Developing a Moral Compass: What Is the Campus Climate for Ethics and Academic Integrity?

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Core Commitments:
Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility
An initiative of

Association of American Colleges and Universities
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In Memoriam
Eric L. Dey
(1962-2009)

Scholar, Educator, Champion of Equal Opportunity, Humorist
A life cut short but a life well lived.

Eric L. Dey was director of research for AAC&U’s initiative, Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, former professor at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan, and recently appointed professor and associate director of the University of Virginia’s Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning.
Developing a Moral Compass

About Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility

Core Commitments, a signature initiative from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), aims to reclaim and revitalize the academy’s role in fostering students’ development of personal and social responsibility. Funded by the John Templeton Foundation, the initiative is designed to help campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices that prepare them to fulfill their obligations as students in an academic community and as responsible global and local citizens.

Core Commitments focuses national attention on the importance of students exploring questions about ethical responsibility to self and others. Core Commitments was developed in concert with AAC&U’s Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) Initiative, which champions a set of learning outcomes—including personal and social responsibility—that are essential for all college students’ achievement in the twenty-first century.

Through a series of interrelated projects, Core Commitments provides national visibility and leadership, and assists campuses as they articulate clear expectations for students’ personal and social responsibility and develop intentional opportunities to advance and assess students’ progress over time. These projects include a national leadership consortium; research and assessment, including the development of a new campus climate instrument; a presidential call to action; outreach activities at national conferences; and a growing set of Web-based resources. For more information, visit www.aacu.org/Core_Commitments.

The Core Commitments Leadership Consortium

Allegheny College  Middlesex Community College  United States Military Academy
Babson College  Oakland Community College  The University of Alabama
Bowling Green State University  Portland State University  at Birmingham
California State University, Northridge  Rollins College  University of Central Florida
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Elizabethtown College  Saint Anselm College  Wagner College
Miami University  Saint Mary’s College of California  Winthrop University
Michigan State University  St. Lawrence University

DEVELOPING A MORAL COMPASS
Acknowledgments

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Our colleagues on the AAC&U staff deserve special mention, especially Caryn McTighe Musil, Nancy O’Neill, and Michèle Leaman, who offered wonderful editorial suggestions and generally made the whole enterprise run, and L. Lee Knefelkamp, whose intellectual leadership throughout the project was invaluable.

Finally, we most gratefully acknowledge the John Templeton Foundation, for providing both the leadership and the resources that were so critical to the success of this project.

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Introduction to the Series

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is pleased to present Developing a Moral Compass: What Is the Campus Climate for Ethics and Academic Integrity? This report is part of the AAC&U initiative, Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, supported by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation. In this report, the second of three Core Commitments research studies, the late Eric L. Dey and his former colleagues at the University of Michigan Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education offer revealing data on the perceptions of four campus groups—students, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals—regarding the availability of learning opportunities that help college students develop moral and ethical reasoning abilities as well as integrity in their personal lives and, especially, in their academic pursuits.

Developing a Moral Compass: What Is the Campus Climate for Ethics and Academic Integrity? focuses on whether—and how well—educational environments promote ethical responsibilities to self and others in an academic community. This report is the second in a series of Core Commitments research reports that feature data about enabling educational environments. The first report, Civic Responsibility: What Is the Campus Climate for Learning?, was released in October 2009. A third report, Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others: What Is the Campus Climate for Engaging Diverse Viewpoints?, will be released in early 2010.

Developing a Moral Compass looks at trends across the 24,000 students and 9,000 campus professionals who were surveyed along two important dimensions of education for personal and social responsibility: whether college students have ample opportunities to develop ethical reasoning and cultivate integrity in their personal lives and in their academic pursuits. Importantly, Dey and colleagues show that across all four groups surveyed, respondents strongly agreed that the development of ethics and integrity should be an essential—not optional—outcome of college. This is news worth celebrating, and we believe this strong endorsement is reflective of a renewed commitment within the academy to educate students to become ethical and moral leaders and citizens.

However, the report’s findings also indicate that much work remains to be done to make rich opportunities to develop ethics and integrity pervasive across the curriculum and cocurriculum and available to all students. When asked if their institutions currently make ethics and integrity a major focus, far fewer respondents—across all four groups—strongly agreed. There is a troubling gap on campuses between aspiration and reality in fostering ethical development and integrity.

Academic integrity policies, for example, are reaching students, but few believe such policies are making a difference. There are opportunities for students to develop moral and ethical reasoning capacities, but they are not yet pervasive. Most students navigate this part of their intellectual, moral, and social growth without the benefit of the very campus professionals in the faculty and student affairs who should be assisting the process. AAC&U hopes that colleges and universities use the report’s data to find ways to strengthen their educational programs across the curriculum and cocurriculum.

The Core Commitments research grows out of AAC&U’s broader framing of key outcomes for a twenty-first-century college education, currently advanced through a ten-year initiative, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP). LEAP is organized around the essential learning outcomes college graduates need to thrive as responsible workers and citizens (see appendix A). There are four strands: (1) knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, (2) intellectual and practical skills, (3) personal and social responsibility, and (4) integrative learning. Core Commitments is designed to bring attention to the third strand, which AAC&U calls the “orphan” outcome because many nod assent to its importance, but few claim responsibility for ensuring that students are actually educated for personal and social responsibility.
AAC&U affirms that *all* students must have multiple opportunities over time to practice excellence, integrity, and responsibility. And we argue that if students are to become accountable for pursuing these outcomes, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals must become much more intentional about articulating these expectations to students, about creating ongoing opportunities for students to acquire these capacities, about assessing how well students are acquiring them, and about learning—across the academy—from the shared progress.

To illustrate this point, the data in this report indicate that only three out of ten first-year students strongly agreed that they felt they could go to academic administrators, faculty, or student affairs professionals to discuss questions or concerns about their own ethical and moral thinking and the challenges they face. Perhaps more distressing is the finding that, as students advance in their studies, these percentages drop even further. Only one in four seniors strongly agreed they could go to faculty to discuss these issues, and only one in five seniors strongly agreed they could go to academic administrators or student affairs professionals to discuss these issues. In other words, *at best*, seven out of ten students are likely to navigate these complex and often ambiguous questions without the benefit of guidance by those most prepared to help them do this navigation.

The good news here is that students who do interact with campus professionals—particularly with faculty outside of the classroom—report that they do develop a stronger sense of personal and academic integrity and ethical and moral reasoning. But much more must be done during college to help *all* students develop these important outcomes.

We hope the report proves useful in spurring a new level of campus commitment to these efforts. We encourage you to use the report to begin that dialogue about how to chart a course of action. For resources that can assist campuses in strengthening education for personal and social responsibility, visit AAC&U’s Core Commitments Web page, www.aacu.org/Core_Commitments.

_Caryn McTighe Musil_
Senior Vice President, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives and Director, Core Commitments

_Nancy O’Neill_
Director of Programs, Office of Education and Institutional Renewal and Assistant Director, Core Commitments
Foreword

Developing a Moral Compass: What Is the Campus Climate for Ethics and Academic Integrity? issues a clarion call from AAC&U’s Core Commitments initiative to recognize that values like honesty, accountability, respect for others, and responsibility cannot be optional when they are so essential to the integrity and sustainability of our democracy.

The findings reported in this report arrive at a crucial junction in the history of U.S. higher education. Policy and philanthropic leaders have clearly signaled a new determination to provide postsecondary education to many more Americans than ever before. Today, about one in three Americans has completed a two- or four-year college degree; the new goal is to raise that number to six out of ten Americans. This priority reflects a widespread understanding that the global economy places a premium on higher-level skills and offers dramatically lessened opportunities for those who lack them.

