

Academic Integrity Policy:

Procedures in Cases of Alleged Academic Dishonesty

The Mount Olive College Academic Honor Policy states that the College “operates according to an honor system which assumes that all members of the College community will respect the principles of honesty, integrity, and mutual trust.” Expanding on the Academic Honor Policy, the College Covenant includes values relevant to academic endeavors: Honesty, Trustworthiness, Justice, Responsibility, and Respect. The Covenant ends with the following: “While people come to this College from different backgrounds, each person who chooses to be a part of the community is expected to strive for these high standards.”

Academic dishonesty diminishes the integrity of the entire College, and its students, faculty, and administration have a vested interest in providing a principled and professional procedure to resolve issues of academic integrity.

I. The Nature of Academic Integrity

Students who possess academic integrity share a basic quality: When they present their work to instructors, it is either solely their work, or they borrow material from others and appropriately document the source.

Students with academic integrity do not cheat, meaning that they do nothing that gives them an unfair advantage over other students. The following is a list of examples of cheating, but it is not inclusive of all types of cheating:

- Allowing other students to copy one’s work and submit it as their own
- Submitting work to an instructor that was previously submitted to a different instructor without the current instructor’s permission
- Using notes, text-messages, cell phones, or preprogrammed calculators during examinations without the instructor’s permission
- Sending or receiving any information during an examination meant to improve the student’s performance in the examination
- Obtaining the content of an examination and using it to prepare for the examination and/or sharing it with another student

- Using material during on-line or take-home examinations that gives the student an unfair advantage over other students
- Falsifying or inventing information or sources in assignments
- Providing false information by forging or otherwise fabricating an official College document
- Fabricating reasons for missing examinations or deadlines
- Changing incorrect answers to correct ones on examinations that are scored in class, or falsely asserting that the instructor made a mistake in grading an examination

Students with academic integrity also do not plagiarize, meaning that they do not present the work of others as being their own work, failing to reference the author of the original material. The following is a list of examples of plagiarism, but it is not inclusive of all types of plagiarism:

- Presenting verbally, electronically, or in writing the work of others, including purchased research papers, without giving proper credit to the author
- Using direct quotations without quotation marks and/or without crediting the source
- Paraphrasing a document without citing the source
- Failing to give adequate citations for material obtained through research, including electronic research and the use of electronic databases
- Taking credit for a group project without participating as required in the assignment

II. Procedures for Addressing Academic Dishonesty

The following procedures shall be followed to adjudicate violations of the College's Academic Honor Policy. To ensure that the same procedures are carefully followed in each case, the word "shall" means that the action referred to must be taken in all circumstances.

The procedures to be followed in cases of academic dishonesty are presented in four sections. The first section describes the steps that instructors shall follow when adjudicating possible violations of the College Honor Policy; the second section describes the procedures if a student appeals the instructor's decision to the Committee on Academic Integrity; the third section describes the procedures involved if the instructor chooses to refer the case to the Vice President for Student Development/College Judicial Board for college-level sanctions; and the final section describes the procedures to be followed if the student appeals the College Judicial Board's decision to the College Judicial Appeals Board.

A. Instructor procedures

1. Gather information. An instructor who learns of a possible violation of the College Honor Policy by a student shall research the situation to determine if a violation has occurred. If the evidence is not sufficient to initiate a case against the student, the issue is dropped. If the evidence indicates that a violation may have taken place, the instructor shall continue to the next step in the process which is to contact and advise the student of the situation.

If the original allegation is made by someone other than the instructor, for example, another student, the instructor shall do everything within reason to protect the privacy of the complainant. This can occur by using the information presented by the complainant to research the allegation in order to determine its validity and to obtain sufficient information so that the evidence provided by the original complainant is no longer necessary. If this can be accomplished, the instructor shall not divulge the identity of the complainant but simply present the instructor's own findings. In cases in which the instructor must rely solely or substantially on the word of the complainant to move the case forward, the complainant must agree to waive the right of privacy, or the instructor shall drop the case.

2. Contact the student. The instructor who believes a violation has taken place sends a letter to the student which:

- Advises the student of the alleged violation of the College Honor Policy and the specific reasons for the belief that a violation has occurred.
- Lists the range of possible academic and college-level sanctions the student may face if found responsible for the violation
- Directs the student not to withdraw from the course at issue but to remain in it until the situation is resolved or the instructor directs otherwise. The instructor also shall request the Vice President for Academic Affairs to contact the Registrar's office. The Vice President for Academic Affairs shall direct the Registrar not to allow the student to withdraw from the course. If the student has already withdrawn from the course, the Registrar shall reverse the withdrawal and reinstate the student in the course.
- Requires the student to contact the instructor within seven business days of the date the letter was sent to make an appointment for a mandatory instructor-student hearing

