeaux (2005), for instance, surveyed 1,116 students from Tier 1 AACSB Schools and a further 1,251 from Tier 2 AACSB Schools to see what their perceptions are on various cheating-related issues including — but not limited to — what they feel about cheating, their perceptions about cheating penalties, and whether or not cheating is problematic in their respective schools. A major finding was that cheating is fairly common at both Tier 1 and 2 AACSB accredited business schools. Prominent universities are not immune to the cheating scourge. Jack Stripling, writing for the Chronicle of Higher Education (2014), recounts the happenings at the University of North Carolina — Chapel Hill where, among other illegal practices, student athletes frequently enrolled in "no-show classes" where they were given course credit for writing a single paper. Stripling (2014) goes on to quote James G. Martin — who was governor of North Carolina in 2012 at the height of the scandal — as characterizing the UNC incident to be an academic scandal as opposed to the perceived lesser label of an athletics scandal.

The second key question that needs to be addressed centers around the manifestations or mechanisms that students use to cheat. The list of types of dishonesty behaviors can never be complete, since students always come up with new ways of circumventing laid down academic procedures. The following list — compiled from a multiplicity of sources including the OVC University Board of Regents' 2012 academic honor document, McCabe

(2005), Mwamwenda and Monyooe (2000), and Callahan (2008) among others — is but a glimpse of the many forms of academic dishonesty:

- **Cheating:** that is, intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized information such as books, notes, study aids, or other electronic, online, or digital devices in any academic exercise; unauthorized communication of information by any means to or from others during any academic exercise; or doing work for another person for academic credit.
- **Plagiarism:** which is characterized as intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, creative work, or data of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise, without due and proper acknowledgement — in essence stealing the words or ideas of another and passing them off as one's own.
- **Fabrication and Falsification:** defined variously as intentional alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification involves changing information whereas fabrication involves inventing or counterfeiting information.
- **Multiple Submissions:** the submission of substantial portions of the same academic work, including oral reports, for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor — a practice called “double dipping”.
- **Online Cheating:** this takes many forms including, but not limited to: the use of smartphones to hide formulas, notes, or take pictures of online questions for later use by friends; cut and paste plagiarism from internet sources; submitting papers purchased or downloaded from a term-paper mill or website (McCabe, 2005); having one student take an exam or quiz on behalf of another; texting answers to others during the exam; as well as saving notes in cellphones for use during the exam.

Contribution to the body of knowledge: The current study is different from other studies in many important respects. We describe an actual academic dishonesty process in use at one Ohio Valley Conference College of Business (OVC-COB). This is vital because all faculties in the College are asked to take the issue of academic dishonesty seriously. The study then proceeds to report and analyze the number of academic dishonesty cases in the business school for the 9 years from 2006 to 2014; the types of student infringements that triggered the faculty reports; the types of penalties, sanctions or punishments attending these infringements; as well as the trend-line of reported cases during the nine-year timeframe. Another contribution of the current study is that we address two further questions, and that is: what is the gender balance among the academically dishonesty students, and can these be further broken down into American versus International Students? The study therefore deals with actual incidents — as opposed to perceptions about cheating — doing so at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

3. Methodology

At its most basic level, this methodology section addresses the key question: how did we gather the data that informs this study? The data upon which the bulk of the current study is based was obtained over a period of nine years — from Spring 2006 to the middle of Fall 2014 — using a clear and consistent academic dishonesty process. The OVC-COB has a long and proud tradition of “catching and rehabilitating” student culprits of academic dishonesty. How does the school do this? A three-pronged approach is utilized, namely:

(a) **Academic Dishonesty Policy:** The school has, since the 1990s, implemented an honor code that has made a difference in student behaviors, attitudes and beliefs. The academic dishonesty policy is part of every course syllabus (graduate and undergraduate) in all 6 departments of the College. In other words, students are educated about the appropriate academic conduct on exams and assignments, including discussion of plagiarism and the

unacceptable tech-savvy methods some students try to use in order to cheat. In short, the school has an assurance of honesty (AoH) policy that abhors dishonesty, specifies unacceptable academic conduct, specifies penalties, and explains appeal procedures available to students in case they believe they are innocent of any wrongdoing.

(b) All faculties in the College are asked and encouraged, without exception, to report all cases of academic dishonesty to the Associate Dean.

(c) The College gives students a second chance. In other words, an attempt is made to try to rehabilitate first-time offenders into becoming more ethical and honest citizens of the world.

Figure 1 presents the step by step process used to handle cheating cases in the College. The key elements of Figure 1 are as follows:

(a) Mission Statement and Assurance of Learning Goals: the very first place that students come across our academic expectations and standards of ethical behavior is in our Mission Statement, which is the logical trigger for Assurance of Learning (AoL) goals and expectations. Our AoL goals at both the undergraduate and graduate levels are explicit on the need for ethical student conduct. It is only when cheating occurs that Figure 1 comes into play.

