

## ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: DECIPHERING THE FACTORS:  
FACULTY DISCRETION IN ACADEMIC  
MISCONDUCT REFERRALS

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College campuses face widespread academic misconduct, with rates as high as 80-95%, but only 3-9% of cases are reported (Cochran 2017; Hard, Conway, Moran 2006; McCabe 2005; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007). Examples include cheating during exams, collaborative assignments meant to be individual, and improper use of online sources. At the University of Maryland, common sanctions for academic misconduct include a 12-month "XF," and suspension or expulsion is possible for repeated or severe offenses. Despite university administrations implementing honor codes, such as the Code of Academic Integrity at the University of Maryland, that require faculty to report all suspicions of misconduct and threaten students with severe sanctions including course failure, suspension, and expulsion, students continue to cheat, and faculty are reluctant to report their suspicions of misconduct.

Existing research underscores the crucial role of faculty in deterring cheating, with inconsistent responses to misconduct by faculty fostering a culture of dishonesty that further encourages misconduct and leads to differential treatment among students (McCabe and Pavela 2004; Scanlan 2006; Packalen and Rowbotham 2022; O'Neill and Pfeiffer 2012; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007). The goal of the study is to address the inconsistency in formal referrals of students suspected of academic misconduct by faculty, and develop a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing faculty decisions to refer to enhance the fairness and equity of the student judicial process. The research found that faculty responses to academic misconduct are inconsistent at the University of Maryland and the factors motivating them to refer students are difficult to discern - consistent with prior research. The research also confirmed that faculty perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of the disciplinary process influence their likelihood to utilize it, emphasizing the importance of understanding faculty rationale in the pursuance of a culture of honesty and integrity.

DECIPHERING THE FACTORS: FACULTY DISCRETION IN  
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT REFERRALS

By

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# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
WHY DOES ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT OCCUR?.....	12
Peer Behavior.....	12
Lack of Deterrence.....	14
RESPONSES TO ACADEMIC DISHONESTY.....	15
Honor Codes.....	15
Culture of Dishonesty.....	16
Inconsistency of Reporting.....	17
<b>Chapter 3: Data and Methods.....</b>	<b>22</b>
SAMPLE.....	22
Records Review.....	22
Faculty Survey.....	23
Dependent Variables.....	25
Independent Variables.....	27
ANALYTIC METHOD.....	30
<b>Chapter 4: Results.....</b>	<b>31</b>
RECORDS REVIEW.....	31
Descriptive Analysis.....	32
Bivariate Analysis.....	34
<b>Chapter 5: Discussion.....</b>	<b>39</b>
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	41
REFERENCES.....	43
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>47</b>
APPENDIX A. TABLES AND FIGURES.....	47
APPENDIX B. SURVEY.....	51

## List of Tables

Table 1. Descriptives of the Dependent Variables.....	33
Table 2. Sample Demographics.....	35
Table 3. Chi-Square Test for Significance.....	36
Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test.....	37
Table 5. Reasons for Formally Referring.....	47
Table 6. Reasons for Not Formally Referring.....	47

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Total Cases Handled by OSC.....	32
Figure 2. Type of Academic Misconduct Referred to OSC.....	48
Figure 3. Sanctions Given By OSC.....	49
Figure 4. Percentage of Students Found Responsible by OSC.....	50



## Chapter 1: Introduction

College campuses have long had issues of widespread academic misconduct, reaching rates of 80-95% of students, with only around 3-9% of cases being reported (Cochran 2017; Hard, Conway, and Moran 2006; McCabe 2005; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007). This alarming prevalence of academic misconduct has garnered significant attention from scholars and educational institutions alike. Common examples of academic misconduct include copying from another student during an examination, collaborating with others on an assignment that was intended to be completed individually, copying entire phrases or sentences from online sources without proper citations, and any other action that a student takes that puts them at an unfair advantage above others in the class. At the University of Maryland, the most common sanction for students found responsible for academic misconduct is a 12-month “XF”; permanent failure of the course with a 12-month “X” that signifies on the student’s transcript: “failure due to academic dishonesty.” Students can also face suspension or expulsion for repeated misconduct or misconduct deemed more egregious.

University administrations are aware of this issue, and in the past 25 or so years, they have attempted to address it largely through the implementation and/or the adaptation of “honor codes.” For example, the University of Maryland employs the *Code of Academic Integrity*, in its newer form adopted in 1991, with updates made as recently as August 2023. Honor codes such as this one lay out the policies, expectations, and disciplinary processes regarding acts of academic dishonesty that all members of the University community are expected to follow. Despite policies governing academic misconduct, including a requirement that faculty report all suspicions of misconduct, and the threat of sanctions as

severe as failing a course, suspension, and expulsion, students are still cheating. The alarming rates of academic misconduct become even more puzzling when considered against the fact that most students understand the value of upholding standards of academic integrity and the harms of cheating (Waltzer, Samuelson, Dahl 2022; Stone 2023). This persistence of academic misconduct warrants a closer examination of the motivations behind students' behavior and the responses of faculty and university administrations.

Existing research highlights the importance of the role of faculty in the development of a culture of integrity that discourages students from cheating (McCabe and Pavela 2004; Scanlan 2006; Packalen and Rowbotham 2022; O'Neill and Pfeiffer 2012; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007). While there is limited research addressing faculty perceptions directly, the findings that do exist further emphasize the need for more consideration of the role of faculty, especially when considered in conjunction with the research of student beliefs. Faculty discretion emerges as a key factor in the disparities between rates of academic dishonesty and rates of formal referrals (McCabe and Pavela 2004; Scanlan 2006; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007).

When faculty choose to not formally refer a student for suspicions of academic misconduct, it opens the door to differential treatment concerning the consequences faced by students who engage in the same behavior. Consolidating faculty responses then becomes a key factor in ensuring a fair and equitable system for all university members. But missing from existing research is an understanding of *why* faculty decide to use their own discretion in addressing academic dishonesty instead of following formal university policy. This literature review will begin by identifying the reasons why academic dishonesty occurs

before delving into how, despite the implementation of honor codes, the inconsistency of faculty responses to misconduct fosters a culture of dishonesty that further encourages students to cheat.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### WHY DOES ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT OCCUR?

When students notice that faculty let academic dishonesty by other students go largely unaddressed, they start believing that cheating is their only choice to stay afloat in their courses (MacLeod and Eaton 2020; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007; McCabe 2005).

While not traditionally considered a delinquency act, academic dishonesty is correlated with delinquency (Williams and Williams 2012; Blankenship and Whitley 2000) and there is significant crossover in the factors that motivate academic misconduct and those that motivate delinquency. Specifically, the schools of thought in criminology that help explain patterns of academic misconduct are research on peer behavior, deterrence and rational choice theory.

#### *Peer Behavior*

Peer influence on deviant behavior is a consistent theme studied in criminological literature. Paternoster et. al (2013) found that individuals in the treatment group cheated at a rate of 38%, as compared to the control group, where no one cheated. The treatment, as it were, was exposure to a deviant peer - justifying the decision to cheat (Paternoster et. al, 2013). The connections to academic misconduct are clear, as students in academic contexts are motivated to cheat for a variety of reasons that centers largely on their perceptions and understanding of their peers' behavior.

Generally, students care about and understand the value of upholding values of integrity (Waltzer, Samuelson, Dahl 2022; Stone 2023); Bretag et. al's survey (2014) of 15,304 students across 6 universities, 92% believed academic integrity was relevant to life or work experience outside university settings (Bretag et al. 2014). However, exposure to peer deviance related to academic dishonesty is a powerful factor that can override this moral compass and deter academic integrity within a university community. Students believing that their friends engage in academic misconduct or that the majority of other students approve of cheating has been found to be the most significant predictor of themselves engaging in academic dishonesty (McCabe 2001; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007; Zhao et. al 2022). They report the feeling of being pressured to engage in academic dishonesty by friends (Cochran 2017), as well as the pressure to get high grades; self-reported cheaters are more likely to believe that cheating is necessary to get ahead (Griffin, Bolkan, Goodboy 2015; Packalen and Rowbotham 2022).

In a study that compared levels of academic misconduct across three universities, the institution with the highest rate of students who reported engaging in academic dishonesty also had 81% of respondents agree with the phrase: "Everyone does it, so it's ok" (O'Neill 2012). This correlation between perceived peer behavior and individual actions highlights the need for responses to academic dishonesty that address not only individual behaviors but also the wider social dynamics at play within the university community.