Yet the new policy emphasis on “access and completion” has been strikingly devoid of any discussion about what today’s students actually need to accomplish in college. To date, the discussion has focused on jobs and job training; even the call for “higher-level skills” has been left vague and underdeveloped. The time is right, then, for higher education itself to advance a compelling public vision of the learning that matters most in college, moving beyond credit hours to focus on the capabilities Americans will need for a turbulent global environment and a diverse democracy facing unprecedented challenges.

As this Core Commitments study and AAC&U’s related work make clear, the academy is ready, both to provide this public vision and to affirm that educating students for personal and social responsibility needs to be an integral part of each institution’s mission and each student’s actual course of study. Collectively, colleges and universities across the country have reached widespread agreement that moral and ethical reasoning and action ought to be a significant goal for undergraduate learning. Through a broad array of curricular and cocurricular innovations, faculty and campus leaders are creating educational resources to help students achieve this goal, but we still have far to go to make such learning pervasive and available to all students across all majors.

On the twenty-three widely diverse college campuses that contributed to the study reported in these pages, 93 percent of students and 97 percent of academic leaders, faculty, and student life professionals either “strongly” or “somewhat” agree that preparing students for lives of integrity and ethical responsibility is an essential goal of a college education. With some 33,000 respondents contributing to the overall study, this is a very significant finding.

The important point, however, is that the institutions included in this study stand in the vanguard of a much larger and rapidly growing national movement. Their explicit commitment to prepare all their students for their ethical responsibility in a diverse democracy is, we now know, representative rather than unusual.

Last spring, AAC&U surveyed its member colleges and universities to find out how many had already defined learning outcomes that applied to all their students. With nearly half of campuses surveyed responding, 78 percent had indeed set such goals. Significantly, the themes addressed in this report and in the broader Core Commitments initiative turn out to be very high priorities for hundreds of colleges and universities of all kinds: public, private, two year and four year (www.aacu.org/membership/memberssurvey).

Among the 78 percent of AAC&U member institutions that already have defined learning outcomes that are applicable to all students, 75 percent have listed ethical reasoning among those expected outcomes. Sixty-eight percent include civic engagement and 79 percent view intercultural learning as an essential outcome.

These personal and social responsibility outcomes—civic learning, ethical learning, and intercultural learning—are best understood as woven strands in a larger tapestry. As the founders of the U.S. republic understood very well, the sustainability of a democracy depends on its citizens’ possession of knowledge, honesty, judgment, and willingness to engage with other citizens—who, in this country, have always come from highly diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic circumstances. Ethical responsibility is a necessary strand in this array of civic virtues, because espoused values gain meaning only when they are matched by
conscientious actions. Values are standards for action and in a democracy, continuing engagement with the meaning, scope, and application of one’s responsibilities to self and others is a crucial foundation both for community and for justice.

Until the late twentieth century, of course, very few citizens actually went to college. Universities certainly contributed needed expertise to the wider community but, of necessity, the primary responsibility for civic education has long been assigned to the public schools. Now, however, with a majority of all American being guided toward higher education, we have an unparalleled opportunity to take education for mindful, compassionate citizenship to a much higher level of purpose, scope, and demonstrated accomplishment. As both this Core Commitments study and the AAC&U membership study show, higher education is poised to seize this opportunity.

To succeed, higher education will need to work vigorously on two intersecting priorities. The first is to challenge and reframe, once and for all, a public discourse about learning that, since the 1970s, has seen education at all levels as primarily about economic needs and individual or private benefit. Many college leaders and faculty have already challenged this framing on campus. But now we need to speak out in unison as a community about democracy’s stake in more vibrant and empowering forms of civic learning, knowledge, and responsibility—guided by a moral compass. We owe our society a compelling and wide-ranging conversation about the multiple aims of college, not just of the economic aspirations. Discussion of the ethical dimensions of learning needs to be central to that dialogue.

The second priority for vigorous action, of course, is to match explicit aspirations with educational programs that live up to the goal. As this report makes plain, higher education is only partially there. The Core Commitments study and other national surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) show persuasively that campus priorities and graduation requirements notwithstanding, many graduating students do not believe that college significantly influenced their understanding of academic integrity or their ethical development.

How and where—even on highly committed campuses—are we falling short? Students themselves offer some intriguing insights in both the quantitative and qualitative findings from the Core Commitments study. One finding to ponder is the steady decline across four years in students’ perception that academic integrity and moral reasoning actually are high priorities for their institutions. Overall, fewer than one-quarter of the students and one-third of campus professionals strongly agreed that the importance of developing a personal sense of ethical and moral reasoning is frequently communicated to students.

Another finding worth extensive discussion is drawn from students’ observation that faculty members prompting students to be reflective about moral and ethical issues is important and that courses function as an influential source stimulating deeper exploration. Putting these two observations together, educators might conclude that the most fertile ground for deepening moral and ethical development will be departmental programs and requirements.

Through its decade-long LEAP initiative, in which the Core Commitments project is an integral strand, AAC&U has already pledged to work with higher education to move personal and social responsibility outcomes from the margin to the center of public consciousness and campus action. Our goal is to graduate students who are both prepared and inspired to take lasting responsibility for the integrity, decency, and vitality of the world’s most diverse and powerful democracy. We thank the John Templeton Foundation and the scholars and practitioners who made it possible for us to create this illuminating picture of what is working and what is not as we strive to reach this goal. We encourage all campuses to probe beneath the surface of their own work in fostering moral and ethical reasoning and practices, across the curriculum and in everyday life.

Carol Geary Schneider
President, Association of American Colleges and Universities
Introduction

“From these teachers and my experiences I’ve learned that I cannot be one person eight hours a day and another person the rest of the time. I am a total person and every waking moment I want to be honest with and to myself and be proud of what I am doing in any environment: academic, work, or personal.”

- Fourth-year student, Core Commitments Leadership Consortium campus

Core Commitments: Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility, a signature initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), aims to reclaim and revitalize the academy’s role in fostering students’ personal and social responsibility. Supported by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, the project is designed to help campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices that prepare them to fulfill their obligations as students in an academic community and as responsible global and local citizens.

In fall 2007, on behalf of AAC&U, researchers at the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education surveyed four constituent groups—students, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals—at twenty-three Core Commitments Leadership Consortium colleges and universities selected from a national pool of applicants (see p. V). Each institution in the Consortium agreed to administer a newly developed AAC&U campus climate survey called the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI): An Institutional Climate Measure. The survey assesses perceptions across the four constituent groups regarding opportunities for education for personal and social responsibility along five specific dimensions, including developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and cultivating personal and academic integrity. These dimensions entail having students use ethical and moral reasoning in learning and in life as well as recognize and act on a sense of honor, ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with a formal honor code (see fig. 1).

**Figure 1. The five dimensions of personal and social responsibility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAC&amp;U has identified five key dimensions of personal and social responsibility that form the crux of the Core Commitments initiative:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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While these five dimensions do not encompass all aspects of ethical responsibility to self and others, they offer a compelling claim as an initial focus for a widespread reengagement with issues of personal and social responsibility.
Twenty-four thousand undergraduate students and 9,000 campus professionals (academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals combined) completed the survey, which includes quantitative survey items plus open-ended items to capture individual respondents’ experiences (see Appendix B for more detail).

Context
Scholars, policymakers, and educators engaged in the ongoing dialogue regarding the purpose of higher education often note the centrality of ethics and values in the broader process of college student development (AAC&U 2002; Bowen 1996; Fong 2002; Meacham and Gaff 2006). A large body of conceptual and empirical scholarship exists that addresses the multidimensional ways in which college facilitates the development of students’ moral responsibilities to self and others. However, many of the changes observed during college are smaller than one would wish (Colby et al. 2002).

In addition, highly public incidents of academic misconduct and general reports of rampant student cheating have contributed to a general sense that morality, integrity, and ethics are declining in higher education (Gallant 2008; McCabe and Drinan 1999). Some critics assert that campus policies and practices—such as inequitable disciplinary procedures, a lack of programs promoting academic integrity, minimal guidance about the implications of technology on integrity, and little assessment of academic integrity policies—may be in part to blame.