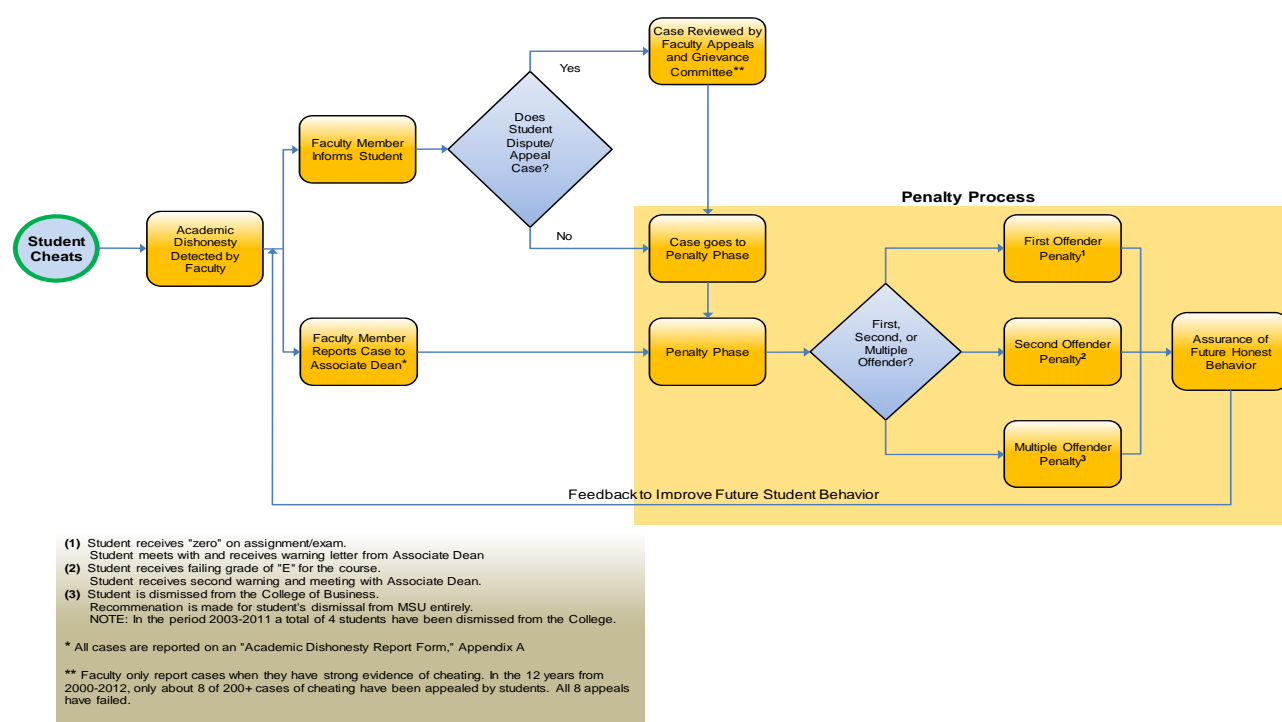


Figure 1 Assurance of Honesty (AoH) Process — How the OVC-COB handles Academic Dishonesty among Students

(b) Essentially, a faculty member informs the cheating student that they have been caught, and immediately submits an official report (with evidence) to the Associate Dean of the College. If the student does not dispute the charge, the case goes to the penalty phase. If they are first offenders, they receive a zero on the exam, quiz, or assignment. But depending on the severity of the first offence, the student could be made to fail the entire course. There is a chance that the student will plead innocent of any wrong-doing, in which case they are made aware (or reminded) of the official appeals process. The appeals process has the Associate Dean convening a meeting of the standing "Faculty Appeals and Grievances Committee" to hear the student's case. If they win the appeal — which

**Assurance of Honesty (AoH) in Traditional and Online Business Programs in an AACSB-Accredited Business School:
Insights from Experience**

has only happened once since 1999 — then their exam/quiz/assignment grade is reinstated. Otherwise, they fail the said exam or quiz.

(c) Second time offenders fail the entire course in which they are currently registered, which amounts to a grade of “E”.

(d) Multiple offenses: In cases where a student is caught cheating on more than two occasions, the Associate Dean will trigger “dismissal from the OVC College of Business” proceedings, as appropriate.

(e) Feedback Loop: Figure 1 has a logical and necessary feedback loop, which is appropriately labelled “improvement of future student behavior”. This labeling is not coincidental. Our intent is to rehabilitate cheating students into better citizens of the world by improving the likelihood that they will be more ethically and morally upright participants in world affairs from that point forward.

**Table 1 Reported Cases of Academic Dishonesty in the OVC College of Business for
the Period Spring 2006 to September 2014**

	The Period Spring 2006 to September 2014																							
	2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		Totals		Overall			
	U	G	U	G	U	G	U	G	U	G	U	G	U	G	U	G	U	G	U	G	#	%		
Action Taken																								
(a) Warning											2		1		1		1		4		1		5	1.4%
(b) Failed Assignment	34		26		17	4	20	1	38	2	19	4	27	2	34	1	13	9	228	23	251	71.5%		
(c) Failed Exam	the 5	2			1		8			2		5		7		1	2	1	30	4	34	9.6%		
(d) Failed Course	the 6		9	1			2	4	3	5		6					1		31	6	37	11%		
(a) Points Deducted			1			1			2	6		4		1		4			14	5	19	5.4%		
(b) Dropped Course			2			1			1										3	1	4	1.2%		
(c) Dismissed					1															1	1	0.2%		
Totals	45	2	38	2	19	5	30	5	43	3	34	4	43	2	43	7	15	11	310	41	351	100%		

**Table 2 Percentage Breakdown of the 2006-2014 Academic Dishonesty Cases among
Undergraduate (U) and Graduate (G) Students**

YEAR	Grand Totals	U-Total U-%		G-Total G-%		Overall
2006	47	44	94%	3	6%	100%
2007	40	38	95%	2	5%	100%
2008	24	19	79%	5	21%	100%
2009	35	30	86%	5	14%	100%
2010	46	43	93%	3	7%	100%
2011	38	34	89%	4	11%	100%
2012	45	43	96%	2	4%	100%
2013	50	43	86%	7	14%	100%
2014	26	16	62%	10	38%	100%
	351	310	88%	41	12%	100%

Where: U = Undergraduate Students, G = Graduate Students

4. Results and Analysis

Table 1 presents summary statistics of all reported cases of academic dishonesty in the OVC College of Business (OVC-COB) for the 9 years from Spring 2006 to September/middle of Fall 2014. The table reveals that

the OVC College of Business has had a total of 351 cases of academic dishonesty in the 9 years in question. One cannot but observe that a single case of academic dishonesty at any University level is bad enough. 351 of them points to a clear moral and ethical hazard among students that needs to be addressed with the aggression it clearly deserves.