### *Lack of Deterrence*

According to deterrence and rational choice theory, coined by Beccaria, Cornish, and Clarke, individuals weigh the costs and benefits of their actions before deciding to engage in deviant behavior. In the context of academic misconduct, this theory posits that students make a rational decision based on the perceived advantages of cheating compared to the potential consequences. If the perceived costs of academic misconduct, such as formal sanctions, are high, and the likelihood of getting caught is significant, students are more likely to be deterred from engaging in dishonest practices. Packalen and Robotham's qualitative study of undergraduate students reinforced rational choice theory as a viable explanation for students' decisions to cheat as the authors found that cheating was not a moral decision made by students, but rather, a result of a cost-benefit analysis. Specifically, students weighed the perceived benefit to their GPA versus their likelihood of getting caught in making their decision to engage in academic misconduct (Packalen and Rowbotham 2022).

Incorporating elements of rational choice and deterrence theories into the analysis of academic dishonesty provides a more in-depth understanding of the decision-making processes behind students' actions. The deterrence perspective is reinforced by Vandehey, Diekhoff, and LaBeff's study (2007), which emphasized the relevance of punitive deterrents in reducing acts of academic misconduct. Nagin (2013) addressed the question of does, and how does, punishment prevent crime in his article, "Deterrence in the 21st Century." Specifically, he contends a heightened "perceived risk of apprehension" deters crimes, which is consistent with prior literature suggesting that "perceived certainty of punishment is

associated with reduced self-reported or intended offending.” Cochran’s 2017 findings further support the deterrence perspective in the context of academic dishonesty, as he found that the perceived threats of formal sanctions by university officials were effective constraints that deterred academic dishonesty.

## RESPONSES TO ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

### *Honor Codes*

Honor codes have been adopted in the past 25 or so years in an attempt by universities to address the high rates of academic dishonesty. At face value, the implementation of a universal university policy should promote a consistent response to academic dishonesty. But these policies leave room for interpretation and discretion by individual faculty members, rendering the policy ineffective. Faculty themselves agree - only 24% of faculty in one survey thought their institution’s policy was effective, and of those respondents, the belief was: “the policy is fine, but it is not implemented consistently” (MacLeod and Eaton 2020). The existence of an honor code is not enough - it is only effective if accepted and reinforced by the university community. There were no significant differences in rates of cheating found between a college that had an honor code that wasn’t incorporated into university culture and a college that had no honor code at all. But a third college that had an honor code that was embedded in the culture of the university community did see statistically significant differences in cheating frequency (O’Neill and Pfeiffer 2012). The adoption of honor codes as a response to academic misconduct highlights the importance of not only implementing

such policies but also ensuring their integration and acceptance within the broader university culture in order to be effective.

### *Culture of Dishonesty*

Despite the implementation of honor codes, existing literature suggests a culture of dishonesty in a university community is perpetuated by faculty's inconsistent actions - or rather, inaction (McCabe and Pavela 2004; Scanlan 2006; MacLeod and Eaton 2020). Students are aware of the inconsistent responses to academic misconduct, which directly impacts their perceptions of academic integrity (McCabe, Trevino, Butterfield 2001). When students believe that cheating is rampant, acceptable, and/or goes unnoticed, more cheating is bound to occur (McCabe and Pavela 2004). As discussed, deterrence and rational choice theory posits that students weigh the perceived risk of cheating against the perceived benefits; students who believe that cheating is rampant and that sanctions are unlikely because faculty do not formally refer their peers are more likely to engage in academic misconduct themselves (McCabe and Pavela 2004; Scanlan 2006; Packalen and Rowbotham 2022; O'Neill and Pfeiffer 2012; Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007). Research suggests that the threat of formal sanctions is ultimately effective in reducing the likelihood of dishonesty, but this threat can only be effective if students have a degree of certainty that they will be caught at all (Cochran 2017; Packalen and Rowbotham 2022; McCabe and Pavela 2004).

Yet the literature has shown that students do not believe that cheating is addressed consistently, if at all. This perception of uncertainty challenges the effectiveness of deterrence-based approaches. One study found that 90% of college students believe that



“cheaters are either never caught or not appropriately disciplined” (Scanlan 2006). Students pick up on “which faculty are harsher, and which are lenient...when word spreads that faculty are lenient, students are less likely to believe that an ethic of integrity exists” (McCabe 2005). In another survey, only 8% of cheaters reported ever being caught cheating (Vandehey, Diekhokk, LaBeff 2007) Overall, there is a lack of uniformity in how faculty choose to address academic dishonesty, even with honor codes in place that dictate the proper actions they should take. This lack of consistency breeds a mistrust of faculty among students and sends the message that academic integrity is not a high priority, creating a culture of dishonesty that leads to more cheating by students (MacLeod and Eaton 2020; Coalter, Wim, and Wanorie 2007; McCabe 2005; O’Neill and Pfeiffer 2012).

### *Inconsistency of Reporting*

It’s established that inconsistency by faculty leads to a culture of dishonesty. But, specifically, the inconsistency in addressing academic dishonesty largely comes down to the discretion of each faculty and their individual decisions to not formally refer some cases while formally referring others. And the literature is clear - there is significant inconsistency in formal referrals for academic dishonesty (Scanlan 2006; MacLeod and Eaton 2020; McCabe 2004; Coalter, Wim, and Wanorie 2007; Vandehey, Diekhoff, and LaBeff 2007). For context, faculty, to include professors and instructors, are most often the actors responsible for the formal referral of suspected academic misconduct in their courses to university administration, who then handle the case according to university policy. For example, at the University of Maryland, the proper procedure dictated by the institution’s Code of Academic

Integrity to handle a suspicion of academic misconduct by a student is for the instructor to submit a referral to the Office of Student Conduct (OSC), where the determination of responsibility and the assessment of possible sanctions is then handled by OSC. This process places a significant responsibility on faculty members to formally refer students and highlights the role they play in maintaining academic integrity.

However, the inconsistency in faculty responses to academic misconduct presents a challenge. Across surveys through the past 20 years, faculty report at least some kind of inconsistency in their approach to addressing academic dishonesty. In one Canadian study (2006) across 11 higher education institutions, 98% of faculty said they would take action when faced with major cheating. But only 53% of faculty would follow proper procedure and formally report their suspicion, and 46% of faculty reported ignoring an incident altogether (Christensen and McCabe 2006). In another study, 42% of faculty said they would handle a clear, but minor case of academic informally (MacLeod and Eaton 2020). Handling matters “informally” leaves the decision to sanction or not sanction a student up to each individual faculty member’s interpretation of their universities policies as well as their personal beliefs. The inconsistency of reporting is again highlighted in another study, with 57.5% of faculty answering in the affirmative to: “Have you ever not taken action (for any reason) when you suspected academic dishonesty in one of your courses?” (Coalter, Wim, and Wanorie 2007).

Currently, the discretion of faculty is contributing to a vast disparity in students who are ever “caught” for cheating, which points to the differential treatment - including sanctions as high as suspension and expulsion - for students engaging in the same misconduct.

Differential treatment is wrong because “it treats differently people who should be treated the

same,” (Yost 2017), but in the context of academic integrity, there is an additional concern as “students motivation and engagement could be adversely affected by perceived lack of fairness in the [academic integrity] process” (Stone 2023). Police discretion literature also provides helpful insights into the importance of consistency, as it helps answer the question of why unfairness matters - “unfairness undermines the relational bonds between people and authorities” (Tyler 2016).

In existing literature, the reasons faculty cite as why they ultimately choose whether or not to address a suspected act of academic dishonesty vary. Some faculty see the hearing process as too much work or that the punishments students receive are not appropriate (Scanlan 2006). Another common reason cited for why faculty would choose to not pursue a suspicion of academic dishonesty is a lack of evidence or proof, or a lack of understanding of the process (Coalter, Wim, and Wanorie 2007). Others believe that their university’s judicial process is not fair and impartial, for everyone involved (Coalter, Wim, and Wanorie 2007; MacLeod and Eaton 2020). But, when faculty perceive the university’s process to be fair and result in sanctions that are appropriate, they are more likely to actually utilize the process (Scanlan 2006).

## THE CURRENT STUDY

Because faculty serve as the bridge between students and the university officials who handle academic dishonesty cases, understanding their perspective becomes even more vital.

Understanding when and why faculty choose whether or not to refer suspected cases of academic dishonesty will help university administrations and faculty themselves establish

more consistent guidelines for addressing academic dishonesty which would, in turn, help create a culture of integrity that further reduces academic dishonesty. Missing from existing research is a comprehensive understanding of not only exactly when and why faculty choose to refer, but also, *who* is doing the referrals. For example, is it inexperienced faculty, or more experienced faculty? If it is less experienced faculty doing more of the referrals, and more experienced faculty doing less referrals, then perhaps there is a systemic issue that more seasoned faculty have picked up on. If less experienced faculty are the ones making less referrals, then the issue could be a matter of better training on academic integrity for newer faculty. Identifying descriptive characteristics of faculty that correlate to higher likelihoods of referral would help university administrations better target and tailor their efforts in academic dishonesty training and support.