There is also evidence that many institutions fail to communicate the primacy of ethics and academic integrity as learning goals to their students. For instance, in a study of the mission statements of institutions included in the Princeton Review’s The Best 331 Colleges, Meacham and Gaff (2006) reported that only 25 percent of the 312 universities with identifiable statements included expectations for “the development of personal perspectives, values, and moral character.” Furthermore, fewer than 10 percent of the 312 institutional statements encouraged students to broaden their ethical and moral responsibilities by acquiring “knowledge and appreciation of the ethical dimensions of humankind” or engaging with “challenging ethical, moral, and human dilemmas.”

Against this backdrop, this report examines the ethical and moral climate of colleges and universities today. What is it about college that promotes the development of personal and academic integrity and moral and ethical reasoning? Using PSRI campus data, this report provides insights into those questions. The data, while not representative of all colleges and universities across the country, is instructive precisely because the Core Commitments Leadership Consortium campuses were chosen on the basis of substantial work already accomplished related to education for personal and social responsibility at the time the survey was administered.

Section I of the report discusses the gap between perceptions about what is desired and what occurs in practice for students with regard to developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and cultivating personal and academic integrity. Section II describes differences in views of students’ attitudes and behaviors pertaining to academic and personal integrity, while section III highlights respondents’ thoughts about institutional policies and practices pertaining to academic integrity. Section IV provides insight into the emphasis on, support for, and opportunities for students to develop ethical and moral reasoning both in and outside of the classroom. Section V explains the relationship between opportunities for student involvement and perceptions of personal integrity, as well as the development of moral and ethical reasoning. Section VI summarizes differences in students’ and professionals’ views by demographic subgroups, while section VII summarizes differences by institutional factors. Sections VIII and IX provide select qualitative responses from the survey respondents, and section X offers concluding thoughts about how colleges and universities can create a more intentional and pervasive campus climate to support the development of ethics and academic integrity.
I. Cultivating Integrity and Developing Moral Reasoning—How Important Was It?

The PSRI first asked respondents if they believed the goal of cultivating personal and academic integrity and developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action was important enough to be a major focus of the campus. The survey then asked a series of questions regarding the degree to which the campus emphasized these goals.

Finding 1: A gap existed between the aspiration and the actuality of these goals.

- Among the five dimensions explored in the PSRI (see p. 1), personal and academic integrity received the highest level of endorsement. More than two-thirds of students (70.6 percent) and nearly nine out of ten campus professionals (86.9 percent) strongly agreed that it should have been an important institutional focus. However, when asked if personal and academic integrity currently was a major focus, only about two-fifths of students (41.9 percent) and campus professionals (42.3 percent) strongly agreed (see fig. 2).

- Fewer students and campus professionals had such strong support for moral and ethical reasoning, but nonetheless, just more than half of students (50.5 percent) and more than two-thirds of campus professionals (70.8 percent) strongly agreed that this dimension also should have been a major institutional focus. However, only one-quarter of students (25.8 percent) and about one-third of campus professionals (29.1 percent) strongly agreed that moral and ethical reasoning currently was a major focus (see fig. 2).

- As the responses shown in figure 2 suggest, data from campus professionals demonstrated a particularly large gap between endorsement and current activity for both personal and academic integrity and moral and ethical reasoning.

![Figure 2. Institutional focus on academic and personal integrity and ethical and moral reasoning](image-url)
**For both dimensions, the gap between “should” and “is” increased for students from first to senior year. First-year students tended to have the most positive views of the current institutional focus on cultivating personal and academic integrity, for example, but students were more skeptical after the first year. This was true even as their endorsement of this goal increased every year (see fig. 3).**

**FIGURE 3. Student responses regarding institutional emphasis on personal and academic integrity, by year in school**

![Graph showing student responses](image)

- The findings also revealed a consistent gap between “should” and “is” across campus professional groups. Nearly universally, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals (86.9 percent) strongly agreed that helping students develop a strong sense of personal and academic integrity should have been a major focus of the institution (see fig. 4). However, a much smaller segment (42.3 percent) strongly agreed that helping students to develop a strong sense of personal and academic integrity was a major focus at the time they responded to the survey (see fig. 4).

**FIGURE 4. Campus professional responses regarding institutional emphasis on personal and academic integrity, by role**

![Graph showing campus professional responses](image)
II. Academic and Personal Integrity—What Did Students Think and What Did They Do?

The PSRI asked respondents a series of questions regarding students’ general qualities, such as being academically honest, as well as specific attitudes and behaviors, such as conducting themselves with respect for others.

Finding 2: Perceptions of students were mixed across all four groups, but student affairs professionals tended to be more pessimistic about students’ attitudes and behaviors related to integrity than other groups.

- Two out of five students (40.5 percent) reported that they had frequently thought seriously about issues of personal conduct (such as drinking, vandalism, interpersonal behavior, and Internet piracy) since they had been in college. In comparison, fewer than one-fifth of campus professionals (18.9 percent) believed that students had frequently thought seriously about these issues.

- Only one-fourth of students (26.6 percent) and campus professionals (24.7 percent, on average) strongly agreed that students conducted themselves with respect for others. Yet relatively few students and campus professionals strongly agreed that students’ drinking and improper personal behavior negatively affected the quality of the academic environment (see table 1).

- Discrepancies emerged between the two groups when respondents were asked whether students were knowledgeable about their responsibilities for upholding personal and academic integrity. More than one-half of students (57.6 percent) strongly agreed that students generally know they are responsible for personal and academic integrity, compared to fewer than two-fifths of campus professionals (39.5 percent). Notably, student affairs professionals, who often are on the “front lines” of student conduct violations, were the most pessimistic of all respondents on this and other related items (see table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1. Academic and personal integrity attitudes and behaviors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSRI SURVEY ITEM</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on this campus are academically honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on this campus conduct themselves with respect for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students understand academic honesty policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students know they are responsible for personal and academic integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ improper interpersonal behavior on this campus negatively affects the quality of the academic environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of drinking on this campus negatively affects the quality of the academic environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Policies on Academic Integrity—Did They Make A Difference?

The PSRI asked respondents a series of questions about academic integrity and the institutional influence on students, including the role of faculty and courses in communicating definitions and policies related to academic honesty.

Finding 3: Academic integrity policies were reaching most students and campus professionals, but fewer believed that those policies made a difference.

- Institutions’ formal academic integrity messages appeared to have been getting through to respondents, especially students. Nearly 80 percent of students and nearly as many campus professionals (71.6 percent) reported that course syllabi frequently define academic dishonesty, including such issues as plagiarism, improper citation of Internet sources, buying papers from others, and cheating on assignments or tests. Similarly, roughly two-thirds of students and slightly fewer campus professionals strongly agreed that faculty understand, support, and reinforce campus academic honesty policies (see table 2).

- Unfortunately, just one-third of students and one-fourth of campus professionals strongly agreed that those same academic honesty policies actually helped stop cheating. Only two-fifths of students and campus professionals strongly agreed that the judicial process for conduct violations helped reinforce campus standards (see table 2).

### Table 2: Academic integrity policies and practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI Survey Item</th>
<th>Percent Who Strongly Agreed or Reported Frequently</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty understand academic honesty policies (strongly agree)</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty support the academic honesty policies of the campus (strongly agree)</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty reinforce academic honesty policies of the institution (frequently)</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal course syllabi define academic dishonesty (including such issues as plagiarism, improper citation of Internet sources, buying papers from others, cheating on assignments or tests) (frequently)</td>
<td>79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic honesty policies on this campus help stop cheating (strongly agree)</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The judicial process for conduct violations helps reinforce campus standards (strongly agree)</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Ethical and Moral Reasoning—What Were the Sources of Support?