The following are some of the key results arising directly from — or as a derivative of — Table 1:

(a) Of the 351 cases of cheating, 310 (88%) have involved undergraduate students, while the balance of 41 (12%) have been graduate students.

(b) CSC 199 — Introduction to Information Technology: Not shown in Table 1 but available in the role data is the fact that of the 351 cases, a total of 173 (49%) have been offenses committed by freshmen in the CSC 199 Course. All freshmen at the constituent University take CSC 199 as part of the general studies core. The course covers introductory technology topics such as file management, word processing, spreadsheets, database management and presentation graphics software.

(c) Supplemented by — and reconstituted into — Table 2 and Figure 2 (showing the breakdown of cheating incidents) as well as Figure 3 (representing the trend-line of cheating incidents), Table 1 reveals that the OVC-COB has had 40 or more cases of cheating in 5 of the 9 years under review — that is, in 2006 (47), 2007 (40), 2010 (46), 2012 (45) and the highest of 50 cases reported in 2013. At 26 cases already reported midway through the Fall 2014 semester, it is possible that 2014 could see 40 or more cases of cheating as well.

A logical question, at this point, is: why are the numbers of cheating incidents at consistently high and unacceptable levels over time? Is this an indication that the OVC-COB school's assurance of honesty (AoH) policy is in fact ineffective and is not working? A useful explanation is to be found in four key places.

First, we have already alluded to the fact that a preponderance of all the cases — that is, 173 or 49% of the 351 total — have occurred in the freshman CSC 199 course. Further to the 173 cases that have occurred in CSC 199, an additional 32 cases have been reported in other freshmen courses during the period under consideration. This brings the overall freshman incidence level to 205, or 58% of the grand total. Since we have new freshmen every year who are not yet exposed to our rigorous and vigorous code of ethics and academic standards, it makes sense that the numbers do not show an appreciable downward trend due to the “Freshman Factor”. In order to judge the effectiveness of our assurance of honesty policy, a logical place to look is the progression of reported cases from freshman level (when students are first sensitized to our honor code) to the sophomore level. By their sophomore year, it is reasonable to expect that students will in fact have “learned their lesson”. Additional data that is not shown in Table 1 reveals two important comparative statistics on this key performance indicator (KPI), and that is:

- The 205 freshmen cases over 9 years point to an annual incidence average of 23 freshman cases per year.
- In the 9 years under consideration, there were a total of 79 cases involving sophomores only. While this is still unacceptably high, the incidence rate has in fact dropped from 23 a year among freshmen to 9 per year among sophomores. This is not a perfect measure of our assurance of honesty effectiveness and efficiency, by any stretch. However the downward trend from freshmen to sophomores — and even further among juniors/seniors (7 cases per year) and graduate students (averaging 5 cheating cases per year) is a helpful sign that progress on the assurance of honesty front is being made, albeit at a slower pace than the situation clearly demands. An alternative explanation for the lower incidence rate among senior classmen is the natural fear, among some, of jeopardizing their graduation if they are caught cheating.

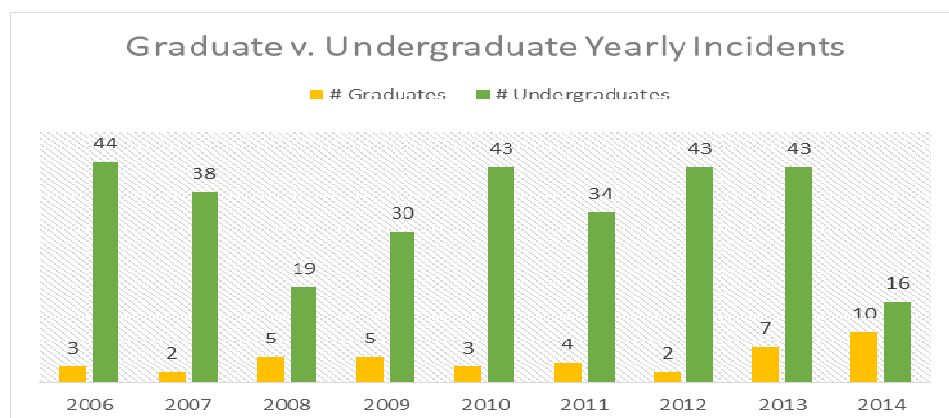


Figure 2 Breakdown of Cheating Incidents between Undergraduate and Graduate Students, 2006-2014