A better understanding of the factors that influence a faculty member's decision to formally refer as well as the discovery of a descriptive profile of who is most likely to refer would provide for a more fair and equitable student judicial process. The purpose of this research is to close the gap in understanding of the inconsistencies in formal referrals of students suspected of academic misconduct by faculty. Existing literature highlights the discrepancy between faculty who suspect misconduct and faculty who follow proper university procedure in referring students for their suspicions. These subjects are addressed through the following research questions:

**RQ1:** Do faculty at the University of Maryland follow University policy (i.e., do they consistently formally refer students to the Office of Student Conduct for suspected academic misconduct)?

**RQ2:** Can a descriptive profile be made of the faculty members that are most and/or least likely to formally refer a student to the Office of Student Conduct for suspected academic misconduct?

**RQ3:** What factors, if any, influence a faculty member's decision to formally refer a student to the Office of Student Conduct for suspected academic misconduct?

## Chapter 3: Data and Methods

This research was informed by two sources of data. A records review was performed to provide a descriptive background for the research; secondary quantitative data from the University's Office of Student Conduct was collected and analyzed to capture rates in academic misconduct from 1993-2022. The second source of data came from a primary quantitative data collection effort in the form of a faculty survey seeking to assess the perceptions and attitudes about academic misconduct of faculty at the University of Maryland.

### SAMPLE

#### *Records Review*

The secondary data used for this study was accessed through collaboration with the Director of Student Conduct, Mr. James Bond. Mr. Bond provided all of the Office of Student Conduct's annual reports, spanning a period of 29 years<sup>1</sup>. Each annual report contains information on rates of both academic and non-academic misconduct. Mr. Bond also provided all of the versions of the *Code of Academic Integrity* since its adoption. The first *Code* was approved on August 1, 1991, and has since been amended in the years 2001, 2005, 2012, 2014, 2019, 2020, and 2023.

I went through each annual report and input the data into a spreadsheet. The relevant data that was pulled from each report, when available, included the number of new cases, the

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<sup>1</sup> The available annual reports included the school years of 1993-1994, 1998-1999, 2002-2003, 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022.

number of carry over cases, and the number of total cases; the average number of days it took to resolve a case; new cases percentage change from the previous year; frequencies of formal referrals for each cheating, fabrication, facilitation, plagiarism, and self plagiarism; frequencies of sanctions imposed for each 12 month “XF”, 6 month “XF”, Permanent “XF”, “F”, letter grade reduction, zero on an assignment, zero on an exam, suspensions withheld, suspensions, and expulsions; the percentage of cases where the student was found responsible, dismissed, and/or not responsible.

### *Faculty Survey*

The participants for the faculty survey were selected through a collection of publicly available faculty email addresses on University departmental websites. Faculty received an invitation by email to complete the survey. This invitation included a link to access the survey that was administered via Qualtrics. A total of 1,473 unique email addresses received an email with a link to the survey.

The survey was interacted with by 301 individuals with 16 previewing and 64 beginning but not completing the survey. Out of the remaining 221 responses, there was incomplete data for 10 of these respondents. Given that most of the skipped questions for these respondents were at the end of the survey, and those questions were ultimately excluded from analysis, 221 responses were deemed complete and usable for analysis.

The sample consists primarily of faculty members currently serving in an instructional role (82.9%, n=189). By gender, there are 132 (59.7%) men, 87 (39.4%) women, and 2 individuals (0.9%) who declined to answer. The majority of respondents

identified as “White” (72.7%, n=160). For non-White individuals, 24 (10.9%) identified as “Asian,” 17 (7.7%) identified as “Black or African American”, 14 (6.4%) identified as “Latin American or Hispanic,” 1 (0.5%) identified as “Native American,” and 4 (1.8%) identified as “Other.” Compared to the actual demographics of faculty at the University of Maryland, white faculty are overrepresented in the sample<sup>2</sup>. The majority of respondents indicated having 15+ years of experience in an instructional role (62.7%, n=141), 31 (13.8%) having 11-15 years of experience, 34 (15.1%) having 6-10 years of experience, and the remaining 19 (8.5%) having 5 or less years of experience.

Academically, the sample is representative of faculty at the University of Maryland. The breakdown of respondents by department or college is as follows: 64 respondents (28.7%) indicated that their primary appointment was in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences; 53 (23.8%) from the College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences; 40 (17.9%) from the A James Clark School of Engineering; 25 (11.2%) from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources; 13 (5.8%) from the Robert H Smith School of Business, 10 (4.5%) from the School of Public Policy, and 1 (0.4%) from the College of Information Studies.

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<sup>2</sup> The actual breakdown of postsecondary, primarily instructional faculty by race at the University of Maryland is 58.2% White, 12.8% Asian, 8.1% Black, 5.6% Hispanic or Latino, and 10.5% unknown (Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment - November 2023)



## VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENT

The records review served to provide descriptive context for the study, therefore, variables were not assessed. The following variables and analytic method apply only to the data captured by faculty survey.

### *Dependent Variables*

The three dependent variables assessed in this study are *past referral*, *ever not referred*, and *future referral intention*.

The *past referral* variable captures whether and how many faculty have submitted formal referrals; respondents were asked, “How many times have you formally referred a student to the Office of Student Conduct for suspected academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) in your academic career?” 41 (18.7%) faculty indicated that they have submitted a formal referral 6 or more times, 33 (15.1%) 3-5 times, and 61 (27.9%) 1-2 times. 12 respondents (5.5%) indicated that they have never suspected academic misconduct in their career, and 72 respondents (32.9%) have never formally referred a student even when they suspected academic misconduct. For purposes of analyses, the *past referral* variable was coded into a binary variable: never referred = 0 and ever referred = 1, with those who indicated that they have never suspected misconduct coded as missing. The resulting frequencies of the binary *past referral* variable is 135 (65.2%) faculty who have referred a student for suspected academic misconduct at least once, and 72 (34.8%) who have never formally referred a student even though they have suspected academic misconduct.

The *ever not referred* variable captures whether and how many faculty have specifically chosen to not formally refer a student for academic misconduct; respondents were asked, “Have you ever chosen not to formally refer a student for suspected academic misconduct?” 50 respondents (24.3%) said they always refer when they have suspicions, 66 (32%) have chosen not to formally refer a student 1-2 times, 37 (18%) 3-5 times, and 32 (15.5%) 6 or more times. 21 (10.2%) indicated in this question that they have never suspected a student of academic misconduct. The *ever not referred* variable was also coded into a binary variable for purposes of analyses: always refer = 0, ever chosen not to refer = 1, with those who indicated that they have never suspected misconduct coded as missing. The resulting frequencies of the binary *ever not referred* variable is 50 (27%) faculty who indicated that they always formally refer students when they suspect academic misconduct, and 135 (73%) who have chosen to not refer a student for suspected misconduct at least once.

The final dependent variable, *future referral intention*, captures the actions faculty report they would take if presented with a future suspicion of academic misconduct. Respondents were asked, “If you were convinced, even after a discussion with the student, that a student was cheating on a major test or assignment in your course, what would be your most likely reaction? (Select all that apply)”. 63 (27.6%) would “reprimand or warn the student,” 63 (27.6%) said they would “fail the student on the test or assignment,” 32 (14%) said they would “lower the student’s grade,” 38 (16.7%) said they would “require the student to retake test/redo assignment,” 12 (5.3%) said they would “fail the student for the course,” 51 (22.4%) said they would “report student to [their] chair, director, or Dean,” 3 (1.3%) said they would “do nothing about the incident.” The majority of respondents (74.6%, n=170)

indicated that they would “report student to the Office of Student Conduct.” The future referral intention variable was also coded into a binary variable for purposes of analyses: would not report the student to the Office of Student Conduct = 0, would report the student to the Office of Student Conduct = 1. The resulting frequencies of the future referral intention variable is 49 (22.4%) who would not formally refer the student to the Office of Student Conduct, and 170 (77.6%) who would formally refer the student.

### *Independent Variables*

*Policy familiarity* captures faculty’s self-assessment of their familiarity with University policy. Faculty were asked, “How familiar are you with the academic integrity policies and guidelines established by our university?” (“Not familiar at all” = 1, “Slightly familiar” = 2, “Moderately familiar” = 3, “Very familiar” = 4, “Extremely familiar” = 5). The average answer was 3.55 which is halfway in between “moderately familiar” and “very familiar.”

*Fairness* captures faculty’s perception of the fairness of the Office of Student Conduct’s process of deciding the responsibility of students accused of misconduct. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “Our student judicial process is fair and impartial” (“Strongly disagree” = 1, “Somewhat disagree” = 2, “Neither agree nor disagree” = 3, “Somewhat agree” = 4, “Strongly agree” = 5). The average answer was 3.52 which is halfway in between “neither agree nor disagree” and “somewhat agree.”

