

# CMU Student Perceptions of Academic Integrity and Old Course-Materials Archives

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## A. Why our topic is interesting

The question that we're proposing to study is Carnegie Mellon University's perception of Academic Integrity & Old Course Material Archives.

As Carnegie Mellon University is a world-class institution known for its rigorous academics, we would like to use this study to find out whether students understand and know all the academic policies that Carnegie Mellon University enforces. Also, we would like to find out about what students feel about old test and course material stockpiles and lastly, their opinion on a possible proposed solution. Using these results, we hope to possibly propose to the university administration, with strong statistical backing, about the possible implementation of a campus-wide, official university-sanctioned system of old academic materials for all classes to ensure all students have the same advantage in achieving academic success.

## B. Question we propose to answer

We propose to answer whether Carnegie Mellon undergraduate students are aware of the academic archives kept by fraternities, sororities, and other campus organizations that may contain old class notes, exams, projects, and homework. Also, we propose to find out whether students have access to such documents, whether these documents are used, and if they believe that the use of these documents is ethical, with hope of evidence to push for a new officially-sanctioned old course material system.

## C. Previous Research on topic

- CMU's *The Tartan* published an article in late 2008 surveying members and leaders of Greek organizations, clarifying official CMU academic policies on the issue of old stockpiles, and referring to Case Western Reserve University's approach. It can be found here: <http://www.thetartan.org/2008/11/10/news/greeks>
- The Journal of College Student Development also published an article about an examination involving academic dishonesty between sorority and non-sorority women. The article talks about the significant differences between the frequency of occurrence of academic dishonesty between greek and non-greek students, which helps to show a divide between the greek and non-greek student population. It can be found here: [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_college\\_student\\_development/v048/48.6williams.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_college_student_development/v048/48.6williams.html)
- Case Western's *The Observer* published an article in late 2007 reviewing the actions of the Academic Integrity Board there and highlighting the ambiguity of the issue. It can be found here: [http://observer.case.edu/Archives/Volume\\_40/Issue\\_9/Story\\_2145/](http://observer.case.edu/Archives/Volume_40/Issue_9/Story_2145/)

- A good potential reference to the scale of the problem can likely be found by Case Western Reserve University's statistics on how many students were investigated for academic dishonesty (essentially, how many were "caught" as opposed to the estimated percentage of students who have used questionable material before):  
<http://studentaffairs.case.edu/groups/aiboard/statistics.html>

#### **D. The population we plan to sample**

The population that will be sampled would be students from the main Carnegie Mellon University campus that are of the undergraduate level (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Year).

#### **E. The population to which we are making inferences**

We would like to make inferences about a population consisting of randomly selected individuals from all colleges. Our sampling frame would be both the Carnegie Mellon C-Book, as well as the Andrew Directory, which could be requested from the hub. The Carnegie Mellon C-Book contains a list of all Carnegie Mellon students and the Andrew Directory contains all Andrew IDs for students, which is essentially an email address. The student SMC information is also listed within the C-Book, as we may require this if enough time is available (Explained in part d.).

at CMU

#### **F. How we plan to carry out our survey**

Our options that we considered are:

1. Face to face interviews, 2. Phone survey, and 3. Email/web survey

Due to the sensitive nature of our survey (questions related to academic integrity, access and usage of archives, etc), our first and most important condition was that our method of survey should maximize the accuracy of responses and best guarantee confidentiality.

Therefore, when considering face to face interviews, we believe that many students we survey (the majority of whom our group would not know) would not be comfortable with the questions we would ask, especially considering that we would likely be asking them at some public setting on campus.

With regard to a phone survey, the first obstacle that we believe we would run into is that the Carnegie Mellon C-Book (2009-2010 edition) generally only lists dormitory phone numbers, and we believe that a significant proportion of undergraduates do not have a land line set up. With that being said, we also believe that we would not conduct a phone survey because even if we had a directory of mobile numbers, we still believe that there would be the uncomfortable barrier of giving an unknown caller who knows your name and other identifying information responses to our survey.

Therefore, we plan to carry out the survey by randomly selecting a population size of a few hundred undergraduate students from the Carnegie Mellon C-Book (2009-2010 edition). We will then utilize the online Andrew directory to send an initial email out that contains a link to complete the survey. Follow-up emails for the non-respondents would be sent exactly 1 week and 2 weeks after the first contact. In addition, given enough time, we would also consider using the student SMC information with the campus mail system to drop reminder slips in student mailboxes after the first week.

Any information sent (initial emails, the survey disclaimers, and traditional mail) to the participants would strongly emphasize the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey. We would likely also include a few sentences about the neutrality of our intentions in order to prevent any response rate effects due to each individual's agreement/disagreement with our data collection on this sensitive issue.