The PSRI asked respondents about the emphasis on developing ethical and moral reasoning in and out of the classroom, as well as sources of support for discussing their moral and ethical questions, concerns, and challenges.

Finding 4: Opportunities for students to develop their moral and ethical reasoning capacities were not yet pervasive across the curriculum or cocurriculum.

- Thirty-eight percent of students and roughly the same percentage of campus professionals said that formal courses frequently provided opportunities for students to further develop their ethical and moral reasoning capacities.
- Slightly higher percentages of students (44.5 percent) and campus professionals (41.1 percent) said that out-of-class activities frequently provided opportunities for students to further develop their ethical and moral reasoning capacities.
- Fewer than one-quarter of students (20.8 percent) and one-third of campus professionals (29.3 percent) strongly agreed that the importance of developing a personal sense of ethical and moral reasoning was frequently communicated to students.

Finding 5: While students cited peers as a source of support for discussing moral and ethical concerns, fewer cited campus professionals as a source of support.

- Overall, four out of ten students strongly agreed that their peers served as a source of support for discussing questions or concerns that they had about their own ethical and moral thinking (see table 3).
- A smaller percentage of students felt that they could go to campus professionals to discuss their moral and ethical concerns. Overall, only 29.8 percent of students strongly agreed that they could bring these issues to the faculty, and even fewer students strongly agreed they could bring these issues to student affairs professionals or academic administrators. These percentages also drop notably from first to senior year (see table 3).

Finding 6: Perceptions varied regarding encouragement for students to take stances and action on important issues.

- With regard to students both considering and acting on moral and ethical issues, approximately one-third of all respondents strongly agreed that students were encouraged to take action to promote a more moral and ethical world. More than one-half of students (54.0 percent) reported that their peers frequently took public stands on ethical and moral issues, while less than one-third of campus professionals (27.0 percent) reported that students frequently took public stands on ethical and moral issues.
- Students and campus professionals also disagreed when it came to their opinions as to whether students feel “safe” in taking stances on important issues that differ from the official stance of the campus. More than one-third of students (38.9 percent) strongly agreed that it was safe to do so, whereas only 16.2 percent of campus professionals strongly agreed that students feel safe to differ from the official stance of the campus on important issues.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI SURVEY ITEM</th>
<th>PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL STUDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel they can go to <em>academic administrators</em> to discuss questions or concerns they have about their own ethical and moral thinking and the challenges they face</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel they can go to <em>faculty members</em> to discuss questions or concerns they have about their own ethical and moral thinking and the challenges they face</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel they can go to <em>student affairs professionals</em> to discuss questions or concerns they have about their own ethical and moral thinking and the challenges they face</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students feel they can go to <em>their peers</em> to discuss questions or concerns they have about their own ethical and moral thinking and the challenges they face</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Enhancing Activities for Developing Integrity and Ethics

The PSRI asked students questions about the type and level of involvement in a variety of activities, which can be examined vis-à-vis items about integrity and ethics.

Finding 7: Certain activities enhanced students’ sense of personal integrity and the cultivation of moral and ethical reasoning.

- Among students who participated in campus life activities, 46.2 percent reported having frequently thought seriously about issues of personal conduct (such as drinking, vandalism, interpersonal behavior, and Internet piracy) since being in college, compared to 34.7 percent of students who did not participate in campus life activities.

- Of students who were involved in community service opportunities, 43.3 percent reported having frequently thought seriously about issues of personal conduct since being in college, compared to 38.3 percent of students who did not participate in community service.

- Of students who partied fewer than six hours a week, 41.5 percent reported having frequently thought seriously about issues of personal conduct since being in college, compared to 35.7 percent of students who partied at least six hours per week.

- The more time students spent studying, the more inclined they were to feel that the campus had high expectations for their personal, nonacademic conduct. Of students who studied six or more hours per week, 40.6 percent strongly agreed that the campus had high expectations for their personal conduct, compared with 33.7 percent of students who studied fewer than six hours per week.

- Students who reported having interactions with faculty outside of class (70 percent of the total sample) were slightly more inclined (by five to seven percentage points) to believe that their campus provided opportunities to develop ethical and moral reasoning through academic work and in their personal lives, compared to students who did not interact with faculty outside of class (see table 4).

- When they became more engaged academically, as evidenced through self-reports of interacting with faculty outside of class and studying more than sixteen hours per week, a greater number of students strongly agreed that the campus helped them to develop their ethical and moral reasoning capacities, including the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly (see table 4).
TABLE 4. Differences in students’ perceived development associated with student–faculty interactions outside of the classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI SURVEY ITEM</th>
<th>PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I have gained a better understanding about academic integrity since I have been in college</td>
<td>43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I have gained an increased sense of personal integrity since I have been in college</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have expanded my capacity for ethical and moral reasoning since I have been in college</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus helps students develop their ethical and moral reasoning capacities, including the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning with academic work</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning in their personal life</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. How Did Students and Campus Professionals from Different Demographic Groups Respond?

PSRI data can also be disaggregated by a variety of demographic differences, including gender, race, and year in school.

Finding 8: Relatively few students believed in their peers’ academic honesty, and they became more pessimistic as they progressed through college.

- Only slightly more than one-quarter of all first-year students strongly agreed that students on their campus were academically honest (see fig. 5).

- The percentage of students who strongly agreed that students on their campus were academically honest declined through all four years, with a difference of 10 percentage points between first and final year (see fig. 5).

![Figure 5: Views of student honesty by class year](image)

Finding 9: Students’ perceptions varied by gender and race regarding the role of college in developing their sense of integrity and encouraging them to promote a more ethical world.

- In terms of whether college had helped them to develop a sense of personal integrity, 51.4 percent of female students strongly agreed that college had done this, compared to 44.4 percent of male students. Likewise, 55.8 percent of students of color strongly agreed that college had helped them to develop a sense of personal integrity, compared to 45.1 percent of white students.

- In terms of feeling encouraged to take action to promote a more moral and ethical world, 38.7 percent of women and 40.0 percent of students of color strongly agreed that they felt supported to do this, compared to 34.3 percent of male students and 35.7 percent of white students, respectively.
Finding 10: Gender differences emerged among campus professionals regarding student conduct and the role of college in promoting moral and ethical development.

- When reflecting on aspects of student conduct and the role of academic integrity on their campuses, female campus professionals expressed more negative views than males. For instance, only 16.6 percent of female professionals strongly agreed that students on their campus were academically honest, compared to 28.2 percent of male professionals. Similarly, only 22.2 percent of female professionals strongly agreed that students conducted themselves with respect for others, compared to 30.8 percent of male professionals. While the magnitude of difference was smaller, the same gender difference held true across most academic integrity items.

- As with their beliefs about academic integrity, female campus professionals were less likely than males to strongly agree that their campus promoted different aspects of students’ moral and ethical development. For example, only 29 percent of female professionals strongly agreed that the importance of developing a personal sense of ethical and moral reasoning was frequently communicated to students, compared to 36.8 percent of males. Similar percentages strongly agreed that the campus provided opportunities for students to develop ethical and moral reasoning.
VII. What Differences Existed Across Institutions?

PSRI data can also be disaggregated by a variety of institutional factors, including institutional type, public versus private control, and religious/secular affiliation.

Finding 11: Students’ and campus professionals’ perceptions regarding academic and personal integrity varied by type of institution.

Students

- Community college students showed greater confidence in their peers being academically honest. Of community college students, 29.9 percent strongly agreed that students are academically honest, compared to 21.5 percent of students from other types of institutions.

- Students attending private institutions had a much greater sense that their institution emphasized such things as honesty, fairness, respect for others, and having a personal honor code. Sixty-one percent of students at private institutions strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 48 percent of students at public institutions (see table 5).

- Students attending religiously affiliated institutions also had a stronger sense that their campus emphasized academic and personal integrity (see table 5).