*Effectiveness* captures faculty’s perception of the effectiveness of the Office of Student Conduct’s process. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with

the statement “Our student judicial process is effective” (“Strongly disagree” = 1, “Somewhat disagree” = 2, “Neither agree nor disagree” = 3, “Somewhat agree” = 4, “Strongly agree” = 5). The average answer was 3.35, which is in between “neither agree nor disagree” and “somewhat agree,” with a slight lean closer to “neither agree nor disagree.”

The *hassle* variable is one of several that capture faculty member’s motivations behind not referring students for suspected academic misconduct. Respondents were asked, “Did any of the following factors influence your choice to not refer a student for suspected academic misconduct? (Select all that apply)”. The *hassle* variable was coded as a binary variable with the selected option, “Student disciplinary process is too much of a hassle,” = 1, not selected = 0. Out of the faculty who have ever not referred a student suspected of academic misconduct, 34 (14.9%) indicated that they did so because the “Student disciplinary process is too much of a hassle.”

*Not enough time* was coded as a binary variable based on whether the respondent selected the answer choice, “Not enough time”, for the question: “Did any of the following factors influence your choice to not refer a student for suspected academic misconduct? (Select all that apply)”. Out of the faculty who have ever not referred a student suspected of academic misconduct, 19 (8.3%) indicated that they did so because of “Not enough time.”

*Didn’t want consequence* was coded as a binary variable based on whether the respondent selected the answer choice, “Didn’t want the student to face consequences”, for the question: “Did any of the following factors influence your choice to not refer a student for suspected academic misconduct? (Select all that apply)”. Out of the faculty who have

ever not referred a student suspected of academic misconduct, 19 (8.3%) indicated that they did so because they “Didn’t want the student to face consequences.”

*Harshness* captures whether faculty believe “The Office of Student Conduct typically serves students with sanctions that are unduly harsh,” (“Strongly disagree” = 1, “Somewhat disagree” = 2, “Neither agree nor disagree” = 3, “Somewhat agree” = 4, “Strongly agree” = 5). The average answer was 2.37, which is in between “somewhat disagree” and “neither agree nor disagree” with a slight lean toward “somewhat disagree.”

*Vigilance* captures whether faculty believe “Faculty members are vigilant in discovering and reporting suspected cases of academic dishonesty,” (“Strongly disagree” = 1, “Somewhat disagree” = 2, “Neither agree nor disagree” = 3, “Somewhat agree” = 4, “Strongly agree” = 5). The average answer was 2.74, which is in between “somewhat disagree” and “neither agree nor disagree” with a slight lean toward “neither agree nor disagree.”

*Problem* captures whether faculty believe “Cheating is a serious problem at UMD,” (“Strongly disagree” = 1, “Somewhat disagree” = 2, “Neither agree nor disagree” = 3, “Somewhat agree” = 4, “Strongly agree” = 5). The average answer was 3.35, which is in between “neither agree nor disagree” and “somewhat agree” with a slight lean toward “neither agree nor disagree.”

Descriptive variables measured and analyzed in this survey are in line with the study’s goal of developing a descriptive profile of faculty members who are most and least likely to formally refer students for suspected academic misconduct. This includes traditional

demographics of age, race/ethnicity, and gender identity, as well as years of experience and college appointment.

#### ANALYTIC METHOD

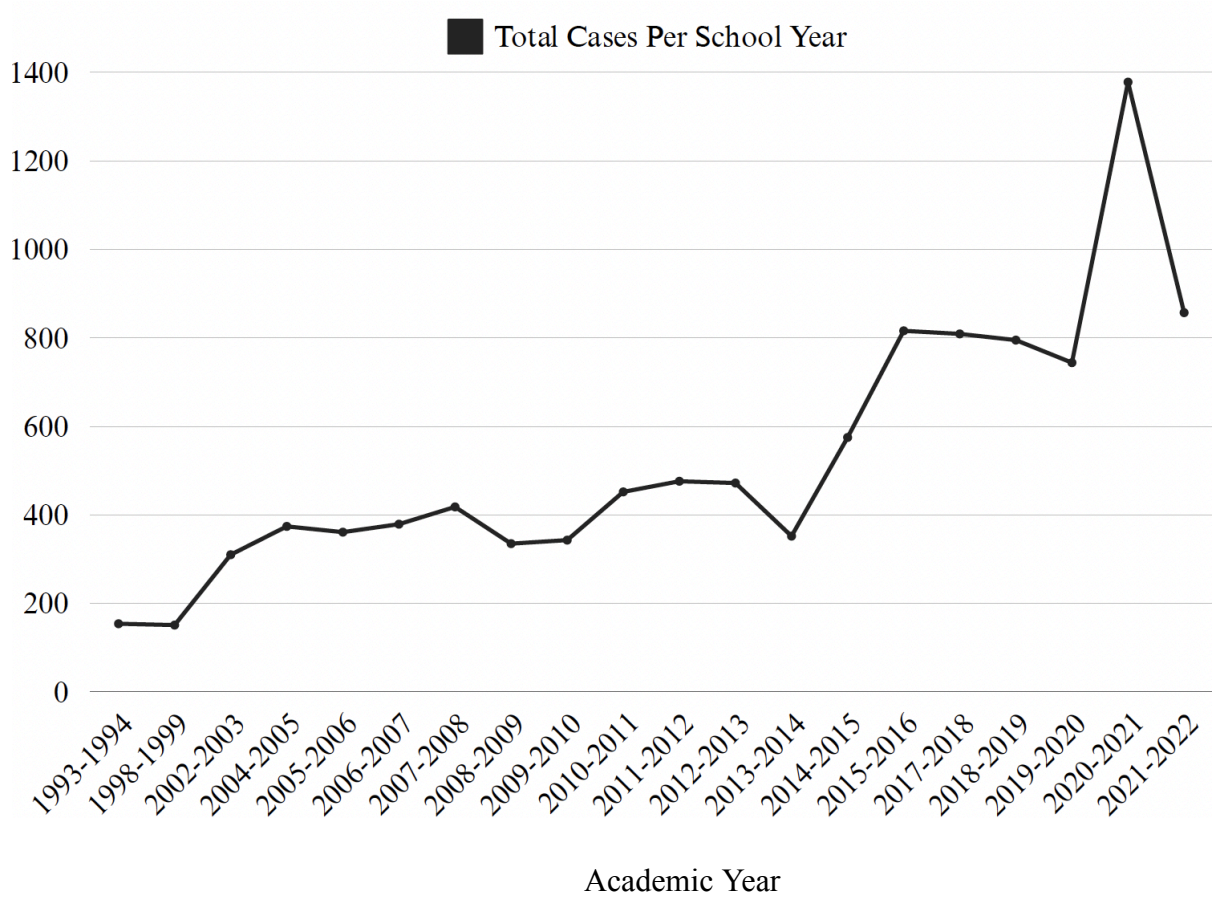
The results of the survey were analyzed using SPSS. The analytic strategy proceeded in two stages. First, univariate analyses examined the frequency of the three dependent variables to help answer the first research question that asks whether faculty at the University of Maryland are consistent in their responses to academic misconduct. Then, bivariate, Chi-Square tests and Mann-Whitney U Tests were used to examine whether there is a significant association between the independent variables and the three dependent variables, in an effort to answer the second and third research questions that ask what factors are most salient to a faculty members likelihood to formally refer or not refer a student for suspected academic misconduct.

## Chapter 4: Results

### RECORDS REVIEW

The annual reports provide context on the prevalence and nature of academic misconduct at the University of Maryland, and do not contribute to answers to any of the three research questions. Figure 1 depicts the total amount of formal referrals to the Office of Student Conduct for each year that the records were available. As shown, there has been a significant increase in the number of reported cases of academic misconduct, with 154 total cases handled by OSC in the 1993-1994 academic year, and 857 total cases in the 2021-2022 academic year. There was a spike in the total number of cases in the 2020-2021 academic year, at 1,378. The significant increase for that year may be explained by a number of causes, all likely stemming from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to note that while there has been an increase in the total number of cases handled by OSC since 1993, this can not be determinative of the actual rate or prevalence of academic misconduct - only that there is an increase in the number of formal referrals to OSC.

Figure 1. Total Cases Handled By the Office of Student Conduct



## FACULTY SURVEY

### *Descriptive Analysis*

The first research question asks whether faculty at the University of Maryland follow University policy by consistently formally referring students to the Office of Student Conduct. *Past referral* demonstrated that over a third (34.8%) of faculty have never formally referred a student to the Office of Student Conduct, even when they have suspected misconduct. *Ever not referred* demonstrated that a vast majority (73%) of faculty have chosen to not refer a student for suspected academic misconduct at least once. Finally, *future*



*referral intentions* demonstrated that the majority of faculty (77.6%) indicate that they would formally refer a student to the Office of Student Conduct if faced with a case of academic misconduct in their course. In other words, the overwhelming majority of faculty (77.6%) say they would formally refer a student if they suspected academic misconduct, and yet, a slightly smaller majority of faculty (73%) have decided to not formally refer at least once. And on top of that, over a third of faculty have never formally referred a student at all, despite having suspicions. These discrepancies support the conclusion that faculty respond inconsistently in terms of their willingness to formally refer suspected cases of academic misconduct.