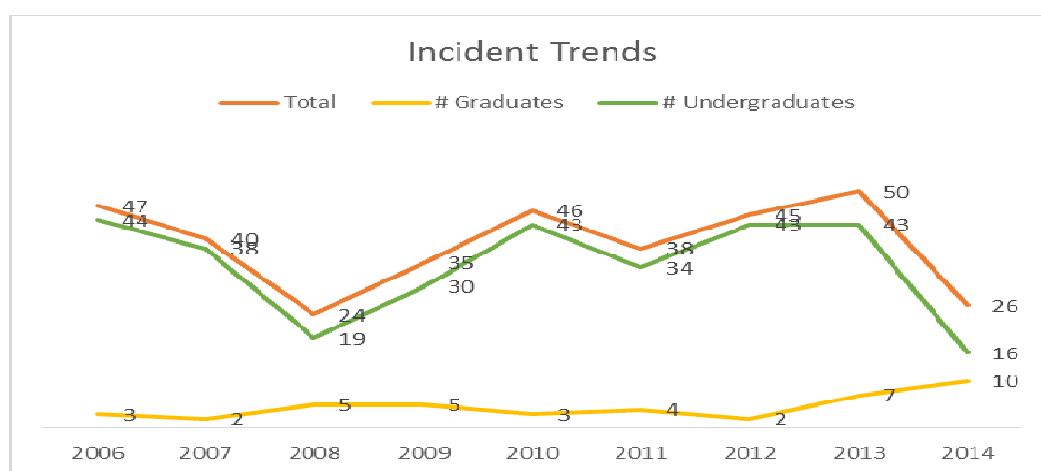


Figure 3 Trend-line of Cheating Incidents — 2006 to 2014

The third explanation worthy of note is that the school's overall infrastructure for detecting cheating has improved, at the same time as more faculty have taken a keener role in such detection and reporting. It goes without saying that faculty has to be interested in looking for incidents of academic dishonesty in order for them to find culprits. Technology-aided cheating detection via such tools as turnitin.com and SafeAssign has clearly improved among faculty in the college. The Turnitin.com plagiarism detection software license, for instance, costs the constituent University \$72,105 a year, which is still a worthwhile investment given the serious nature of the cause at hand. The fourth and final measure of the college's AoH effectiveness is to be gleaned from the fact that our comprehensive Assurance of Honesty policy is now being adopted as the benchmark and best practice by other colleges in the parent university system.

Other additional and critical analyses can be made based on the results presented in — or reconstituted from — Table 1. This is vital in order to fully address all of the original objectives of this paper enunciated earlier on. Some of the more noteworthy are: the types of student infringements that triggered academic dishonesty reports by faculty, the types of sanctions and punishments attending these infringements, the trend-line and gender profile of reported cases during the 9 years from 2006 to 2014, as well as the break-down of these cases by nationality (American versus International students) as well as by level — undergraduate versus graduate offenses. Each of these is discussed next.

**Table 3 Breakdown by Offense of the 2011-2014 Academic Dishonesty Cases among
Undergraduate (U) and Graduate (G) Students**

Nature of Offense	Grand #	Totals %	U-Total	U%	G-Total	G%	Overall
Using unauthorized source	5	3%	5	100%	0	0%	100%
Cheating during examination/test/quiz	19	12%	12	63%	7	37%	100%
Non-attribution of sources	49	31%	32	65%	17	35%	100%
Use of other students' work	63	40%	60	95%	3	5%	100%
Unlawfully obtained copy of graded materials	3	2%	3	100%	0	0%	100%
Unauthorized collaboration	10	6%	10	100%	0	0%	100%
Tampering with university computing system	1	1%	1	100%	0	0%	100%
Online Course cheating	9	5%	0	0%	9	100%	100%
Total	159	100%					

4.1 Types of Academic Dishonesty Offenses by Students — 2011 to 2014

A relevant question, at this point, is: what exact offenses have been committed by these students? Table 3 provides the types of offences committed in the four years from 2011 to 2014. A total of 159 offences were committed in this timeframe, with the following characteristics:

(a) Some 40% have been caught using another student's work as either their own or with insufferably minor adjustments.

(b) In 31% of the cases, a prima facie case has been made of either improper or completely non-existent attribution of utilized material to external sources, commonly known as plagiarism. Together, using another student's work and plagiarism have accounted for a preponderance of all offenses, at 71%.

(c) Other high percentage incidents have involved outright cheating on exams, assignments and quizzes using smartphones, cellphones, and notes (12%), unauthorized collaboration with other students (6%), and cheating in online courses (5%). One student even tampered with the entire university's computing system to try and gain an undue advantage.

4.2 Nature of Actions Taken by the OVC College of Business

As important as it is to build prima facie evidence against student cheating, it is equally important to identify and analyze the actions taken by faculty and the Business Dean's Office in light of such offenses. We again turn to Table 1, which reveals that of the 351 total students:

(a) Some 71.5%, the clear majority, were given a failing grade on the particular quiz or assignment. A further 9.6% were made to fail the exam in question. When combined, failure of the exam or assignment accounted for 81% of official penalties aimed at punishing current behavior, with the clear intent that future student behavior will change and be in tandem with high academic and ethical standards.

(b) Points were deducted from either exams or assignments in 5.4% of the cases, while 11% were made to fail the entire course because their actions were clearly deemed to be egregiously defiant of acceptable academic behavior.

(c) One undergraduate student who was in the final semester of their undergraduate degree was dismissed from both the OVC-COB and the parent University, entirely, in 2007. This happened after three severe warnings were given to the student in person and in writing, after dishonesty by the student was both documented and proven. The student had the audacity to cheat yet again. It has to be noted that between 2003 and 2005 (a period that is outside the current frame of reference), three other students had already been dismissed for repeat offences:

one was an undergraduate, while the other two were both MBA students.

