

MONDAY: Opinion
TUESDAY: Politics
WEDNESDAY: Opinion
THURSDAY: Politics
FRIDAY: Opinion

OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

BY MAIL: P.O. Box 3159,
 Eugene, OR 97403
BY PHONE: (541) 346-5511
BY E-MAIL: ode@oregon.
 uoregon.edu
IN PERSON: Suite 300, EMU

Cheat and be damned — but not caught

OPINION



Sonja Sherwood

If academic integrity was taught at the University, somebody already would have the crib sheets

There are a hundred ways to cheat in school. You can wear your baseball cap so it covers your eyes, stuff a cheat sheet into the holes of your jeans or write the answers on your desk the day before the exam. Have a big paper? Just phone up one of a number of "research assistance" companies around the country. Unsure of your ability to juggle your schoolwork with weekends at Rennie's? Join a fraternity and make hay with the house test-files. Still not convinced you're damned? Go order yourself a copy of "Cheating 101: The Benefits and Fundamentals of Earning the Easy 'A,'" the cheater's handbook written by an undergraduate at Rutgers University — only don't order it from the University bookstore (first lesson!)

By all accounts, universities are brimming with cheats, thieves and liars. An abundance of studies by educators and ethics think-tanks all puzzle over evidence of the same problem: Academic dishonesty is rife. Even here!! In 1992, the University was included in a study of academic dishonesty in a number of public schools around the country.

The percentage of students surveyed from the University class of 1992 (some of you are still around — remember?) who admitted to cheating within the previous year was 91 percent. That's higher than most students get on their tests even when they copy answers. 91 percent wasn't even atypical; the national average differed by only a couple of percentage points.

What that means for the remaining 9 percent are inflated overall GPAs and the knowledge that after college the good jobs will go to the ethical epsilons with padded vitae. Fair? No. Likely to change? No. Contemporary cheat rates are consistent with those published 30 years ago, indicating that the problem isn't growing, it's merely self-replicating. Which suggests that students' moral fiber will continue to unravel at a steady rate, regardless of what punitive experiments are implemented. Like all things both social and bad, cheating is systemic, and therefore just one of several bad strokes on the big picture.

Part of the problem is philosophy. American educators believe that doing enhances thinking, when in fact it just as often substitutes for it. Educators assign papers, projects, and presentations — sometimes all at once. This piles on the pressure and simultaneously cuts down on reflection, thus tempting students to

take shortcuts while rendering the actual intellectual rewards of learning negligible. Work overload is a mindkiller. Ambitious students with high grades and a lot to lose are just as likely to cheat as the slackers. In addition, our social system applauds networking activities, so that the typical student sets aside a few hours a week for at least one club or committee, sometimes even a sport. The only lesson many learn is that it really isn't what you know, but who you know — and everyone knows a lot of people who know nothing.

Another problem is that, verily, everybody's doing it. Undergraduates who cheat in school grow up to become adults who cheat on taxes, insurance, health claims, you name it. University administrators, too, have been known to inflate SAT scores to improve their reputation and lure new recruits. Some California high schools discovered a way to fleece the state of GPA-dependent funding in the early '80s by re-defining their student populations so that poor students weren't figured into the calculations. Original sin, it turns out, is a little tricky to place.

One thing that has come out of these studies is the hypothesis that the best way to treat temptation is to appeal to the conscience. Instances

of academic dishonesty are typically lower at schools that have an honor code. These codes have absolutely no authority beyond the ethical entitlement they bestow on you to give your inner child a sound spanking, but some speculate that codes have helped maintain the integrity of the private schools and military academies that use them.

There's no compelling evidence, though, that the conscience of a public school student is more hardened than an Ivy Leaguer's. It's more likely that the high morals at private schools are simply the result of lower teacher/student ratios. Idle hands make mischief most merrily when nobody's watching.

If this is the case, then our post-Measure 5, faculty-scarce University is in a hell of a bind. Which brings us to another of academia's shortcomings, and probably the primary reason students cheat: They can get away with it. Sanctions ranging from failing the class to expulsion are in place but don't do any good if the infraction is never detected, which — as 91 percent of the 1992 student body can attest — they usually aren't.

Sonja Sherwood is a columnist for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper. Sonja can be reached at cheers@gladstone.uoregon.edu

UP AHEAD

New academic policies are on the docket for a hearing to amend the Student Conduct Code at 2 p.m., Nov. 1 in the EMU Walnut Room. The University is proposing to increase campus participation in the judicial process by creating a review board comprised of students and faculty to hear cases of academic dishonesty.

LETTERS

Useful Police

This is in response to Simon Austin's letter, "Useless Police" (ODE, Oct. 16). He is highly critical of the Eugene police for not aiding him or his roommates after they were assaulted two weeks ago. I'm a cop here and believe we should be held accountable for our actions in this incident. Unfortunately, Mr. Austin is either ignorant or lying about the truth in this case.