Table 1. Descriptives of the dependent variables

		Frequency	Percent
<i>past_referral</i>			
	I have never formally referred a student even when I have suspected misconduct	72	34.8%
	I have referred a student for suspected misconduct at least once	135	65.2%
<i>ever_not_referred</i>			
	I always formally refer students when I suspect academic misconduct	50	27.0%
	I have chosen to not refer a student for suspected misconduct at least once	135	73.0%
<i>futureintention_binary</i>			
	I would not formally refer the student to the Office of Student Conduct.	49	22.4%
	I would formally refer the student to the Office of Student Conduct.	170	77.6%

### *Bivariate Analysis*

The second research question asks whether a descriptive profile can be made of the faculty members that are most and/or least likely to formally refer students for suspected academic misconduct. To assess this, chi-square tests were run between each of the demographic variables and the dependent variables. See Table 2 for a breakdown of the sample demographics, and Table 3 depicts the significant results for the chi-square tests. There were no statistically significant differences for the *future referral intention* variable and any of the demographic variables. With race/ethnicity coded as “White” = 1 and “Non-White” = 0, a significant relationship was found between this variable and *ever not referred* (chi-square=4.355,  $p < 0.05$ ). Analyzing the frequencies of the two groups, this relationship means that white faculty are more likely to have not referred a student for a case of suspected academic misconduct at least compared to non-white faculty. A significant relationship was also found between the race/ethnicity variable and *past referral* (chi-square=4.436,  $p < 0.05$ ), which means that white faculty are also more likely to have referred a student for suspected academic misconduct at least once. These patterns are inconsistent and inconclusive, as white faculty essentially seem to have self-reported as both more and less likely to formally refer. There were no statistically significant relationships between gender identity, college appointment, or years of experience and any of the dependent variables. These findings indicate that differences in faculty likelihood to formally refer a student for academic misconduct cannot be distinguished by demographic factors.

Table 2. Sample Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Man	132	59.7%
Woman	87	39.4%
Prefer not to say	2	0.9%
<i>Race</i>		
White	160	72.7%
Asian	24	10.9%
Black or African American	17	7.7%
Latin American or Hispanic	14	6.4%
Native American	1	0.5%
Other	4	1.8%
<i>Years of Experience</i>		
Less than one year	2	0.9%
1-2 years	2	0.9%
3-5 years	15	6.7%
6-10 years	34	15.1%
11-15 years	31	13.8%
15+ years	141	62.7%
<i>College</i>		
College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences	53	23.8%
College of Arts and Humanities	16	7.2%
College of Behavioral and Social Sciences	64	28.7%
A James Clark School of Engineering	40	17.9%
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources	25	11.2%
Robert H Smith School of Business	13	5.8%
College of Information Studies	1	0.4%
School of Public Policy	10	4.5%
Other	1	0.4%

Table 3. Chi-Square Test for Significance

<i>Future referral intention</i>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<i>White</i>	0.49	0.048*
<i>Hassle</i>	5.83	0.016*
<i>No time</i>	4.663	0.031*
<i>Ever not referred</i>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<i>White</i>	4.355	0.037*

\*p<.05

The third research question asks if there are any factors that can be identified that influence a faculty member’s decision to formally refer a student to the Office of Student Conduct for suspected academic misconduct. To assess this, both Chi-Square and Mann Whitney U Tests were run between each of the dependent variables and the independent variables. No statistically significant relationships existed between *ever not referred* and any of the independent variables. Table 3 contains two independent variables that were found to be significant for the *future referral intention* in the chi-square test, and Table 4 shows the statistically significant relationships that were found between *past referral; future referral intentions* and their respective significant independent variables through the Mann-Whitney U Test.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test

<i>Past referral</i>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<i>Harshness</i>	2631.5	<.001*
<i>Vigilance</i>	3609	0.041*
<i>Problem</i>	3271.5	0.002*
<i>Fairness</i>	3389.5	0.007*
<i>Effectiveness</i>	3434	0.016*
<i>Familiarity</i>	3296	<.001*
<i>Future referral intention</i>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<i>Harshness</i>	2502	<.001*
<i>Fairness</i>	2563	<.001*
<i>Effectiveness</i>	2647.5	0.001*
<i>Familiarity</i>	3091	0.003*

\*p<.05

For *past referral*, there existed statistically significant relationships between the *harshness* variable (U=2631.1,p<0.001), *vigilance* (U=3609,p<0.05), *problem* (U=3271.1,p<0.01), *fairness* (U=3389.5,p<0.01), *effectiveness* (U=3434,p<0.05), and *familiarity* (U=3296,p<.001). The faculty who say they have formally referred at least one case of academic misconduct in the past are statistically significantly more likely to disagree that the Office of Student Conduct is too harsh and disagree with the sentiment of faculty being vigilant in reporting academic misconduct. They are more likely to agree that cheating is a serious problem at UMD and that the student judiciary process is both effective and fair, and self-assess as being more familiar with University policy.

For *future referral intentions*, there existed statistically significant relationships between the *hassle* variable (chi-square=5.83,p<0.05), *not enough time* (chi-square=4.663,p<0.05), *harshness* (U=2502,p<0.001), *fairness* (U=2563,p<0.001), and *familiarity* (U=3091,p<0.01). The faculty who say they would formally refer future suspected cases of academic misconduct are statistically significantly more likely to self-assess as more familiar with University policy, believe that the student disciplinary process is fair and disagree with the sentiment of the Office of Student Conduct being too harsh. They are less likely to indicate that they did not formally refer previous cases because the student disciplinary process is too much of a hassle and less likely to indicate that they didn't formally refer previous cases because of not having enough time.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The results of this study confirmed what existing literature suggests; faculty are inconsistent in their responses to academic misconduct, and the factors that motivate faculty to formally refer a student for academic misconduct are difficult to discern. It was not possible to create a descriptive profile for faculty that are more or less likely to refer based on the results of the survey. This suggests that any efforts to improve consistency in response to academic misconduct can not and must not be directed toward any one particular group. Instead, a holistic approach is necessary, as the use of personal discretion in decisions by faculty is prevalent across departments and years of experience.

Years of experience, interestingly enough, was not correlated with a higher likelihood of faculty having formally referred more often. It would be realistic to assume that faculty who have been in an instructional role for longer would have more opportunity to formally refer and thus have a higher likelihood to have referred before, but this was not the case. This suggests that faculty's opinions on formal referrals don't necessarily change over time; if they don't believe in formally referring students early on in their career, it doesn't seem as though they stray from that belief. The two theories proposed in "The Current Study" section are both refuted. Neither less nor more experienced faculty are more inclined to formally refer students for academic misconduct; no such relationship exists. There could very well be issues in both the training/understanding of University policy, as well as an existence of issues that faculty might have with the policy itself.

What the findings of the study do make clear is that faculty who believe the process is fair and effective are more likely to utilize it, consistent with prior research (Scanlan 2006).

Faculty who see self-assess as more familiar with University policy are also more likely to utilize the formal process. Seeing as the utilizing the formal process is in line with University policy, these faculty are correct in their self-assessment. Faculty who have referred before are also more likely to have a different perspective on academic misconduct at the University, as they are more likely to agree that cheating is a serious problem, and that faculty are not vigilant in addressing academic misconduct. These findings suggest that as faculty become more involved in the disciplinary process, through making formal referrals, they become more familiar with the state of academic integrity in the University community.

There were several reasons that the overwhelming majority of faculty agreed upon which helped explain why they formally referred a student for suspected academic misconduct, seen in Table 5. For example, 96% of faculty agreed that they formally referred a suspicion of misconduct to ensure that the student faced consequences for their behavior, and 93% did so because it was university policy. However, none of these reasons held statistically significant relationships with any of the dependent variables. Even though there were two statistically significant relationships found in the *hassle* and *not enough time* independent variables, there was very little consensus on the reasons the faculty decided not to refer, seen in Table 6. The decision to formally refer or not refer thus seems to be a personal one, and the descriptive variables measured in this study cannot help explain why faculty make the decisions they do.



## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Limitations can be found due to sample size, as only 221 responses were usable for the study. The sample is not large enough to be entirely generalizable to the University of Maryland faculty, and is not representative of faculty outside the University of Maryland. Demographic limitations existed in racial/ethnic makeup. 72.7% of the respondents were white, which is higher than the proportion of faculty at the University of Maryland who are white (58.2%).