TABLE 5. Students’ perceptions of campus attention to personal and academic integrity, by institution type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI SURVEY ITEM</th>
<th>PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL CAMPUSES (N=23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having personal and academic integrity (honesty, fairness, respect for others, and having a personal honor code) is emphasized by the campus community</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Campus Professionals

- Professionals employed at liberal arts colleges had decidedly more positive views of their institution’s role in promoting the development of academic and personal integrity. Of liberal arts campus professionals, 62.5 percent strongly agreed that helping students to develop academic and personal integrity was a major focus of their institution, while 77 percent strongly agreed that doing so should have been a major focus. Furthermore, 32.5 percent of liberal arts college professionals strongly agreed that students on their campus were academically honest and 33 percent strongly agreed that students conducted themselves with respect for others. In contrast, their colleagues at other types of institutions had less positive views, with 13.1 percent strongly agreeing that students were academically honest and 20.4 percent strongly agreeing that students conducted themselves respectfully.

- Campus professionals at research universities expressed more skepticism about their institution’s role in promoting academic and personal integrity compared to colleagues at other types of institutions. Just 19.5 percent of professionals at research universities strongly agreed that cultivating academic and personal integrity currently was a major focus at their institution, compared to 22.2 percent of professionals at community colleges, 23.3 percent at master’s institutions, and 44 percent at liberal arts colleges.

Finding 12: Students’ and campus professionals’ perceptions regarding ethical and moral reasoning varied by type of institution.

Students

- Students attending research universities were least convinced that helping students to develop ethical and moral reasoning both should have been and was a major focus of the institution, in contrast to those at community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and master’s institutions. Forty-nine percent of research university students strongly agreed that developing ethical and moral reasoning should have been a major focus, while only 24 percent strongly agreed that it was a major focus. This contrasts with 52 percent of community college students, 55 percent of master’s institution students, and 56 percent of liberal arts college students strongly agreeing that developing ethical and moral reasoning should be a major focus, and 37 percent of community college students, 26 percent of master’s institution students, and 39 percent of liberal arts college students strongly agreeing that it was a major focus (see table 6). Interestingly, the gap between “should” and “is” is 25 percentage points for research university students and 29 percentage points for master’s institution students, and smaller for students at community colleges and liberal arts colleges.

- Community college students perceived their campus contexts as especially favorable to providing students with opportunities to develop ethical and moral reasoning through academic work. Forty-eight percent of community college students strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 38 percent of students at research universities, 35 percent at master’s institutions, and 45 percent at liberal arts colleges (see table 6).

- A greater number (44 percent) of private institution students strongly agreed that they were encouraged to take action to promote a more ethical and moral world, compared to students attending other types of institutions (35.9 percent).
There was also a contrast between students who attended religiously affiliated private colleges and students who attended secular private colleges. A higher percentage of students at religiously affiliated colleges strongly agreed that their campus helps students to develop ethical and moral reasoning capacities, including the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly, compared to their secular private-college peers. Thirty-nine percent of students at religiously affiliated private colleges strongly agreed with this item, compared to 33 percent of students at secular private colleges (see table 6).

This same phenomenon occurred with respect to the extent to which students believed that the importance of developing a personal sense of ethical and moral reasoning was frequently communicated to them by the institution. Of students at religiously affiliated private colleges, 37.2 percent strongly agreed with this statement, compared to just 25.3 percent of students at secular private colleges.

**TABLE 6. Students’ perceptions of the institution’s role in promoting ethical and moral reasoning by type of institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI SURVEY ITEM</th>
<th>PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL CAMPUSES (n=23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students develop their own ethical and moral reasoning is a major focus of this campus</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students develop their own ethical and moral reasoning should be a major focus of this campus</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus helps students develop their ethical and moral reasoning capacities, including the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning with academic work</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning in their personal life</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Campus Professionals

- Campus professionals at religiously affiliated private institutions were more likely to believe that their institution made developing students’ ethical and moral reasoning a major focus, compared especially to colleagues at secular private institutions. Specifically, 43 percent of campus professionals at religiously affiliated private institutions strongly agreed that this was a major focus, compared to 26 percent of campus professionals at secular private institutions (see table 7).

- Similarly, campus professionals at liberal arts colleges were more likely to believe that their institution made developing students’ ethical and moral reasoning a major focus, compared to colleagues at other types of institutions. The contrast was particularly sharp between liberal arts college professionals (44 percent) and research university professionals (19.5 percent) (see table 7).

- Interestingly, community college professionals were more likely than their colleagues at other types of institutions to strongly agree that students feel “safe” taking stances on issues contrary to the official campus position (23.9 percent compared to 15.6 percent).

**TABLE 7. Campus professionals’ perceptions of the institution’s role in promoting ethical and moral reasoning by type of institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSRI Survey Item</th>
<th>PERCENT WHO STRONGLY AGREED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL CAMPUSES (n=23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students develop their own ethical and moral reasoning <strong>is</strong> a major focus of this campus</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping students develop their own ethical and moral reasoning <strong>should be</strong> a major focus of this campus</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus helps students develop their ethical and moral reasoning capacities, including the ability to express and act upon personal values responsibly</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning with academic work</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This campus provides opportunities for students to develop their ethical and moral reasoning in their personal life</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VIII. Students’ Qualitative Insights—In Their Own Words

In each section of the PSRI, respondents were invited to include qualitative commentary to explain or expand upon their survey answers. Analyzing those responses reveals new insights that complement the quantitative data. When asked about campus experiences that have helped cultivate their personal and academic integrity and develop their moral and ethical reasoning, students’ responses clustered around their understanding of campus policies and the consequences if those policies were broken. Students’ responses also reflected the value of discussions they had with faculty members and peers regarding integrity and ethics. It is clear that students believed that these policies and discussions made a positive difference for their personal and academic integrity and for their moral and ethical reasoning.

Students Responded to Being Given Responsibility for Their Own Integrity

Students’ responses suggested that institutional and faculty demonstrations of trust regarding academic endeavors aided in the development of academic integrity. Specifically, a small handful of institutions in the study had a student-enforced honor code in which students were the primary whistleblowers for the academic dishonesty of their peers. These policies also declared that faculty were not to proctor student exams. As a result, students believed that this freedom enabled them to develop their own sense of personal and academic integrity. One student elaborated on this, noting, “On our campus, we have a student-enforced honor code that includes such provisions as being allowed to take tests around a building with no professor present. I believe [this] encourages students not to cheat because if you do, other students can implicate you and … that would not be fair to them.”

Another student stated, “I think being able to have unproctored exams has helped strengthen both my personal and academic integrity. I also feel that the amount of trust and freedom that [my institution] allows … students has strengthened my personal integrity.” Interestingly, students who attend institutions with this type of student-enforced honor code cited the honor code as contributing to their academic integrity, while those who attended institutions with institutionally enforced honor codes rarely cited the honor code as a contributing factor. Even institutions that did not have a formal student-enforced honor code but had faculty who chose to leave the room during exams have had similar impact. To this point, one student noted, “Teachers leaving the room during tests has strengthened my academic integrity because I know that my teachers have such high expectations and trust me to do what is right.”

Students also mentioned that witnessing or suffering consequences because of others’ academic dishonesty encouraged them to consider their own academic integrity. One student wrote about a particular incident, in which “some people in my biology class cheated and we are all being punished for it. This has helped me decide further that cheating is not worth it.” Another student reflected on a similar experience: “I had to re-take a test because some people cheated—that will make anyone think about it.” Another student concluded that “seeing others make mistakes has encouraged me to redefine my sense of integrity.” It appears that simply understanding the consequences of academic dishonesty helped students to maintain academic integrity. One student elaborated on this, noting, “The possibility that I could be kicked out of school if I am dishonest about an assignment or misbehave is enough to help me strengthen my personal and academic integrity.”
What Faculty Members Said—and Did—Influenced Students

These experiences also illustrate the impact that faculty and courses had on the development of personal and academic integrity and ethical and moral reasoning for students. Students did pay attention and learned from what faculty taught them. One student noted that “the devotion of the instructors toward the students [to help] them to succeed” helped her to further refine her sense of integrity. Another student supported this, stating, “in my classes, all of my teachers have strengthened my personal and academic integrity.” A third student elaborated on the impact that faculty had, stating, “My professors have enlightened me with new topics and worldly situations that I never thought about before. I feel this knowledge and thinking has helped strengthen me personally. Also, I feel challenged with my coursework, [and] these challenges have strengthened my academic integrity.”

