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## More Ethics Training in Classroom Will Benefit Workplace Behaviors Later

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## More Ethics Training in Classroom Will Benefit Workplace Behaviors Later

By William Steiger  
UCF Forum columnist

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Cheating at business schools of all sizes is widespread, according to a study a few years ago by the Association to Advance College Schools of Business, which accredits 740 of the world's best business schools in 50 countries.

Since it appears that many students at those accredited schools tend to accept, or at least tolerate, academic dishonesty — despite their exposure to ethics as mandated by the association — it is possible that they will be open to dishonesty and unethical behavior in the workplace.

Another study by researchers Nonis and Swift at six business schools found a high correlation between the frequency of cheating at college and the frequency of cheating later at work. They found that about 10 percent of the respondents identified only 12 of the 21 dishonest workplace behaviors as not examples of cheating. The researchers also found a significant relationship between students' beliefs about whether a work behavior is cheating and the frequency with which they actually engaged in cheating. This is a fundamental weakness in their belief system and personal ethics.

The findings indicate that once a student believes that cheating is acceptable in his or her eyes, the more likely this behavior will be used in an academic or workplace setting. While academic dishonesty appears to be a serious issue in business schools, the more troubling finding is the relationship between academic dishonesty and unethical behavior in business after college.

Ethics training needs to become a fundamental responsibility by institutions as students prepare for a business career.

This presents two challenges:

- \* Can business schools reduce dishonest academic behavior through business-ethics education?
- \* How should they incorporate ethical business training into the curriculum so it translates into workplace honesty?

I believe business schools *can* reduce dishonest academic behavior through ethics course work. And there is empirical evidence that certain deterrents can reduce the level of academic cheating.

For example, the UCF College of Business Administration has a state-of-the-art testing center that features closed-circuit cameras and computer-screen proctors that monitor every one of the 200 testing seats. Cheating in the lab has been virtually eliminated. And the college requirement to define cheating in every syllabus has reduced the “I didn’t know” excuse for dishonest student behavior.

The next step is to design and test an ethics class that results in ethical student academic behavior. This type of training should also include a culture of integrity in business schools. Some argue that this cannot be done due to the frequency of unethical business news from beyond the walls of the business school, but I do not agree.

Faculty members have the responsibility to model ethical behavior in their dealings with students. It is easier to model behavior when you have observed it.

The final consideration is how to translate business-ethics academics into career-workplace honesty.

That starts with ethical behavior while *in* college. Business schools should use examples of ethical practices and decision-making throughout the curriculum, not just in the ethics class.

If these ethics practices can be embedded in the individual classes, it can lead to the culture of integrity that will go forward with students into their new careers - and benefit all of us.

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