- Directs the student to compose a detailed document in response to the alleged violation and forward it to the instructor at least 24 hours before the scheduled hearing
- Directs the student not to destroy any evidence relevant to the alleged violation and to bring to the hearing all evidence, whether it supports or impeaches the student's position
- Advises the student that failure to respond to the instructor by the deadline or to appear at the mandatory hearing shall be construed as a plea of "no contest," and sanctions shall be imposed. The student shall be sent notification of this action by letter within three business days. A copy of the letter shall be forwarded to the Chair of the instructor's department; if the instructor is the Chair of the Department, the copy shall be sent to the Dean of the School.
- Advises the student that if the student disagrees with the decision regarding responsibility or the sanction for the violation, the matter may be appealed to the Committee on Academic Integrity within seven business days

This letter and all letters written by College representatives during the entire adjudicative process shall be on College stationery, clearly marked CONFIDENTIAL, and maintained in a secure location.

3. Instructor-student hearing. The instructor first reminds the student of each point in the letter the instructor sent the student so that there is no confusion about the situation and its seriousness. The instructor then presents the reasons for believing the student violated the College Honor Policy and invites the student to respond to each point. The student ultimately has two choices: to accept or to deny responsibility for the violation. At the end of the hearing, the instructor indicates that, after reviewing all the evidence, the instructor shall send the student a letter indicating the instructor's decision within three business days.

The meeting between the instructor and student, and all subsequent committee or board meetings, shall be in person, in contrast to communicating electronically. All meetings shall be documented and include the names of all participants and the date, time, and location of the meeting.

Students enrolled in courses at distant learning centers or online who are suspected of academic dishonesty and who would find it a legitimate hardship to meet personally with their instructor or the Committee on Academic Integrity will go through the same adjudication process described above with the

exception that they will be permitted to participate by telephone (not email) in hearings that would ordinarily require their presence.

4. The instructor's decision.

During the decision process, the instructor uses the "clear and convincing evidence" standard of proof that the student committed a violation of the College Honor Policy. This standard lies midpoint between the "preponderance of evidence" standard, which means that there is, at a minimum, over fifty percent probability that the student committed the violation, and the "guilty beyond a reasonable doubt" standard, which means that the belief that the student committed the violation is certain or very near certain. In other words, the "clear and convincing" standard means that the student "most probably" committed the violation. Because the instructor brought forth the allegation, the instructor bears the burden of proof. There is no burden on the student to prove innocence.

The instructor considers the totality of the circumstances in determining whether the student is responsible for the violation. These circumstances include the nature of the violation, the student's subjective culpability, the student's intentions, the degree of premeditation, the student's acceptance of personal responsibility, the student's awareness of the social justice ramifications of the violation, the actual or potential harm to other students, the student's attitude toward the violation and the adjudicative process, the student's disciplinary history (which can be obtained from the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Development), and any other aggravating or mitigating factors.

Ultimately, the instructor has two choices: to find the student responsible for the violation and impose sanctions or to find the student not responsible and drop the matter. In either case, the instructor shall notify the student of the decision by letter within three business days. If the student is found responsible and sanctions are imposed, the letter shall also indicate that the student has seven business days to appeal the case to the Committee on Academic Integrity if the student believes that one or more of the College's criteria for appeal can be met. If the student fails to appeal within the seven day limit, the Committee on Academic Integrity shall not accept the case, and the instructor's decision and sanction will be final.

In some cases, after the instructor finds the student responsible and imposes academic sanctions, the instructor may find the violation was so egregious that it calls for not only academic sanctions but also

college-level sanctions. If this occurs, the instructor shall refer the case to the Vice President for Student Development/College Judicial Board for further review and possible college-level sanctions. In this case, the instructor is the complainant and, as a member of the College community, has the right to formally charge a student with a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and make the referral (Student Handbook, Sec. 6.1).

B. Student appeal to the Committee on Academic Integrity

1. Criteria for appeal. A student who disagrees with the instructor's decision regarding the student's responsibility for the violation or with the severity of the academic sanction may lodge an appeal with the Committee on Academic Integrity. Because the student is initiating the appeal, the student bears the burden of proof, using the "clear and convincing proof" standard that one or more of the following criteria have been met:

- There is significant new information relevant to the case that was not available at the time of the original hearing
- There is evidence that the instructor was unduly biased in deciding the case
- The sanction the instructor imposed was capricious, that is, excessive when compared with previous sanctions for similar violations under similar circumstances
- The adjudication process, including the hearing, contained procedural errors so substantial as to deny the student a fair hearing. (Student Handbook, Sec. 6.8.4.2)