4.3 Dishonesty Trends by Gender and Nationality

Both Table 2 and Figures 2 and 3 are unambiguous about undergraduate students cheating at a higher rate than their graduate counterparts. In fact the only time that the proportion of graduate incidents has exceeded the 20% mark was in 2008 and 2014. In terms of gender profiles, there are suggestions in the literature — by, among others, McCabe (2005), Jones (2011), Mwamwenda and Monyooe (2000) — that male University students tend to cheat more than their female counterparts. This assertion is borne out by the current study, which finds that of the 351 cheating incidents, only 114 (32%) were committed by female students. The preponderance of cases — that is, 237 (68%) — involved male students. This study utilizes the traditional, long-held definition of gender, as opposed to its newer variants.

What is the cheating profile by nationality, specifically between American students and non-American (International) students? Of the 351 total cases of academic dishonesty reported between 2006 and Fall 2014, a total of 178 (or 51%) have been committed by American students, while the remaining 49% have been international students. Given that international students only constitute between 5-8% of total student enrollment in the entire OVC University, the case can be made that international students tend to cheat in numbers that are disproportionate to their low overall enrollments at the University.

4.4 Online Business Classes: Additional Academic Dishonesty Perspectives

This paper would be incomplete if it did not address the emergent subject of cheating in online classes. Although little has been said thus far about online cheating, Table 3 in fact reveals that in the 2011-2014 time frame, it accounted for 5% of the 159 cases of cheating in the OVC College of Business. All the cases, incidentally, involved only graduate students. The OVC-COB offers online courses in three of its seven graduate programs: the MBA Program (AACSB accredited), the Master of Science in Information Systems (AACSB accredited) and the Master of Science in Telecommunications Systems Management (TSM). It is a fact that technological advancements in recent years have triggered new and “innovative” ways of cheating among students who take online courses. Online forms of cheating can take many forms, including (a) the use of smartphones to hide formulas, notes, or take pictures of online questions for later use by friends, (b) cut and paste plagiarism from internet sources, (c) submitting papers purchased or downloaded from a term-paper mill or website (McCabe, 2005), (d) having another student take an exam or quiz on behalf of the rightful member of the online class or section of the same course, (e) texting answers to others during the exam, and finally (f) saving notes in cellphones for use during the exam. As enrollments in online programs increase over time, the problem of online cheating will get correspondingly worse. It goes without saying that greater attention should be paid to online cheating.

4.5 Repeat Offenders

The academic dishonesty records in the College were updated in September 2014. At this point, a total of 21 repeat offenders were discovered. Of these, 52% are international students, with the balance of 48% being Americans. These 21 repeat offenders fall into two categories:

Those who have since graduated: Of the 21, a total of 9 have already graduated. It goes without saying that as a College, we should have been more diligent in identifying this group before they graduated. Not much can be done to and for this group at this point. When contacted by the Associate Dean of the College in Fall 2014, one of these students sent the following response: “I am unable to come to your office. I do not attend the OVC University anymore and do not live in the area”.

Those who are still students: On October 10, 2014, the Associate Dean of the OVC College of Business sent a red alert to each of the 12 repeat offenders who are still students. This was by way of a warning letter — for which their official signatures of acknowledgement and understanding were required — telling them that they would be dismissed from the College and the constituent University if they ever cheat again. Appendix A presents the “Academic Dishonesty Student Statement of Understanding and Agreement Form” that each student had to sign.

Any incident of dishonesty — whether at the national or international level — represents a black mark on our students and on humanity generally. When a preponderance of offenders — including repeat offenders — are international students (in relation to their low overall proportion of the entire student body), this raises the specter of an “international army of cheaters” being unleashed on to the global economic stage. That is not good for anybody. This is especially worrisome because a number of the students caught cheating are from one of the largest economies and most populous countries in the world. The negative multiplier effects of this scenario are only too obvious.

5. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

This paper discusses one of the most consequential academic issues of our time: academic dishonesty among university students. It uses the example of an AACSB-accredited College of Business in the Ohio Valley Conference of schools in the United States. It details the school’s Academic Dishonesty Policy (ADP), and identifies the number of student cheating cases and sanctions from 2006 to 2014. Key findings include the fact that 351 students have cheated over the 9-year period, most of them disproportionately male, and that international students cheat in numbers that are disproportionate to their low enrollment profiles on campus. Additionally, a preponderance of cases involve freshmen, while undergraduates account for the bulk of cheating incidents (88%, to be more specific). The school has dealt with these cases in a variety of ways including warnings, failing students on exams, failing students in the entire course, as well as the dismissal of one undergraduate student in 2007.

It is fair to suggest, based on these findings and a literature that is rich in additional data, that if cheating among business students in universities is not aggressively addressed, the long-term consequences could be a major moral and ethical failure that would make the 2001 Enron Scandal look like a minor slap on the world’s professional and economic conscience. For the reader’s elucidation, Enron was an energy company — now out of business — where fraudulent accounting practices led to America’s biggest moral and ethical corporate failure. Student academic dishonesty has the clear potential to breed corporate malfeasance later on — the types of illegal actions, moral and ethical failures whose partial genesis in academic dishonesty needs to be effectively addressed early at the university level.

We advance, suggest, and recommend, by way of conclusion and significant contribution to the body of knowledge on academic dishonesty, a 10-point framework for dealing with this consequential issue on college campuses.

Towards A 10-Point Assurance of Honesty Strategy

We offer the following ten-point strategy and best practices as a comprehensive recommendation to be used by Universities worldwide to aggressively deal with academic dishonesty among students generally.