Another limitation is that while data from the records review show that there are significantly more reported cases of academic misconduct today than there were in 1993, it cannot be determined whether that means there is more academic misconduct or more reporting, only that more academic misconduct is being formally processed. No assumption can be made about what these numbers truly mean; it is entirely possible that acts of academic misconduct have increased substantially since 1993 and the number of formal referrals in 2023 are capturing an even smaller proportion of this academic misconduct, despite the visually higher number of cases. Incorporating student voices from the University of Maryland is a future direction that would add great value to existing research. In addition to gathering self-reported academic misconduct data that would be more accurate than any formal data, understanding student perspectives, motivations, and attitudes towards academic misconduct and policy that seeks to address it would expand the knowledge base further and connect the dots between the discrepancies that persist.

## CONCLUSION

The implications of this research and potential for future research point to the importance of gaining a better understanding of why faculty make the discretionary decisions that they do, as understanding the rationale behind faculty discretion is pivotal for fostering a culture of integrity within institutions of higher education. Overall, if faculty who believe that the student disciplinary process is fair and effective are more likely to utilize it, then discovering what it is they believe makes the process fair and effective would be a place for future exploration. Collecting these opinions would help inform recommendations to changes in policy that might encourage more faculty to utilize the formal process, thereby decreasing the likelihood of differential treatment among students who engage in the same behaviors as their peers. Therein also lies the importance of capturing student perspectives, as existing research has highlighted how student perceptions of faculty responses to academic misconduct directly impacts their perspective on academic integrity (MacLeod and Eaton 2020; Coalter, Wim, and Wanorie 2007; McCabe 2005; O'Neill and Pfeiffer 2012). In turn, consistency in use of the formal process by faculty will breed more trust within the University, ultimately providing for a culture of honesty and collaboration that promotes integrity across the board.

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX A. TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 5. Reasons for formally referring.

<b>I formally referred a student for academic misconduct...</b>	
	<i>Percentage of respondents who agreed with each reason.</i>
To deter other students from engaging in academic misconduct.	59.80%
To ensure the student receives consequences for their behavior.	96%
Because it was the right thing to do.	96.20%
Because I would face consequences if someone found out I didn't refer.	14.30%
Because it is university policy.	93.10%
To make sure the student learns from the experience.	92.10%

Table 6. Reasons for not formally referring.

<b>Did any of the following factors influence your choice to not refer a student for suspected academic misconduct? (Select all that apply)</b>	
	<i>Percentage of respondents who selected each reason.</i>
Lacked evidence/proof	32%
Didn't want to deal with it	14.90%
Cheating was trivial/not serious	11.80%
The assignment in question was only a small percentage of the final course grade	17.10%
Lack of support from administration	3.50%
Didn't want the student to face consequences	8.30%
Student disciplinary process is too much of a hassle	14.90%
Not enough time	8.30%

Figure 2.

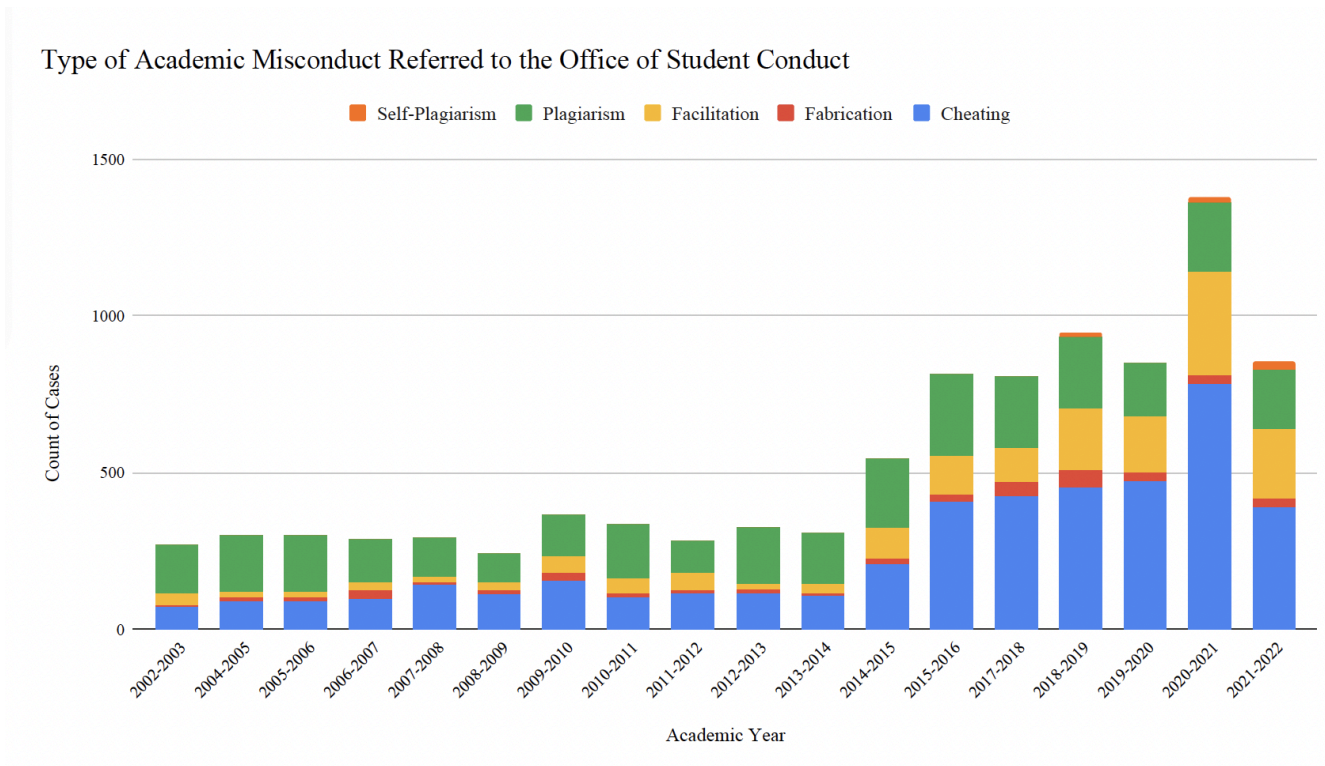




Figure 3.

Sanctions Given by the Office of Student Conduct Each Year (Recorded)