2. Appeal process.

- A student who believes that one or more of the criteria are met shall draft an appeal that clearly details the student's argument. The student forwards the appeal, along with copies of the original letter sent to the student by the instructor, the student's response to that letter, the student's documentation of the hearing, if any, and the letter indicating the instructor's decision by letter to the Chair of the Committee on Academic Integrity within seven business days of receiving the instructor's decision.
- The Chair of the Committee on Academic Integrity shall send a letter to the student advising that the appeal was received. The Chair also shall send a letter to the instructor informing the instructor of the student's appeal and stated grounds for appeal. The Chair also shall request the

instructor to provide a letter detailing the instructor's response to the appeal and the instructor's documentation of the original hearing. These documents are due to the Chair within seven business days of receiving the Chair's request. If the instructor fails to respond within seven days, the Committee shall hear the case based solely on the evidence presented by the student.

- If all documents from the instructor and student arrive in a timely fashion, the Committee on Academic Integrity meets within seven business days. The Committee has one task: to decide if the student has presented a preponderance of evidence that one or more of the criteria for appeal were met. The Committee's task is not to adjudicate the case or to decide on the appropriateness of the instructor's decision and/or sanction, except as it pertains to the criteria for appeal.

3. The Committee's decision

- Within three business days of the Committee's decision, the Chair will notify the instructor and student by letter of the Committee's decision.
- If the Committee finds the student has proven with a preponderance of evidence that one or more of the criteria for appeal was met, the Chair shall uphold the appeal. The letter to the instructor and student shall advise that the instructor has three options: to drop the charges, to modify the sanction, or to hear the case again in a manner that rectifies any procedural problems present at the first hearing. If the instructor plans to rehear the case, the instructor must advise the student within seven business days and follow the same protocol that existed in the first hearing.
- If the instructor rehears the case, the student may again appeal the instructor's decision or sanction as discussed above.
- If the Committee finds the student's argument for appeal unpersuasive, the instructor's decision on responsibility and sanctions stands. The Committee's decision is final regarding responsibility and academic sanctions. However, this does not preclude college-level sanctions being imposed by the Vice President for Student Development/College Judicial Board, as discussed below.

In contrast to the instructor's detailed documentation of the original hearing with the student, the documentation of the content of any committee or board meeting shall be brief and general. It shall include a short summary of what transpired at the meeting, in contrast to reporting detailed statements, specific details of the case, the reason underlining decisions, or the actual vote count.

C. Instructor referral to the Vice President for Student Development/College

Judicial Board for College-level Sanctions

After researching the violation, meeting with the student, and providing the student with the instructor's decision and academic sanctions according to the procedures discussed above, the instructor may choose to refer the case to the Vice President for Student Development/College Judicial Board for possible college-level sanctions. The Vice President for Student Development/College Judicial Board shall not proceed with a sanctions hearing until the student's appeal to the Committee on Academic Integrity is completed and the student's academic responsibility and sanction are upheld. The College Judicial Board acts solely as a sanctioning board and has one task: to decide, based on a preponderance of evidence, if the student's violation was so egregious as to warrant college-level sanctions, in addition to the academic sanctions which have already been imposed and will remain standing. College-level sanctions cover a wide range, for example, a written warning, campus service, fines, disciplinary probation, and separation from the College by suspension or expulsion (Student Handbook, Sec. 6.10 – 6.10.1).

Once a decision is reached, the Chair of the College Judicial Board shall inform the instructor and student by letter within three business days. If college-level sanctions are imposed, the student shall also be informed in the letter that the decision may be appealed to the College Judicial Appeals Board within seven business days of receiving the letter regarding the College Judicial Board's decision.

D. Student appeal to the College Judicial Appeals Board.

If the student appeals the College Judicial Board's decision regarding college-level sanctions to the College Judicial Appeals Board, the grounds for appeal are the same as those that applied to appeals to the Committee on Academic Integrity (Student Handbook, Sec. 6.8.4.2). Once again, the student has the burden of proof using the preponderance of evidence standard.

The College Judicial Appeals Board has one task: to decide if the student met the burden of proof in arguing that one or more of the criteria for appeal were met. If the College Judicial Appeals Board decides the student met the standard of proof, the College Judicial Board college-level sanctions are nullified. If the College Judicial Appeals Board decides the student failed to meet the standard of proof, the College Judicial Board sanctions stand.

The College Judicial Appeals Board's decision is final, except in cases in which the sanction is suspension or expulsion from the College, in which case the student may appeal the sanction to the President of the College within seven days (Student Handbook, 6.8.4.1).

Students enrolled in courses at distant learning centers or online who are suspected of academic dishonesty and who would find it a legitimate hardship to meet personally with their instructor or the Committee on Academic Integrity will go through the same adjudication process described above with the exception that they will be permitted to participate by telephone (not email) in hearings that would ordinarily require their presence.