- (1) Assurance of Honesty Policy: Establish a visible, comprehensive, faculty-driven and enforceable

assurance of honesty (AoH) policy that reduces — and ideally eliminates — academic dishonesty among business students and other university students generally. The OVC-COB, the basis of this study, provides the framework for precisely such a policy. There is solid support in the literature for such an institutionalized ethical honor code. McCabe and Pavela (2000) for instance found empirical confirmation of a link between the presence of a student honor code and lower levels of student cheating. McCabe and Pavela (2000) go on to make the useful argument that university campuses with honor codes actively communicate to students the importance of academic integrity as a core institutional value, and point out the role students must play in attaining this institutional goal.

(2) Ethics Education: Academic dishonesty originates from the broader area of ethics — or, in this particular case, the specific lack or shortage thereof. It is not a stretch to suggest, therefore, that ethics education in business schools needs to be part of the business core needing constant revision, reinforcement, and integration throughout the business curriculum. Premeaux (2005) makes the useful assertion that teaching business ethics requires that professors provide clear distinctions between right and wrong, and illustrate the ramifications of unethical behavior — as well as the inherent benefits of behaving ethically. AACSB-International, the premier accrediting agency for business schools in the world, feels so strongly about ethics education that in 2004 it issued its widely cited report: “Ethics Education in Business Schools.” This was against the backdrop of corporate scandals at major firms such as Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco. In the report, AACSB (2004) called on business schools to “make the world a better place” by equipping their students with skills to be ethical and successful managers and leaders. In the latest accreditation standards issued in 2013, AACSB (2013) renews this call and commitment to ethics education in Standard 9. The standard calls for curriculum content to be appropriate to the general expectations of degree programs and their assurance of learning (AoL), and goes on to require student competence and skills in ethical understanding and reasoning.

(3) Rehabilitative, Teaching Moments: In reviewing the results presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3, the reader may be tempted to ask the not so illogical question: “Well, why have you not dismissed at least 5% of the 351 cheaters between 2006 and 2014?” There is a logical explanation for this. It has to do with a sincere desire, on our part, to “rehabilitate” students, by providing “teaching moments”. Our approach has solid support in the literature. McCabe (2005) for instance makes the point that while strong punitive measures against students are clearly appropriate for more serious forms of cheating, it’s also clear that most student cheating is far less egregious. What — McCabe (2005) asks — is an appropriate sanction for a student who cuts and pastes a few sentences from a source on the internet without attribution? It may well be that the student is genuinely ignorant about citation etiquette. If the student is a first offender — the 58% “Freshman Factor” we alluded to in the results from Table 1 — what is the educational value of a strong sanction? We take the logical view that most students learn from their mistakes, hence our first reaction calls for “rehabilitation” rather than, necessarily, aggressive punitive action such as expulsion/dismissal.

(4) Executives on Campus Programs: As part of Executives on Campus (EoC) or Executives in Residence (EiR) programs, there is a clear need to encourage visiting industry executives to speak strongly and forcefully about the values/virtues of good ethical conduct, and the consequent perils to personal careers and the broader world economy generally if ethical misconduct becomes pervasive.

(5) Customized Orientation for International Students: Of the 26 cases in Fall 2014 alone, 17 (71%) are international students. Of these 17, a total of 8 (47%) are all graduate students from the same country in Asia. They are from two graduate programs: the Master of Science in Information Systems (MSIS) and the Master of Science in Telecommunications Systems Management (TSM). The 8 Students copied an answer from a student’s

file from 2012. All of them were awarded a zero for the assignment. The material they copied from 2012 has since been updated in the book, a fact they were not aware of. Going forward, the OVC-COB intends to work with the university's Institute for International Studies (IIS) so that an "Ethics Orientation" becomes a visible and permanent feature for all international students when they arrive on campus. If additional, country-specific orientation sessions are warranted for countries with large numbers of incoming students, the College of Business will take the lead in getting this done as well.

(6) Online Programs and Technology-Aided Impediments to Cheating: The number of online courses and 100% online graduate and undergraduate programs in the U.S. has seen phenomenal growth in recent years, with some estimates putting internet usage growth at 152% since 2000 (Jones, 2011). This growth is expected to continue for many years to come, what with the "convenience factor" offered by online instruction and the fact that students increasingly do everything else online anyway. The OVC College of Business, for instance, began offering online MBA courses in 2005. By Fall 2013, its 100% online enrollment accounted for 55% of the 300 students on the MBA program. With this technology-driven shift in instruction comes a corresponding shift in the nature of student academic dishonesty. It seems logical, therefore, that at least two things ought to happen in order to combat online cheating.

(a) Faculty must keep abreast of the new, creative ways in which online students try to cheat.

(b) The central university administration must improve and update the overall infrastructure for detecting online cheating. The OVC University, for instance, pays \$72,105 a year for the Turnitin.com license, which enables faculty to detect some aspects of both on-campus and online cheating. Jones (2011) goes so far as to argue that student cheating methods have gone "viral", and that educators must be proactive and develop instructional strategies that integrate all facets of appropriate digital citizenship.

(7) People Process, more than a Paper Process: The argument here is a fairly straight forward one: the assurance of honesty (AoH) policy must be seen to be a "people" process that is actually followed, as opposed to being a mere "paper" process where the honor code is written in university mission statements and strategic plans without being "actualized" in practice.