Students also found it powerful to sign academic honesty agreements at the beginning of the semester, particularly on individual course syllabi. A brief discussion and review of institutional expectations helped students to think critically about the implications of their actions. One student wrote about this: “For some of my classes, I’ve had to write the academic integrity policy and sign it. It has made me even more aware of the emphasis [my institution] places on academic integrity.” Another student concurred: “the guidelines given to us have helped me better understand what is expected of me with both personal and academic integrity.” A third student noted, “our math professor had us sign something on a test saying that we did not cheat and if we did, that we understand the consequences of our actions. I will never cheat.”

With regard to developing their capacity for moral and ethical reasoning, students again discussed the importance of faculty and courses—in instances when the professor or the subject matter actually raised ethical and moral issues. One senior, for example, noted that “courses in history, particularly [in those covering topics such as] the Holocaust or American slavery, allow for the circulation of various viewpoints…during discussion with peers and professors and encourage [students] to develop their own reasoning and then to learn how to articulate it, defend it, refine it, etc.” An alternative perspective was offered by another senior at the same institution:

While many professors offer the opportunity for student-created paper topics, papers are often assigned to assess our understanding of the topics presented and do not ask for a deeper critical understanding of the issues and how they influence our daily lives. It is difficult to develop personal and social responsibility when class materials do not penetrate my own experience and passions. While I may mentally work through ethical and moral questions in my mind, I am given no training in how to put those ideas into action while in the classroom. It seems to be an unstated rule that any active participation in ethical and moral development should be done on our own time, outside the classroom.

In their courses, faculty need to be willing to tackle ethical and moral issues, or ethical and moral aspects of larger issues, directly in order for students to feel that they deepened their own capacities through their academic experiences.
Peers Also Influenced Students a Great Deal

Students also attributed much of their development of integrity and ethics to their peers. Sometimes interaction with other students in cocurricular activities helped them to develop these capacities, and sometimes friendships and informal, social conversations contributed to this development. One student expanded on this, noting, “My involvement in a variety of extracurricular activities has introduced me to many people with extraordinary integrity. I continuously find that if I stay active, the people that I will meet will also be those who like to stay active—people who usually take pride in themselves and their actions.”

Another student commented that “Motivation from my roommate and new friends has helped me to strengthen my academic and personal integrity,” while a third said that “making friends with [people who have] strong values helps me to become a better person” and that “associating with high-caliber individuals and several new friends I have met in my very hard and challenging classes” also helped. In fact, one first-year student reflected on the fact that “just by speaking with people from my dorm to hear how they view things and how we observe things differently helped me get a more complete understanding of the integrity that I should have.”

Students also mentioned that they can develop their integrity and ethics against the actions of their peers. For example, one student wrote that “Being around others who have less personal and academic integrity than [I do] has helped me to strengthen my personal and academic integrity. Some examples are people who do not study as much as I do for class, or people who just do not use their time wisely.”

Along these same lines, many students attributed their decision not to drink alcohol as a contributing factor to the development of personal and academic integrity. Students who choose not to drink not only perceive themselves as having high levels of integrity, but they perceive their peers that consume alcohol as having a weaker sense of integrity. One student argued, “I have chosen to never go out drinking, and my academics come first. Although [these] are personal choices, I think I have been doing better because [of them].” Similarly, another student noted, “My personal and academic integrity was strengthened when I made my decision to not drink at college. It helped me focus on the more important things, as well as motivate me to follow that ... lead in all aspects of life.” These findings demonstrate that in addition to paying attention to institutional and classroom policies that address academic honesty, students are reflecting on their own behavior and the behavior of others in social situations.

Overall, it appears that clear communication about campus policies as well as the actions of faculty and students alike play a key role in helping students to cultivate personal and academic integrity and develop moral and ethical reasoning. Explicit academic honesty guidelines, the enforcement of consequences, and ongoing engagement in discussions about personal and academic integrity and moral and ethical questions all seem to contribute to students’ development in these important aspects of personal and social responsibility.

Several students summed up this notion. One noted, “Knowing the consequences of academic dishonesty usually helps being more honest and tough on myself when it comes to my academics. Also, being in an environment that surrounds me with those who have integrity helps me to further develop my own integrity.” Another found that “class discussions facilitate [moral and ethical reasoning]. Not all questions have answers that jump out right away, and ethical and moral reasoning is necessary to understand and comprehend many different issues.”
IX. Campus Professionals’ Qualitative Insights—Candid Responses and Comments

Academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals also provided candid responses that highlighted their views of their institutions’ efforts to cultivate students’ personal and academic integrity and develop their moral and ethical reasoning. Comments from the campus professionals focused on three primary contexts for these efforts: academic integrity and other student conduct activities; campus life activities, including those in religious life; and curricular opportunities.

Academic Integrity and Other Student Conduct Activities—Especially Proactive Efforts—Contributed to Students’ Development

The most common context for campus professionals’ comments related to academic integrity and other student conduct activities. Across different institutions and all three professional groups, respondents pointed to the opportunities inherent for education in the development and presence of honor codes; the student judicial system; and educational outreach efforts about problem behaviors such as copyright infringement, plagiarism, substance abuse, and academic dishonesty.

At several institutions, the presence of an honor code was singled out as important for creating an environment that helped students to develop integrity and ethics. One administrator noted, “The honor code is alive and well here. It is stated, respected, and honored. [Here], your signature is your word.”

Others were less sure as to whether the presence of an honor code actually had the hoped-for outcome. One faculty member said, “Although we have the academic honor code, we have not measured its effectiveness, if that’s even possible.”

Campus professionals also pointed to student conduct offices and procedures as being important mechanisms for helping to educate students. One student affairs professional wrote, “[The] student conduct office does a tremendous job of educating and developing responsibility and integrity of students.” Another student affairs professional pointed specifically to the presence of a student-led honor council in helping in those educational efforts, noting, “I think things like the academic honor council and the discipline system help students learn from their mistakes—especially the academic honor council and the peer council, since students are the ones who are actually hearing the case[s].”

Educational efforts about ethical behavior also took place outside of the context of disciplinary action and conduct violations. Campus professionals pointed to many specific programs at their institutions aimed at educating students about conduct issues before they committed violations. One administrator cited two examples: (1) “Librarians, working directly with students to explain concepts such as academic fair use, copyright law, and acceptable uses of information resources have contributed to a wider understanding of intellectual property issues” and (2) “administrators who supervise student employees often involve themselves in fostering dialogue on personal integrity.”

Some campus professionals, however, saw academic and conduct policies as having little substance behind them. In some departments, campus professionals noted that students who failed to follow the stated ethical expectations were not subject to penalties or discipline. For example, one student affairs professional wrote, “The honor system [here] encourages cheating because it is too lenient. Probation is almost always given versus expulsion. [Students] know they have a ‘free pass.’”

Other professionals were concerned that these efforts were often reactive rather than proactive, and that efforts needed to be focused on helping students make ethical choices to begin with, rather than educating them after a problem arose. One administrator wrote, “A lot of the programs/practices that would
be helpful in this regard happen after students have committed an offense, whether [it] is academic honesty or drinking. We need to be more proactive with students to let them know the expectations, provide clear and timely feedback, and not just wait for them to make a mistake.”

