

April 17, 2008

Dear Smeal MBA Community,

This past semester, three cases were brought before the Smeal Honor Committee and went into full review. These cases are outlined below:

The Smeal Honor Committee investigated and reviewed a report of an Academic Integrity violation regarding collaboration between two students on a graded homework assignment. Upon careful review of the professor's communicated expectations for the deliverable, electronic and hard copy versions of the students' completed assignments, and interviews with the students involved, it was determined that the students had committed an infraction in collaborating beyond the boundaries set forth by the professor. Though it was determined that wrongful collaboration did occur, the Honor Committee also determined that there was no deliberate intent to cheat on the part of the students involved. As a sanction, the student who provided assistance on the homework assignment received a zero on the assignment and the student who received assistance on the assignment received a "WF" (withdrew failing) grade for the course.

The Smeal Honor Committee also reviewed a reported plagiarism case that involved failure to cite several paragraphs of a written deliverable that were copied from a web site. After evaluating the professor's assignment guidelines, the deliverable content, and the corresponding web site material - in addition to conducting an investigative interview with the student, the Committee determined that an academic infraction did occur. However, the Committee also determined that the failure to cite was an oversight as the student turned in an incomplete list of sources and the final deliverable was unfinished. As a result of the infraction, the student received a grade of zero for the deliverable.

### **Key Learning**

With your input and feedback we will continue the commitment to improve our Honor Code system. In the spirit of ongoing learning and dialogue, we would like to highlight two important takeaways from these experiences.

1) We are all part of a learning environment with a system of standards. The Honor Code is less about being *perfect* and more about taking ownership and accountability when we do make mistakes or when we are at risk of making a mistake.

2) It is important to remember that our process is designed to clear students who did nothing wrong, as much as it is designed to impose sanctions on those who do violate the Academic Honor Code.

We invite you to reflect on these learning opportunities, and if you would like to share your thoughts with us please do so by contacting any of us by e-mail. Once again, we thank all of you for your ongoing commitment to honor and academic excellence in the Smeal community.

Sincerely,

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