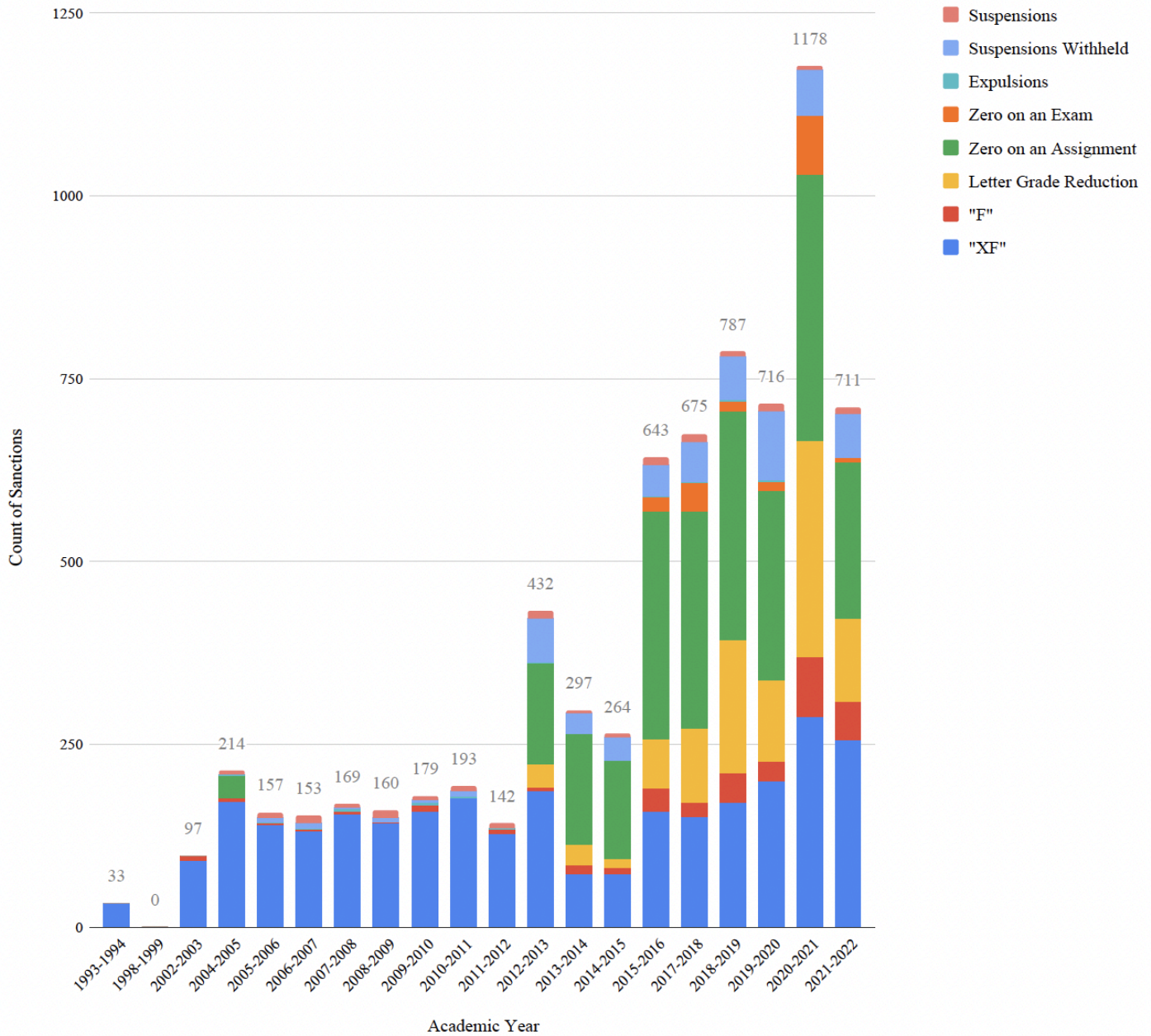
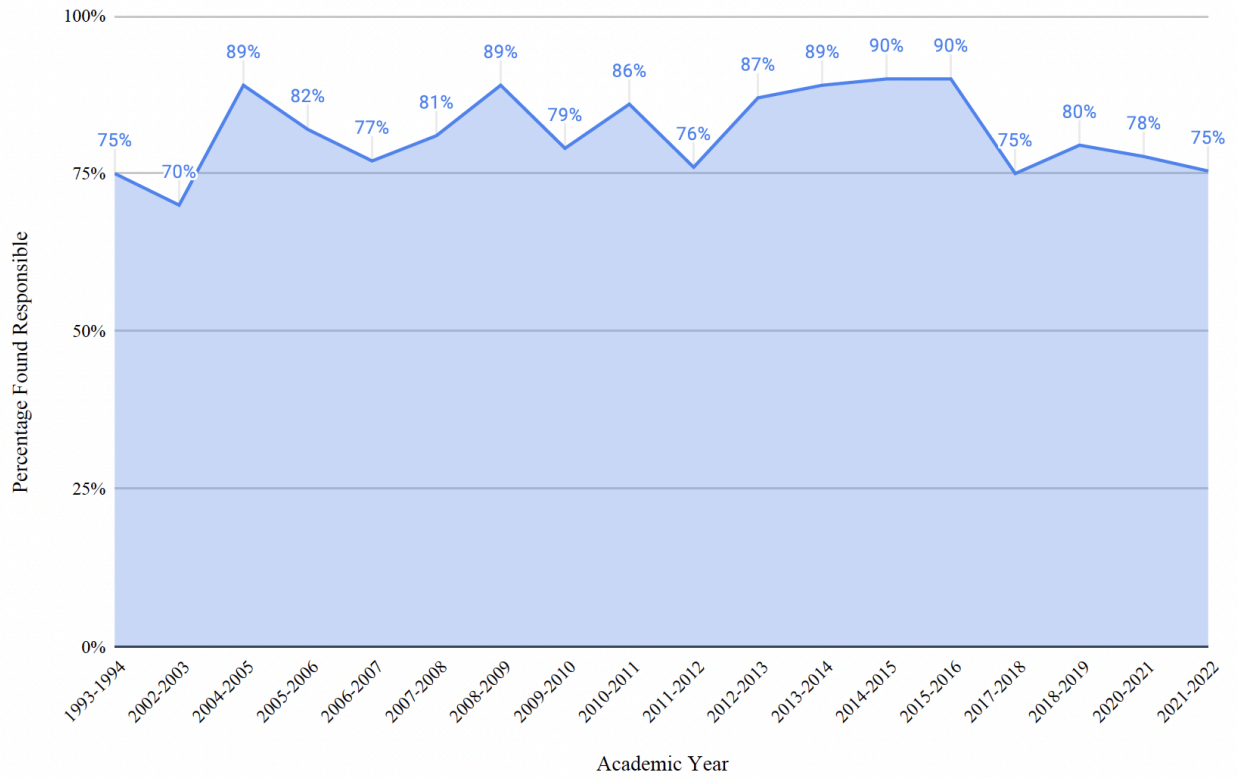


Figure 4.

Percentage of Accused Students found Responsible by the Office of Student Conduct



## APPENDIX B. SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey that will contribute to my undergraduate thesis in Criminology and Criminal Justice titled: "Deciphering the Factors: Faculty Discretion In Academic Misconduct Referrals."

The full Consent to Participate form can be downloaded [here](#).

This anonymous survey will consist of questions assessing your perceptions of academic misconduct at the University of Maryland. The anticipated time commitment for the survey is 10-15 minutes. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to leave your contact information if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview. This contact information will not be connected to your survey answers to protect the anonymity of your responses.

By clicking the forward arrow to continue the survey, you are indicating your consent to participate.

Are you serving in an instructional role (e.g., teaching a class) at the University of Maryland this semester?

- Yes
- No

Which best describes your appointment at the University of Maryland, College Park?

- Tenured Faculty
- Tenure-Track Faculty
- PTK Instructional Faculty
- PTK Research Faculty
- Graduate Teaching Assistant
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

With which race or ethnicity category do you identify?

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Other

What is your current age?

---

How many years of experience do you have as an instructor in higher education?

- Less than one year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 15+ years

With which college or school is your primary appointment?

- College of Computer, Mathematical, and Natural Sciences
- College of Arts and Humanities
- College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
- A James Clark School of Engineering
- College of Education
- College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- School of Public Health
- Robert H Smith School of Business
- College of Information Studies
- School of Public Policy

- School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation
- Philip Merrill College of Journalism
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What proportion of the courses you teach are undergraduate versus graduate courses?

- All undergraduate
- Mostly undergraduate, some graduate
- Equal undergraduate and graduate
- Mostly graduate, some undergraduate
- All graduate

Please rank the following class sizes according to the most typical class size that you instruct, from most to least typical.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Class size of 19 students or less
- \_\_\_\_\_ Class size of 20-49 students
- \_\_\_\_\_ Class size of 50-74 students
- \_\_\_\_\_ Class size of 75 or more students

What is your approach to assignment deadlines in your courses? Please select the option that best represents your perspective.

- I strictly adhere to deadlines, and I expect assignments to be submitted on time. Late submissions generally incur penalties.
- I am generally understanding and flexible with deadlines but require valid excuses for extensions (e.g., illness, family emergencies).
- I routinely provide extensions to all students, such as allowing everyone an extra day or two upon request.

What is your approach to attendance policies in your courses? Please select the option that best represents your perspective.

- I believe strict attendance policies are essential, and regular class attendance should be mandatory.
- I believe that students should communicate with me about absences, and I will evaluate their circumstances individually.
- I do not enforce an attendance policy in my courses, as I prioritize students' ability to manage their own schedule.

How do you typically balance participation and performance when determining students' grades? Please select the option that best represents your approach.

- I assign a significant portion of the grade to participation, emphasizing students' engagement in class discussions, activities, and group work.
- I weigh participation and performance equally, valuing both aspects equally when determining grades.
- I primarily focus on performance in assignments, exams, and other assessments, with participation playing a minor role in the overall grade.

What is your preferred teaching style in the classroom? Please select the option that best describes your approach.

- I primarily use a discussion-based teaching style, emphasizing active student participation, group discussions, and interactive learning activities.
- I blend both discussion and lecture-based approaches, incorporating elements of each to create a balanced learning environment.
- I primarily use a lecture-based teaching style, where I deliver content through structured lectures and presentations.

In just a few words or a sentence, how would you define academic misconduct?

---

Please select from the list below what effect you think academic misconduct has in educational settings. (Select all that apply)

- It undermines the educational process and diminishes the achievements of honest students.
- It erodes trust and integrity within the academic community.
- It hinders the development of essential skills and knowledge in students.
- It can lead to unfair advantages and inequality among students.
- It may lead to consequences that negatively impact a student's academic and professional future.
- It is a violation of academic rules and ethical standards.
- It disrespects the time and effort I invest in creating course materials and teaching.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How familiar are you with the academic integrity policies and guidelines established by our university?

- Not familiar at all
- Slightly familiar

- Moderately familiar
- Very familiar
- Extremely familiar

How frequently do you think the following occur at the University of Maryland?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Plagiarism on written assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inappropriately sharing work on assignments that are meant to be independent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cheating during tests or examinations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inappropriately using the Internet as an aid for assignments and/or online quizzes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How frequently do you think the following occur in the courses that you teach?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Plagiarism on written assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Inappropriately sharing work on assignments that are meant to be independent



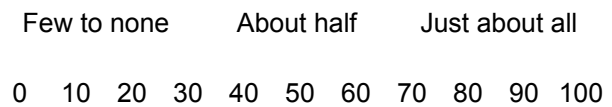
Cheating during tests or examinations



Inappropriately using the Internet as an aid for assignments and/or online quizzes



Adjust the slider to your best estimation.