**Student Life Activities—including Religious Life Activities—Helped Students Develop Ethics and Personal Integrity**

A second context that campus professionals identified focused on student life activities, including religious life activities. Many respondents cited leadership programs, diversity programs, and civic engagement activities as sources for students to develop their personal integrity, test their values and beliefs, and develop moral and ethical reasoning. As one administrator noted, “as far as personal integrity, I think it is tackled through programs … that force students to examine their own beliefs. Also many leadership programs have a focus on personal integrity.” A second administrator stated, “I believe that our focus on civic engagement and service learning strongly contribute to developing a capacity for ethical and moral reasoning. Exposure to situations where people find themselves homeless gives our students an opportunity to reflect on that situation and its causes. Preconceived notions are frequently dispelled.”

Other campus professionals discussed the importance of having both clear messages about these educational goals and activities that support the messages. One administrator noted, “There is a stated public commitment to civic engagement and personal responsibility [at this institution] — and activities to match.” Likewise, a second administrator commented that “[our] college has worked to develop a statement of community that projects the campus learning culture of inclusion, respect, and civic involvement. This statement is used to work through conflicts and as the key part of [leadership] programs.”

Others discussed civic and citizenship obligations. A faculty member noted

> From day one, with a focus on becoming responsible citizens, we engage students in such thinking, discussions, and action—reflection sessions connected with service-learning, for example. We integrate such objectives into our courses. For example, my ‘Human Values in Literature’ course calls for students to examine the way in which our ideas about the values of knowledge, religion, politics and government, gender, and the arts have changed over time (from Medieval to present). By the end, they should know how they value these aspects of life and why.

Another faculty member discussed the importance of engaging students on the specifically moral and justice dimensions of issues such as “global warming or AIDS” through public lectures and symposia.

Many campus professionals identified religious life activities as an important source for students to refine their moral and ethical reasoning. Campus professionals pointed to the activities of faith-based student organizations, programs sponsored through college chaplaincies and religious life offices, and religion and theology courses as important sources of students’ education for moral and ethical reasoning.

Campus professionals at religiously affiliated institutions also pointed to a general institutional culture that helped students to develop moral and ethical reasoning. For example, one administrator noted, “I think this issue permeates our campus culture to such an extent that it is difficult to pick an example [though] the required religion classes are places where this topic is formalized.” In a second example, a faculty member discussed how different activities worked together to form a strong campus culture: “The two-course religion requirement introduces students to forms of moral reasoning and encourages them to develop their own moral position. Public symposia regularly address significant moral issues with a variety of national and international scholars. Daily chapel [lessons] regularly focus upon issues of moral integrity and the common good.”

In some cases, though, the presence of a great deal of activity on the part of religious life offices can lead some professionals to place the responsibility for teaching students about integrity and ethics solely on these offices. As one administrator said, “I see the religious classes and the religious life office on campus in general being in charge of the ethical and moral development of the students.”
Other professionals expressed concerns that a religious focus created an environment where not all perspectives on ethics and values are embraced. A student affairs professional at a religiously affiliated institution wrote, “This is a Catholic institution. I don’t see how they can promote understanding between Catholics and non-Catholics [and] forget it if you are gay … all these questions about ethics and morals don’t work here because is not ethical or moral to write off a large percentage of the planet because they don’t see things your way.”

Still others worried that students may circumvent personal exploration of values and beliefs in a specifically religious environment. As one faculty member pointed out, the “downside” to a strong religious environment is that “many students have assumptions about what faith is (or ought to be) and often define it in terms of a specific content rather than a journey.”

Courses Were an Important Source for Ethics and Integrity Education

A third context that campus professionals frequently cited for educating students on integrity and ethics centered on required and nonrequired courses. Many professionals viewed these courses as a way to reach a wide range of students, particularly when they were required. As one student affairs administrator wrote, “Faculty have the best opportunity to encourage ethical reasoning in the classes they teach.”

In some cases, entire courses were devoted to topics including contemporary moral issues, values and decisionmaking, ethical reasoning, and professional ethics, while in other cases, ethics and values comprise a unit within a broader course or the ethical and moral implications of different subjects were raised by both faculty and students.

Professional programs were cited as an important source of ethics and integrity education, and several respondents referenced the importance of classroom discussions on the professional ethics of a particular field. One administrator noted that “codes of ethics and professional practice requirements are discussed in class and applied in practice” and another said, “In our major, ramifications in the profession for dishonesty and lack of personal integrity are serious and can result in the suspension or loss of licensure/certification…. Having that very practical outcome deters [students] from engaging in these behaviors.”

Many respondents also cited their institution’s required ethics or values courses in general education or general education courses that were tagged with a values or ethics designation because these issues were woven into the course content. Yet some professionals cautioned that having ethics or values in the title of the course, or on the syllabus, was not enough to ensure that students were receiving powerful educational experiences. As one administrator said about a required course on values, “[it] is too inconsistent from section to section, leaving some students to feel like they never had any exposure to the values [dimension]. I often talk with students who say that they don’t like [this] class because all they do is debate topics each week, pick a side, [and] fight it out. The sections should use the common reading, explore it as appropriate based on the discipline, and encourage students to reflect on that.”

A different administrator pointed out another common problem in how such courses play out, noting, “my sense is that the values [emphasis in the course] is limited in that students get a dose early in the semester with very little later in the course. This … should be across all courses and the idea of values and what they mean in [the] disciplines should be an ongoing discussion.”

Some campus professionals pointed to the opportunity to integrate teaching about integrity and ethics in different types of classes. Several academic administrators and faculty referenced plagiarism detection tools and techniques that could be used throughout the curriculum. Others discussed specific ways they could help reduce instances of plagiarism through pedagogy and class structure, including “strictly [enforcing] academic integrity policies, [stating] them on their syllabi, and [discussing] their stance on academic integrity,” “[creating] assignments that discourage or do not allow for overt cheating,” “small class sizes to increase student–teacher contact/relationships,” and “portfolio reviews [and] capstone projects [that] promote academic integrity and the relationship of the student to a defined personal product.”
X. Conclusion—Developing a Moral Compass, a Foundation for Action

The findings highlighted in this report convincingly demonstrate that colleges and universities have a unique opportunity to cultivate students’ moral and ethical reasoning and integrity in their personal lives and in their academic pursuits. Students and campus professionals alike strongly agreed that colleges and universities should help students to develop personal and academic integrity as well as moral and ethical reasoning. In fact, of the five dimensions in the PSRI, personal and academic integrity received the highest level of endorsement. Yet the findings also suggest that in practice, campuses are not fully achieving these aims; far fewer students and professionals strongly agreed that their institutions currently focus on either dimension.

While students and professionals noted that policies specific to academic integrity were in place on their campuses, fewer believed that these policies actually impacted students’ behavior. Establishing policies and communicating these policies to campus stakeholders is certainly an important first step in promoting integrity. Now, institutions must more intentionally consider how their policies are translated into practice and what might be done to ensure that students absorb the broader messages embedded in such policies. The qualitative data offers some guidance in this respect; students remarked on how signing academic honesty agreements reiterated their institutions’ emphasis on integrity and underscored the accountability inherent in these policies.

When faced with ethical concerns or challenges, students most frequently cited their peers as a source of support, relative to campus professionals. The qualitative comments reiterated that interactions with peers in cocurricular activities, as well as through friendships and informal social conversations, helped some students to enhance their integrity. Yet peer interactions, formal and informal, must be matched by much stronger outreach to all students by academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals—those formally charged with educating students. At the time this survey was administered, only three out of ten students strongly agreed they could go to campus professionals to discuss questions or concerns they had about their own ethical and moral thinking. In other words, seven out of ten students navigate these complex and often ambiguous questions without the benefit of guidance from those most prepared to help them do this navigation.