If our final proportion of participating students is not representative of the overall CMU undergraduate population profile (gender, year of study, academic major, etc), we will weight different response categories in order to better project how our sample represents the actual student body.

## **G. Variables we propose to measure**

### **Category 1: Basic identifying variables**

- Age
- Gender (Male/Female)
- Race (Caucasian, Asian, African American, Native American, Other)
- Citizenship Status (Primarily U.S. Citizen versus International Student designation)
- Year in College (Freshman/Sophomore/Junior/Senior/Other)
- Primary College (CIT, TSB, H&SS, etc)
- Academic Major(s)
- Academic Minor(s)
- On Campus/Off Campus Residence
- Current QPA

### **Category 2: Survey topic-related variables**

- % of respondents with graduate school plans (to gauge respondent interest in higher education and how this might affect the choice of work completion method that we are trying to sample, which includes using old material)
- Frequency of usage of campus services (Academic development, Career Center, CMU Escort, Safewalk, other services)...this could be used to identify respondents who actively utilize official university services
- Knowledge of what the CMU Academic Policy states (comparing survey responses against what our group has researched and knows the CMU Academic Policy allows/disallows)

- The usage of old tests handed back by professors is (allowed/not allowed/unsure)
- The stockpiling of old academic material by student organizations is (allowed/not allowed/unsure)
- The estimated percentage of all classes taken by the respondent that have had the instructor expressly prohibit usage of old course material (to measure professor awareness, knowledge, and proactive steps taken to cut down on usage)
- The estimated percentage of all classes taken by the respondent that have had the instructor post old exams, quizzes, etc as a study tool
- The percentage of students who have personal access to an archive of old academic material
- Follow up variable measurement: Source of this archive (choices would include Greek organization, other student organization, informal group of friends, and other)
- Follow up variable measurement: How often students with access utilize it (never, daily, etc)
- Note: we would not identify the exact archive source for fear of skewing the accuracy of our survey or inducing non-response
- To what extent respondents believe that students with access to old material has an advantage (slight, significant, none)
- Follow up variable measurement: For those who answer that there is an advantage, what percentage thinks that this is an unfair advantage?
- Degree of interest (category variable) students would have in a campus-wide, official university-sanctioned system for all classes
- This would be preceded by a brief description of the attempt made at Case Western University and what the test bank would include.

#### **H.**

Please see above

#### **I. IRB**

Please see separately submitted IRB form.

#### **J. Proposed privacy protection**

We use the information collected from the surveys to compile reports on CMU Student Perceptions of Academic Integrity and Old Course-Materials Archives. Due to the sensitive nature of research data, any information that is collected is treated with the utmost confidentiality. We will not sell any personal information gathered from individual respondents. Furthermore, personal data is never shared with any third parties unless the respondent has specifically authorized it.

#### **K. Sampling scheme**

We have decided to use Multi-Phase Sampling in which we will use two phases. We have decided to use two phases of sampling, because we are uncertain what our response rate

will be. In the first phase we will send out a smaller set of surveys to gauge the response rate we can expect. We will then send out a second phase of surveys, which will take into account the number of responses we expect (as detailed in part M).

Our questions do not rely on gender, age, race or major; the main division in the population of interest for our survey is between students involved and not involved in a fraternity or sorority. This is why we have decided against using Stratified Sampling.

If our results do not accurately reflect the student population divisions, we will weight the results. For example, based on the Fraternity and Sorority Life Report, Fall 2009, 18% of the Carnegie Mellon population is involved in Greek Life; based on this, we will weight our responses so that 18% of our population's responses will be those of students involved in Greek Life. If we feel that a misrepresentation of gender/major/age is affecting our survey's results, we will then apply weights to correct this.

This is fine; you do not have to stratify further.

However, if you think that the rate of using old course materials differs for fr/sor/jr/sr it might be worth stratifying further.

## L. Questionnaire

Attached at end of document.

## M. Sample size

For a 95% confidence level, with a population of 5892 undergraduates (Wikipedia), we have calculated the following:

Confidence Interval	Sample Size:	Phase 1: number of emails sent	Phase 2: (expecting 25% response)
4%	545 people	400	1500
5%	361	200	1200
6%	255	180	900
7%	190	140	600
8%	146	100	500
9%	119	100	380
10%	96	100	280

According to lecture slides, the range for emailed survey responses is 20-30%. We will assume a 25% response for our Phase 1 email. Based on this, we will submit 150 Phase 1 emails. From this, we will determine how many Phase 2 emails to send (see above for examples). We will aim for a confidence interval of 8%. This will be affected primarily by response rate of Phase 1.

this is a great idea to use phase 1 to estimate the resp rate and hence the remaining effort required.