What percentage of students do you believe successfully engage in academic misconduct in your courses without getting caught?	
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In your opinion, which of the following strategies would be most effective in reducing academic misconduct among students?

- Strengthening education about academic integrity
- Implementing stricter penalties for academic misconduct
- Providing academic support and resources to struggling students
- Increasing awareness of the consequences of academic misconduct



From your understanding, who ultimately decides whether students accused of academic misconduct are responsible for such violation?

- The instructor/course professor
- A department or faculty committee
- The Office of Student Conduct

From your understanding, who ultimately decides on the sanction imposed on students who are found responsible for an act of academic misconduct?

- The instructor/course professor
- A department or faculty committee
- The Office of Student Conduct

What do you believe is the most common sanction for students found responsible for cheating on a major assignment (e.g., a mid-term exam) at our university, ranked from most to least common?

- Written warning from the Office of Student Conduct
- Grade reduction or failure on the assignment/exam
- Course failure (F in the course)
- Course failure with a transcript distinction that the failure was due to academic dishonesty (XF in the course)
- Dismissal from the university (suspension or expulsion)
- Educational sanctions (e.g., an ethics seminar and a reflection paper)

What do you believe SHOULD be the typical sanction for students found responsible for cheating on a major assignment (e.g., a mid-term exam) at our university, ranked from most appropriate to least?

- Written warning from the Office of Student Conduct
- Grade reduction or failure on the assignment/exam
- Course failure (F in the course)
- Course failure with a transcript distinction that the failure was due to academic dishonesty (XF in the course)
- Dismissal from the university (suspension or expulsion)
- Educational sanctions (e.g., an ethics seminar and a reflection paper)

What do you believe is the most common sanction for students found responsible for inappropriately sharing work on assignments that are meant to be done independently, ranked from most to least common?

- Written warning from the Office of Student Conduct
- Grade reduction or failure on the assignment/exam
- Course failure (F in the course)
- Course failure with a transcript distinction that the failure was due to academic dishonesty (XF in the course)
- Dismissal from the university (suspension or expulsion)
- Educational sanctions (e.g., an ethics seminar and a reflection paper)

What do you believe SHOULD be the typical sanction for students found responsible for inappropriately sharing work on assignments that are meant to be done independently, ranked from most appropriate to least?

- Written warning from the Office of Student Conduct
- Grade reduction or failure on the assignment/exam
- Course failure (F in the course)
- Course failure with a transcript distinction that the failure was due to academic dishonesty (XF in the course)
- Dismissal from the university (suspension or expulsion)
- Educational sanctions (e.g., an ethics seminar and a reflection paper)

What do you believe is the most common sanction for students found responsible for inappropriately using the Internet as an aid for assignments and/or online quizzes, ranked from most to least common?

- Written warning from the Office of Student Conduct
- Grade reduction or failure on the assignment/exam
- Course failure (F in the course)
- Course failure with a transcript distinction that the failure was due to academic dishonesty (XF in the course)
- Dismissal from the university (suspension or expulsion)
- Educational sanctions (e.g., an ethics seminar and a reflection paper)

What do you believe SHOULD be the typical sanction for students found responsible for inappropriately using the Internet as an aid for assignments and/or online quizzes, ranked from most appropriate to least?

- Written warning from the Office of Student Conduct
- Grade reduction or failure on the assignment/exam
- Course failure (F in the course)
- Course failure with a transcript distinction that the failure was due to academic dishonesty (XF in the course)
- Dismissal from the university (suspension or expulsion)
- Educational sanctions (e.g., an ethics seminar and a reflection paper)

How confident are you in your ability to spot cheating or academic misconduct in your courses?

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all

Have you ever suspected cheating but later found out you were mistaken? If so, what percentage of your suspicions turned out to be false?

- Never suspected falsely
- Less than 25%
- 25% to 50%
- More than 50%
- I have never suspected academic misconduct

If you were convinced, even after a discussion with the student, that a student was cheating on a major test or assignment in your course, what would be your most likely reaction? (Select all that apply)

- Fail the student on the test or assignment
- Report student to your Chair, Director, or Dean
- Reprimand or warn the student
- Report student to the Office of Student Conduct
- Fail the student for the course
- Lower the student's grade
- Require the student to retake test/redo assignment
- Do nothing about the incident

How many times have you formally referred a student to the Office of Student Conduct for suspected academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) in your academic career?

- Never; I have never referred when I suspected academic misconduct
- 1-2 times
- 3-5 times
- 6 or more times
- I have never suspected academic misconduct

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

I formally referred a student for academic misconduct...

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
To deter other students from engaging in academic misconduct.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To ensure the student receives consequences for their behavior.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because it was the right thing to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because I would face consequences if someone found out I didn't refer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because it is university policy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To make sure the student learns from the experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the most recent event that you can recall, what happened after you referred the student to the Office of Student Conduct?

- No further action was taken by any parties involved
- I don't know what happened after I submitted the referral
- The Office of Student Conduct dismissed the case
- The student accepted responsibility and the original sanction offered by OSC

- The student did not accept responsibility, and the matter was escalated to a hearing in which the student was found to be not responsible
- The student did not accept responsibility, and the matter was escalated to a hearing in which the student was found to be responsible
- The case has not yet been resolved.

How satisfied were you with the way the case was handled?

- Extremely dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

How would you say your experience with how the case was handled impacted your willingness to report future suspicions to the Office of Student Conduct?

- Made me less likely to report again
- Did not impact my willingness to report again
- Made me more likely to report again

Use this space to expand on the event itself (type of misconduct, percentage of final grade, what happened or what do you think happened, etc.) If there are multiple events, please feel free to expand on multiple events, or pick the one you have best recollection of.

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Does the severity or nature of an academic integrity violation influence your likelihood to refer a student for disciplinary action or reporting?

- Yes, I am more likely to refer a student for more serious violations.
- Yes, I am more likely to refer a student for less serious violations.
- No, I treat all violations the same and refer students regardless of severity.
- I don't typically refer students for academic integrity violations.

Have ever you chosen not to formally refer a student for suspected academic misconduct?

- No, I always refer when I have suspicions
- 1-2 times

- 3-5 times
- 6 or more times
- I have never suspected a student of academic misconduct

Did any of the following factors influence your choice to not refer a student for suspected academic misconduct? (Select all that apply)

- Lacked evidence/proof
- Didn't want to deal with it
- Cheating was trivial/not serious
- The assignment in question was only a small percentage of the final course grade
- Lack of support from administration
- Didn't want the student to face consequences
- Student disciplinary process is too much of a hassle
- Not enough time
- N/A
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Cheating is a serious problem at UMD.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our student judicial process is fair and impartial.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our student judicial process is effective.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Students usually get away with cheating.	○	○	○	○	○
The Office of Student Conduct typically serves students with sanctions that are unduly harsh.	○	○	○	○	○
The Office of Student Conduct typically serves students with sanctions that are not harsh enough.	○	○	○	○	○
The University of Maryland community has a culture of academic dishonesty.	○	○	○	○	○
Faculty members are vigilant in discovering and reporting suspected cases of academic dishonesty.	○	○	○	○	○

Academic misconduct is an insult to me as an instructor and the effort I put into my course material.

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For a student's actions to be considered academic misconduct, the rules and expectations related to the specific assignment must be explicitly stated in the assignment instructions.

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An updated Code of Academic Integrity became effective on August 28th, 2023. Under this updated code a new “Academic Deferral” procedure for cases of minor academic misconduct will be implemented (Part IX, Section A).

The policy states: “...the Instructor may request that the matter be resolved by Academic Deferral... An undergraduate Responding Party who agrees to resolve a minor act of Academic Misconduct with an Academic Deferral...must successfully complete an educational Sanction as described in the Deferral Letter... Once the educational Sanction is complete, the matter is closed and removed from the Responding Party’s disciplinary record.”

Essentially, there is now a policy in place that would allow for more “minor” acts of academic misconduct to possibly be resolved **without permanent notation on the student’s transcript or failure of the course.**

Did you know that this new policy exists?

- I've never heard of it



- I probably heard of it at some point; it is vaguely familiar
- Yes, I already knew about this new policy

Knowing that there now exists a procedure where students will not face course failure or permanent transcript notation for academic misconduct, are you more or less likely to refer a student for a suspected case of minor academic misconduct?

- Much less likely
- Less likely
- No change
- More likely
- Much more likely

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. If you would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview where you would have the chance to share more of your thoughts about academic misconduct at the University of Maryland, please indicate so below.

Please note: If you choose to leave your email address, this information and your answers to survey questions will not be linked to one another to protect the anonymity of your responses.

- Yes, I would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview.
- No, I would not like to be contacted for a follow-up interview.

Please enter your email address below:

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