(8) Develop Fair, Prompt, and Efficient Due Process Procedures: McCabe and Pavela (2000) are convincing in making the "fair due process" argument. While students involved in cheating deserve a timely and fair hearing — especially if they appeal their cases — faculty, too, deserve fundamental fairness, and not what the authors characterize as "procedural complexity." The two authors are of the correct view that active faculty participation in the assurance of honesty (AoH) process is enhanced if individual faculty have discretion in resolving less serious first offenses after meeting with accused students. This, indeed, is the attendant approach in the Ohio Valley Conference College of Business that informs this paper.

(9) Benchmark with Peer, Competitive, and Aspirant Schools: The continuous improvement paradigm demands that colleges of business review the prevailing honor code practices in place at other schools, with a view to making comparative improvements. Using phraseology that is common among AACSB-accredited programs, the best schools to do this against are the peer, competitive, and aspirant schools. For the OVC-COB, comparable peers would be schools in states contiguous to the Southeast region (but not close enough to be directly competitive to the OVC-COB), and have similarity of mission. The competitive schools represent those institutions with which the OVC-COB competes on a number of levels including, but not limited to: students, faculty, and financial resources as well as outreach programs and research funding. Finally, the aspirant group is just that: in this case, these would be schools whose academic integrity practices one would aspire to emulate

because they are rooted in a long tradition of excellence in minimizing unethical student conduct.

(10) Campus-wide, All-Inclusive Effort: Academic and student honor codes are most likely to succeed — and cases of student cheating are likely to be lower — when all constituent units on campus pursue assurance of honesty among students with equal vigor and interest. In an era when our university students take courses across disciplines, those taking business and music classes, for instance, should be exposed to the same expectations about academic integrity, even though business and music courses are domiciled in two different colleges on the university campus. Stated differently, there must be a faculty-led “full-court press” against academic dishonesty that permeates the entire campus community. Admittedly, this is a weakness found at the parent campus of the Ohio Valley Conference University. While the OVC-COB has a long-standing, credible and vigorous student dishonesty detection and sanction regime, other colleges within the same university are discernibly less so.

Going forward, an important contribution of this paper will be to hopefully influence change away from this status quo. Such a comprehensive, multifaceted approach to student cheating (that is, “it takes a village”) has the additional advantage that no campus constituency will shift the “blame” for cheating elsewhere, since everyone will be operating with the same stringent academic and honor standards. This will involve, inter alia, keeping senior members of the university central administration abreast of the holistic profile, record, and sanctions of student cheating campus-wide. An OVC University Honor Code Database will be developed, led by the College of Business, where names of all offending students will be kept for at least 6-year period. Six years is long enough to get any undergraduate or graduate student matriculated through the system. The database will be accessible to all academic deans and assistant/associate deans so that every time there is a reported and proven case of dishonesty, two things will happen: respective units will enter the name of the student in the database, as well as check to see whether the student in question is a multiple offender. Appropriate action will then follow from there.

The framework for such a student dishonesty database has already been developed by the College of Business. Its current database — which is the empirical basis for this paper — has the following data entry criteria: name of the student, year during which the cheating occurred, the nature of the incident, the course venue of the incident, as well as the nature of the punishment or sanction by the administration. We believe that such a database — and the ensuing data and information sharing among constituent units on campus — will engender a robust culture of aggressively molding student ethical conduct campus-wide.

Acknowledgements

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge — with gratitude — the research assistance of Mariam McLain (MBA Student) and Robert McLain (MBA Graduate), both of whom are from the AACSSB-Accredited College of Business. Debbie Nesbitt, Manager in the Dean’s Office, as well as student workers Miranda Bivins, Lauren Vaughn and Hannah Cochran provided critical assistance, for which we are grateful.

References:

- AACSB (2013). “2013 Standards: A bold evolution for the global business revolution”, retrieved September 22, 2014, available online at: <http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/standards/2013-standards.aspx>.
- AACSB (2004). “Ethics education in business schools”, Report of the ethics education task force to AACSB International’s Board of Directors.
- Callahan E. S. (2008). “Beyond the ethics course: Making conduct count”, *McGeorge Law Review*, Vol. 39, pp. 757-762.

**Assurance of Honesty (AoH) in Traditional and Online Business Programs in an AACSB-Accredited Business School:
Insights from Experience**

- Jones D. L. R. (2011). "Academic dishonesty: Are more students cheating?", *Business Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 141-150.
- McCabe D. L. (2005). "It takes a village: Academic dishonesty", *Liberal Education*, Summer/fall, pp. 26-31.
- McCabe D. L. and Pavela G. (2000). "Some good news about academic integrity", *Change*, September/October, pp. 32-38.
- Mwamwenda T. S. and Monyooe L. A. (2000). "Cheating among university of Transkei students", *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 87, No. 1, pp. 148-150.
- Premeaux S. R. (2005). "Undergraduate student perceptions regarding cheating: Tier 1 versus tier 2 AACSB accredited business schools", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 62, pp. 407-418.
- Stripling J. (2004, September 8). "A Chapel Hill, a scandal that won't die: The chronicle of higher education", retrieved September 15, 2014, available online at: <http://chronicle.com/article/At-Chapel-Hill-a-Scandal-That/148665>.
- Williams S., Beard J. and Tanner M. (2011 July/August). "Coping with millennials", *BizEd*, retrieved October 1, 2014, available online at: <http://www.e-digitaleditions.com/i/72038>.

Appendix A: Academic Dishonesty Student Statement of Understanding and Agreement Form

This serves to confirm that the student whose name and signature appear below does understand and agree to all of the following statements, in their entirety:

That the Ohio Valley Conference College of Business is intolerant of all forms of academic dishonesty, and there will be severe consequences for all students who are caught cheating.

