Chapter 29
Technological Approaches to Maintaining Academic Integrity in Management Education

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ABSTRACT

Challenges to academic integrity in management education appear to be on the rise in U.S. institutions of higher education. In an effort to reduce cheating and plagiarism in business education, universities have turned to a variety of technological approaches. However, technology cannot be considered a panacea for ensuring academic integrity and is probably best viewed as a "stop gap" measure that can eventually be compromised. The authors begin this chapter by describing how declining ethics has been evidenced recently in business. Then, they present a review of the literature describing the extent and causes of academic dishonesty and discuss what some educational institutions are doing to address academic integrity, including calls for an increase in ethics education. Finally, they review technological approaches used by many colleges and universities to prevent cheating and plagiarism, examining the features, strengths, weaknesses, and current status of each technology.

INTRODUCTION

The headlines of scholarly and popular business publications seem to be far too frequently filled with shocking reports of ethical lapses in business education and business practice at many institutions of higher learning and local, national, and international business organizations. Many reports suggest that cheating in academia over the past few decades has been steadily on the rise and may be indicative of disturbing changes in societal values that portends similar behavior in

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future business practice. Academic and business organizations have historically addressed this issue in reactionary ways using straightforward, policing strategies, rules-based policies and procedures, conventional monitoring and measuring techniques, and consequences/penalties that to date have been largely ineffective.

In this chapter, initially we will review several illustrative lapses in ethical practices in both business practice and business education and suggests the need for improving the mechanisms by which business education is conducted and the need for strengthening ethics education within these curricula. Then we will highlight current attempts in business education to improve ethical decision making and, to a lesser extent, focus on the broader issues of social responsibility and values. Many of these topics (curricula, techniques, and strategies for teaching ethics) are addressed in detail in other chapters of this book. Finally, we provide a broad review of the technologies available for maintaining academic integrity in business education, including their capabilities, limitations, and deployment status.

THE ETHICAL ENVIRONMENT

More sensational headlines come from the world of business practice with disturbing frequency. Complex accounting regulations, policies and procedures, intricately intertwined international relationships, and significant technology improvements make it seductively easier for greedy and unethical business practitioners to evade detection and reap enormous personal gain at the expense of other stakeholders in the organization and the investing public.

One of the more publicized business scandals of the times was Enron, America's seventh largest company with 21,000 employees in more than 40 countries. Several key executives, including CEO Kenneth Lay, CFO Andrew Fastow and chief auditor David Duncan, conspired to defraud investors, launder money stolen from the company and hide the corporation's enormous debt through deceptive accounting practices (BBC, 2002). Although no illegal actions have been discovered governmental levels, the Enron scheme included developing close ties with high ranking members of the administration in the U.S. and Great Britain to influence the energy policies of those countries. Enron executives formed complex agreements with several international companies and skimmed substantial portions of the proceeds for themselves (Lawyershop, 2002).

In one of the largest corporate scandals and cases of accounting fraud in U.S. history, former CEO Bernard Ebbers, CFO Scott Sullivan, Controller David Myers, and Director of General Accounting Buford Yates, used questionable accounting methods to hide WorldCom's declining financial condition and inflate profitability to manipulate the price of WorldCom stock (Associatedcontent.com, 2007). These executives and others were convicted of securities fraud, conspiracy and falsifying financial statements. These illegal actions misrepresented over $3.8 billion over five operating quarters and, when discovered, resulted in 17,000 WorldCom workers losing their jobs and created plummeting stock values for investors (Hancock, 2002)

Through deceptive accounting practices John Rigas and his son, Timothy, managed to defraud and hide billions of dollars of debt from Adelphia Communications and investors (Grant & Nuzum, 2004; Associated Press, 2004). They flaunted their ill-gotten gains with lavish lifestyles and "eye-popping luxuries" shamelessly using corporate assets as their personal sources of funds. Ironically, because of the complex internal protections contained in their agreements with the company, Adelphia paid an estimated $27.8 million towards the Rigas' criminal defense (McCarthy, 2004).

In a similar case, former Tyco executives, CEO Dennis Kozlowski and CFO Mark Schwartz, were convicted of defrauding the corporation of an estimated $600 million, falsifying business records,

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