A clear theme across the quantitative and qualitative data is that students cite faculty, especially, as an important influence on their development of integrity and ethics. For instance, students who interacted with faculty outside of class were more likely than their peers to report that their personal and academic integrity had increased while in college. Likewise, those who interacted with faculty outside of class or who studied more than sixteen hours per week felt a greater sense that their institutions helped to develop their ethical and moral reasoning capacities. Promoting academic engagement thus appears critical not only for students’ intellectual advancement but for their personal and social development as well.

Engaging in structured cocurricular activities—most often the purview of student affairs professionals—also promotes students’ understanding of ethics and integrity. For instance, those who participated in campus life activities or in community service activities reported a stronger sense of personal integrity than peers who did not participate. Yet all types of out-of-class involvement are not equal; students who reported partying at least six hours per week, for example, were less likely to think about issues of personal conduct than those who party less often.

The findings from Developing a Moral Compass underscore the importance of integrating education for personal and social responsibility into the fabric of the institution. In particular, the report highlights the need to create a more intentional and pervasive climate—across the curriculum and cocurriculum—that supports students in developing an increasingly sophisticated sense of ethics and integrity over time.
References


APPENDIX A. Essential Learning Outcomes for the Twenty-first Century

AAC&U’s LEAP campaign is organized around a robust set of essential learning outcomes, which are best developed through a contemporary liberal education. These essential outcomes provide a new framework to guide students’ cumulative progress beginning in school and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies. Key groups—the higher education community, accreditors, employers, and civic leaders—agree that students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by developing:

**Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

**Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring**

**Intellectual and Practical Skills, including**
- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

**Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance**

**Personal and Social Responsibility, including**
- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

**Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges**

**Integrative Learning, including**
- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

**Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems**
APPENDIX B. About the Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory (PSRI)

The PSRI is a campus climate survey developed as part of the Core Commitments initiative. It is designed to gauge participants’ perceptions about the opportunities for learning and engagement with issues of personal and social responsibility across an institution. The inventory consists of three types of questions about the five dimensions, tailored for each of the four constituent groups:

- **Attitudinal items**: participants choose the degree to which they agree with a statement about the institution (choosing from Strongly Agree, Agree Somewhat, Disagree Somewhat, Strongly Disagree, No Basis for Judgment)

- **Behavioral items**: participants choose the degree to which they experience a particular phenomenon at the institution (choosing from Frequently, Occasionally, Never)

- **Open-ended items**: participants provide text related to experiences, programs, and practices at the institution that help students to develop personal and social responsibility.

**PSRI Development and Administration**

Supported by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, the initial inventory was developed in 2006 under the direction of L. Lee Knefelkamp and Richard Hersh with research assistance from Lauren Ruff. The survey items were carefully designed to measure aspects of a campus climate that are related to each of the five dimensions. This work began with a thorough review of the psychology and developmental literatures to clarify the definitions, identify the character traits, and record the relevant behavioral manifestations of each of the dimensions. Building upon the established definitions, the authors then examined the climate and congruence/dissonance literatures to identify reasonable markers for each dimension, with the goal of establishing ten markers of campus climate. The authors devised a multifaceted sampling strategy to survey four different constituents: students, academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs staff. This approach would provide comprehensive data regarding how well institutions are embedding education for civic and moral responsibility.

The initial inventory was then refined in cooperation with Eric L. Dey and his associates at the University of Michigan’s Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education and the instrument piloted on three campuses in spring 2007. In fall 2007, data were gathered from the twenty-three institutions comprising in the Core Commitments Leadership Consortium. The responses were of sufficient size and variety to be representative of the four populations on participating campuses. The overall survey response rates were 28 percent for the student survey and 47 percent for the professional surveys, and were statistically adjusted to account for bias in response patterns. However, since the project design did not randomly select institutions to participate in Core Commitments, the overall sample is not representative of the four populations nationally.

**Instrumentation**

The inventory is comprised of two surveys, one for students and the other for professionals. These forms are parallel in their structure, with a total of 137 items in each of the two forms that capture respondents’ impressions of the extent to which their campus is educating students for personal and social responsibility. These items are comprised of Likert-type scales, where respondents are asked to rate either their level of agreement with a statement ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree) or their impression of
how often something occurred on campus, ranging from 1 (frequently) to 3 (never). Additional survey items are included that prompt respondents to provide basic demographic and background information.

In total, 23,950 students and 8,825 professionals from across the twenty-three institutions completed the PSRI. There was considerable variability in the campus response rates, especially with respect to the student responses. On campuses where there was a statistical bias, the research team made statistical corrections to eliminate this discrepancy. Expected response rates were determined based on the campuses’ student body gender, race, and class year breakdown. Weightings were then added to each student’s scores based on the difference between the campuses actual response and the responses expected as a percentage of the general student population. (For example, if a campus is comprised of 50 percent men and 50 percent women, but its respondents were 25 percent men and 75 percent women, each man’s response would be weighted times two and each woman’s response would be weighted by half.) The individual weights were then combined to give each student one weight to more accurately reflect a random sample of the student bodies. Chi-square tests on the weighted campus samples showed them to be statistically indistinguishable from each institution’s general population.

A Note about the Data

Campus climate data are self-reported data that focuses on participants’ perceptions of the campus environment. They did not capture what an institution is actually doing with regard to the phenomena under investigation. The PSRII results may point to: (a) a lack of awareness about existing programs and practices related to personal and social responsibility, (b) a lack of impact of these programs and practices on the overall institutional culture, or (c) actual gaps in programs and practices. The Leadership Consortium institutions are using their own data to probe the situation on their individual campuses.

Because campuses differ dramatically in terms of mission, culture, size and population, this report does not compare data across individual institutions. Hence, the data are reported in the aggregate across the twenty-three schools. The data are disaggregated where relevant by factors such as students’ year in school, for example, or by professional category (academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals). To better highlight comparisons with student responses, several graphs combine academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals into a single professional category (campus professionals) where such group differences were found to be inconsequential.

In some instances, the students and campus professionals were further disaggregated into relevant categories such as divisions along gender and minority status. In terms of the institutions, data were disaggregated according to institutional type, public versus private. Further distinctions were also examined, as we considered the difference between large public institutions, community colleges, and military academies, or denominationally affiliated private institutions.

All student data presented in this document are reported in a weighted format. Weights were determined for each student using the framework suggested by Dey (1997), a common procedure to adjust the individual responses the sample more closely resemble the population of interest, lending more validity to inferences made from the data. Campus-specific response rates were calculated for eight subgroups of students: men, women, students of color, white students, first-year students, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. A weighted value for each subgroup was calculated by comparing the known campus population with the value of the sample population on each dimension of interest. In total, there are 176 subgroup weights (twenty-two campuses, each with eight student subgroups). PRSI data previously reported were not in the current weighted format.

1 For each of the 137 items, respondents also had the option of choosing the response “No basis for judgment.”
About the Authors

ERIC L. DEY had just begun as a professor at the Curry School of Education and Director of Higher Education Programs and Associate Director of CASTL (Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning) at the University of Virginia and director of research and assessment for Core Commitments before his untimely death in November 2009. He was formerly affiliated with the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan where the PSI data were collected and analyzed for Core Commitments. Dey earned his PhD in higher education from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and holds master of education and a bachelor of general studies degrees from Wichita State University. He also directed the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) as an associate director of the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Dey’s research focused on the ways that colleges and universities shape the experiences and lives of students and faculty. He was a member of the team of social scientists that provided research on the educational effects of diverse student bodies, which was foundational to the Supreme Court’s decision supporting the continuing use of affirmative action in college admissions. In 1998, Dey was selected as one of forty “Young Leaders of the Academy” by Change magazine and received the Early Career Achievement Award from the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). More recently, ASHE also honored his work on the University of Michigan’s Affirmative Action Legal Defense team with a Special Merit Award in 2003.

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