That the student was involved in more than one case of academic dishonesty.

That said dishonesty was duly reported by a faculty member, or someone designated on behalf of a faculty member, in the Ohio Valley Conference College of Business or a constituent unit within the OVC University.

That if this student is EVER again involved in another case of academic dishonesty, the consequences will be expulsion/dismissal from the OVC-COB with the potential of exclusion from all other academic programs at the OVC University. This understanding is not negotiable, since the case of cheating is proven.

That this, in fact, is their FINAL WARNING against cheating.

Full Name of Student:

ID#:

Signature:

Date:

Witness: Associate Dean of the OVC College of Business

Vision and Mission Statements

Vision: The College of Business aspires to be one of the best regional business schools in the nation.

Mission: The Ohio Valley Conference College of Business (OVC-COB) prepares students for careers in the dynamic environments of business, information technology, public and private organizations, and mass communications. With a domestic student population drawn primarily from Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Missouri, and Illinois; and a substantial international student population; the OVC-COB strives for excellence by:

- Engaging students in the acquisition of fundamental knowledge; mastery of professional skills (including oral and written communication, problem solving and critical thinking); and the application of knowledge and skills to emerging issues, technologies, and professional practices in a student-centered learning environment.
- Providing students with quality undergraduate and master's degree programs embodied in relevant curricula and innovative learning environments.
- Encouraging students in intellectual and social development by providing a high degree of student and faculty interaction both inside and outside the classroom, cultivating leadership, and developing an appreciation for ethical issues and diversity in the global market place.
- Providing students with global perspectives in the classroom, while also encouraging both students and faculty to pursue opportunities for international travel and learning.
- Developing and encouraging academic outreach, collaborative relationships with alumni, business and industry, public schools, government agencies and non-profit organizations, as well as colleges and universities at home and abroad.
- Supporting a faculty commitment to quality teaching, service and continuous improvement that is enhanced by a 50% to 65% focus on Discipline Based Scholarship (DBS), with secondary emphasis on both Contributions to Practice (CP) and Learning and Pedagogical Scholarship (LPS).

**Assurance of Honesty (AoH) in Traditional and Online Business Programs in an AACSB-Accredited Business School:
Insights from Experience**

Values and Guiding Principles: Emphasizing teaching, research and broad-based service (in that order), the College espouses and embraces the same values as Murray State University — the parent institution — namely: Accessibility, Academic Freedom, Accountability, Diversity, Excellence, Integrity, Nurturing Environment, Shared Governance, and Student-Centered Learning.

Major Vision and Mission revisions and broad-based stakeholder affirmations were made in: Fall 2000; Fall 2003; Summer 2007, Summer 2008, Summer 2011 and Fall 2011.

Assurance of Learning Goals for Various Programs in the OVC College of Business

Assurance of Learning Goals for the Undergraduate Bachelor of Science in Business (BSB) Program: Graduates of the BSB programs shall be able to:	Courses Where Assessed
Goal 1: Fundamental Knowledge: Demonstrate a fundamental knowledge of the core business disciplines.	MGT 590
Goal 2: Problem-Solving and Decision-making: Demonstrate effective problem solving and decision making skills in business situations.	FIN 330, MGT 443
Goal 3: Information Technology: Apply information technology tools appropriately in the analysis of business problems.	BPA 355, CIS 307
Goal 4: Ethical Issues: Perform a structured analysis of ethical issues in business.	BPA 442
Goal 5: Global and Multicultural Dimensions: Demonstrate knowledge of the global and multicultural dimensions of the modern business environment.	ECO 310
Goal 6 (a): Effective Oral Communication: Communicate effectively in oral formats.	MGT 590
Goal 6 (b): Effective Written Communication: Communicate effectively in written formats.	BPA 215
Assurance of Learning Goals for all MBA Programs: MBA Graduates will:	Where Assessed
Goal 1: Core Business Knowledge: Possess the current working body of knowledge in the business disciplines of Management, Marketing, Managerial Accounting, Managerial Economics, Corporate Finance, and Quantitative Management Science.	MGT 656
Goal 2: Strategic Problem Solving and Decision Making: Be able to incorporate a strategic perspective into their decision making and problem solving processes after identifying, analyzing, and applying relevant data and information.	ECO 625
Goal 3: Effective Written Communication: Students will be able to effectively communicate ideas in written professional reports.	MGT 656
Goal 4: Ethical Issues: Students will be able to incorporate the various ethical perspectives into their decision making and problem solving processes after identifying, analyzing, and applying relevant data and information.	MKT 667 ACC 604
Goal 5: Technology Awareness and Usage: Students will apply information technology tools appropriately in the analysis of business problems.	FIN 602
Goal 6: Global Awareness and Diversity Issues: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of internationalization on businesses.	FIN 602
AoL Goals for the Master of Science in Information Systems (MSIS) Program	Where Assessed
Goal 1: Core IS Knowledge: Students will possess the current working body of knowledge in the Information Systems field.	CIS 650, CIS 609, CIS 645
Goal 2: Students will have knowledge of Business Intelligence and Decision Support and Quantitative Financial Controls.	CIS 695, CIS 609, CIS 645
Goal 3: Students will have adequate interpersonal skills to be effective in business world.	CIS 650, CIS 695
Goal 4: Students will have adequate communication skills to be effective in business world.	CIS 650, CIS 695
Goal 5: Students will have adequate awareness of ethical, global and multi-cultural issues in information systems.	CIS 650