Trust

BYU-Idaho and Pathway provides an honor code for its students to follow. Instructors who include the idea of academic integrity and show trust in their communication with students have a significant impact on the level of cheating that can occur in the classroom. We want our emphasis to be “Remember who you are and what you stand for” rather than “Don’t cheat.” This positive messaging changes the focus for students and provides an anchor to help them avoid cheating behaviors.

In a study performed by Thomas Tobin of the Northeastern Illinois University, he found that doing the following items promoted academic integrity and reduced the occurrences of cheating in his classes:

- Have an honor code
- Set up expectations early
- Give students periodic reminders
- Show students you care about their academic integrity
- Alleviate students’ pressure when possible

Have an Honor Code

We have an honor code for all students, whether they are enrolled in BYU-Idaho or Pathway courses. The honor code for both organizations states that students should be honest and avoid cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism in their work. While an honor code outlines a list of do’s and don’ts, it is important to not lose sight of the why behind an honor code. It is important to foster integrity and a desire to be good in our students. It helps to promote the honor code in an early announcement and even share a link for students to access.

For BYU-I students, Honor Code link
For Pathway students, Honor Code link

Set up Expectations Early

It is important to establish clear expectations early on with students. From your first communication, take the opportunity to outline guidelines for late work, discuss the honor code, and remind students to remember who they are and what they stand for. A great devotional given by Tyler Williams emphasizes the message of “Remember who you are and what you stand for.” Finding a short video clip from that devotional or another church source can help to illustrate the important principles for your students.

You can copy and paste this embed code into the HTML editor of your announcement to get a shortened video clip from Tyler Williams’ devotional address:

(start copying after here)
Sample Announcement:
“I am excited to have you in my class this semester. As we begin, I wanted to spend a moment to outline my expectations from you in this course. We have an honor code that I will expect you to uphold as students. This means being honest as you take quizzes or turn in assignments. Read and follow the instructions carefully. Instructions are found before each discussion, quiz, or assignment on the Content page. Never sell out your integrity. A short-term gain through dishonest methods can have long-term consequences. I hope you’ll take a few minutes to watch this devotional clip to help illustrate this point.”

Give Periodic Reminders
The scriptures share examples of the Lord stirring the hearts of the Nephites to remember the covenants they have made (1 Ne. 2:24; 2 Ne. 5:25; Helaman 11:4,34). You won’t use famines or invading Lamanites in your reminders, but sending out periodic messages to your students to keep their integrity will help steer those away who may be wavering close to the edge. The best times for these reminders are close to key assessments such as midterms, final papers, and tests.

Sample Reminder:
“With your exam only a few days away, I wanted to send you a reminder about how the test should be taken. This test is closed book and notes. That means no accessing course material or any other resources, including using online search engines and your mobile phone. You take this test alone, so find a quiet room by yourself for an hour and avoid any chance that others might see or comment on the questions you are answering. It can help to let your family and roommates know ahead of time so they know not to distract you. Turning off your phone can also help to limit distractions. To best prepare, review these content pages…. Prepare well, do your best, and remember who you are and what you stand for.”

Show Students You Care About Their Academic Integrity
By following many of the other points in this training you will be demonstrating to your students how important academic integrity is to you. However, when you write your messages, make
sure you are communicating more than “Don’t cheat and keep the honor code,” but that you remind them of who they are and encourage them to be a person of integrity.

Non-example
“There is an honor code. Make sure you read it and abide by it while taking this course.”

Example:
“Class, you may or may not have been aware, but in our program we have an honor code that you are expected to abide by. It can be tempting, at times, to cut corners, copy someone else’s work, and look up answers while taking a test. Don’t sell yourselves short. You’re worth more than that. You and I are both working hard to help you learn and succeed. If you’re struggling, contact me for help. Make the commitment today that you will follow the assignment and course instructions and keep the honor code as outlined here, no matter what.”

Alleviate Students’ Pressure
Students cheat when they feel pressured. Time constraints (such as completing an assignment or taking a test) and lack of clarity from instruction are the biggest pressure-causing factors. Instructors can help to alleviate this pressure.

Some ideas you can use to alleviate students’ pressure:
- Create videos and explain upcoming exams and assignments to help prepare students.
- Get them thinking ahead of time about big projects coming up in your announcements.
- Try a “getting started” activity by using the Question & Conversations discussion board to help students begin thinking and even possibly working on bigger papers and projects (e.g., writing a paper can be “topic sentence,” “main arguments,” “write three body paragraph sentences, etc., with a new, smaller segment of the paper or project worked on each week).