We were called to 715 E. 16th Ave. regarding an assault at 1:37 a.m. on Oct. 6. The call was dispatched a minute later, and we arrived at 1:38 a.m. Officers detained an individual outside, but were informed by a resident who had been assaulted that he wasn't the assailant. A six-page police report was written, including Austin's statement that he didn't know who the suspects were. Dozens of hours of investigation have taken place since that time, and three suspects have been charged with felony counts of assault. A fourth suspect has been identified and will soon be arrested.

Mr. Austin might be a "nice guy" and a heck of a good host; after all, he admits inviting four strangers into his house and giving them a free beverage. The 17-year-olds appreciated the beer, Mr. Austin, but the police resent your inaccurate account and insults.

Sgt. David Poppe
 Eugene police department

Free party

Those of you involved with student groups know the frustrations of getting your group's name known on campus. Many clubs plan events to get the group name out, and although usually extremely successful, these events cost money! That is where the PARTY Fund comes into play.

Your student group can apply for a mini grant to help with the cost of your fall event.

We ask that your event/activity is planned for a Friday or Saturday night, and that it lasts until at least midnight. What is the purpose of the PARTY Fund? The Office of Student Life is providing these mini grants to encourage fun, safe, late night activities on campus.

So how can your group apply? Pick up an application at the front desk of 364 Oregon Hall and fill it out. You plan the event, and we give money to aid you. It's that simple! Call 346-1135 for a list of fun, upcoming events!

Misty Brown
 PARTY Fund
 Student Director

Educate yourself

Voting is your right in a democracy. Exercise it, even though the mass of initiatives appears cumbersome. Just choose a few to vote on that are important to you. Get to know something about a few of the candidates and vote for them. Just receiving the huge voter pamphlet in the mail may be enough to turn you off. Reading it can be a daunting experience for all of us. You will get more information from the Eugene Weekly and the "other paper" than from the garbled language in the city/county/state publication.

Be sure to note who is for and who is against a measure or candidate. If Monsanto wants the toxic right to know measure defeated, or the Coca-Cola people want the bottle bill voted down, you can figure out yourself where to put your vote. It's easy. There are lots of opportunities to hear the candidates speak on campus. Take time out to learn from them what the issues are about. They are your future! Vote! Be informed!

Hilde Cherry
 Eugene



Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

Editor-in-Chief: Steven Asbury
 Managing Editor: Jennifer Carter Night Editor: Doug Irving
 Community: Jennifer Schmitt, editor, Jean Bond, Christian Hill
 Entertainment: Nicole Kreuger, editor, Jesse Stephenson
 Higher Education: Kristine Sohney, editor, Tamyra Howser, in-depth: Benjamin Kwasney
 Opinion: Ashley Bach, editor, Chris Hutchinson, illustrator, Brian Diamond, Larry Hatfl, Sonja Sherwood
 Politics: Shana Cohn, editor, Doug Irving
 Special Projects: Tiffany Smith
 Student Activities: Kristin Bailey, editor, Angie Suchy, Tom Potter, Laura Cadiz
 Sports: Mark McTyre, editor, Andrea DeYoung, assistant editor, Chris Hansen, Ryan Frank, Ryan Halvorsen
 Copy Desk: Thom Schoenborn, copy chief, Sarah Kickler, Mike Schmierbach, Kendra Smith, Paul Mezrich
 Presentation: Dennis Bolt, editor, Cosmos Corbin, Matt Garton
 Photography: Matthew Stiffler, editor, Andrew Brackensick, Joe Bunik, Amanda Erickson, Shannon Kilduff, Chad Patteson
 Freelance: Lara Pittman, editor, On-Line: Nicholas Stiffler, director.

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union.
 The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

General Manager: Judy Riedl
 Advertising: Becky Merchant, director, Arnie Amador, Lee Yen Beh, Marco Ching, Yujin Chi, Matt Johnson, Anne Miller, Trina Shanaman, Rose Soil, Matt Solomon, Greg Walsh
 Classified: Tara Sloan, manager, Natasha Lumpkin, Debbie Levy, Heather Moyer
 Production: Michele Ross, manager, Ingrid White, coordinator, Shawna Abele, Laura Daniel, Tara Knight, Melissa Lebahn, Molly McCanta, Allison Stormo, Mike Young
 Business: Kathy Carbone, supervisor, Judy Connolly
 Distribution: John Long, Jeff Johnson, Ferenc Rakoczi
 Newsroom (541) 346-5511
 Display Advertising (541) 346-3712
 Business Office (541) 346-5512
 Classified Advertising (541) 346-4343