To achieve our  $\pm 8\%$  goal we will need a sample size of 146 people, so we will have to send 600 email surveys if our response rate to Phase 1 is 25%.

## DEMOGRAPHICS:

Please fill in the following:

Primary Major \_\_\_\_\_

**Year(circle one)**    1       2       3       4       5+

**Gender:** Male / Female

**QPA(circle one):**

0.00-2.00    2.01-2.50    2.51-3.00    3.01-3.50    3.51-4.00

**Do you live (check one):**

\_\_\_ On Campus University Housing (Excluding Greek Lease Housing)

\_\_\_ Greek Lease Housing

\_\_\_ Off Campus university housing

\_\_\_ Private off campus housing

**Are you a member of a sorority/fraternity (excluding professional, service, and honor societies)?** Yes / No

**Are you currently a member of an officially recognized campus student organization (not including a fraternity or sorority)?** Yes / No

## **MAIN SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**1. Do you intend to go to graduate school?**

\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_ Unsure

\_\_\_ No

**2. Which academic campus services do you use, and with what frequency:**

Office Hours

Never       Semesterly       Monthly       Weekly       Multiple times per week

Academic Development (SI, study groups, tutors, etc.)

Never       Semesterly       Monthly       Weekly       Multiple times per week

Career Center

Never       Semesterly       Monthly       Weekly       Multiple times per week

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What is the university policy regarding the use of old class materials to study for a current course a student is enrolled in? Choose the best fitting choice:**

- a. Entirely prohibited
- b. Prohibited unless given by professor
- c. Not prohibited unless professor says otherwise
- d. Not prohibited
- e. Don't Know

**4. To what extent do you believe the following can be used as supplemental information for a course you are taking? Choose the best fitting choice:**

Old notes (not given from professors):

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

Old Homework:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

Old Exams:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

Old Projects/Programs:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

Old Papers:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

Old Lab Materials/Papers:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

Internet Sources:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

In-Class Peers:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

Students Who Have Completed the Class:

1 (never)      2(rarely)      3(sometimes)      4(often)      5(always)      6 (n.a.)

**5(a). For your current courses, do you currently have access to any of the following materials from previous years the class was offered? Check all that apply:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Notes	<input type="checkbox"/> Homework
<input type="checkbox"/> Projects	<input type="checkbox"/> Lab Data/reports
<input type="checkbox"/> Papers	<input type="checkbox"/> Programs/Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Exams	

**5(b). If you checked any of the above, what is the source of your access?**

☐ Fraternity/Sorority

☐ Officially recognized CMU student organization

☐ Informal social network

☐ Other

**6. Out of the materials you have access to, which do you use? Check all that apply:**

<input type="checkbox"/> No Access	<input type="checkbox"/> Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Homework	<input type="checkbox"/> Projects
<input type="checkbox"/> Lab Data/Reports	<input type="checkbox"/> Papers
<input type="checkbox"/> Programs/Code	<input type="checkbox"/> Exams
<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Blackboard

**7. How much do you believe possessing supplemental materials would affect the average student's academic performance?**

Notes:

Does not help at all grades	Helps but does not affect grade	Changes letter
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Homework:

Does not help at all grades	Helps but does not affect grade	Changes letter
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Projects:

Does not help at all grades	Helps but does not affect grade	Changes letter
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Lab Data/Reports:



Does not help at all  
grades

Helps but does not affect grade

Changes letter

Papers:

Does not help at all  
grades

Helps but does not affect grade

Changes letter

Programs:

Does not help at all  
grades

Helps but does not affect grade

Changes letter

Exams:

Does not help at all  
grades

Helps but does not affect grade

Changes letter

**8. Do you think that Greek organizations have archives of old class materials?**

\_\_\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_\_\_No

**9. Would you consider joining a Greek organization to be able to access this material?**

\_\_\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_\_\_No

**10. Did these archives affect your choice to join a Greek organization?**

\_\_\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_\_\_No

\_\_\_\_\_Not in a Greek Organization

**11. Thus far this semester, how many of your professors provided old materials to study with? \_\_\_\_\_ How many professors do you have?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**12. Do you believe that old course material provides students with an advantage?**

\_\_\_\_\_Yes

\_\_\_\_\_No

**13. Do you believe that access to old course materials (not provided by the professor) is fair?**

\_\_\_\_\_Fair

\_\_\_\_\_Not Fair

**14. Ideally speaking, which students should be able to access the archives of old course materials that are kept by sororities and fraternities?**

\_\_\_\_\_No Students

\_\_\_\_\_Students in the Organization

\_\_\_\_\_All Students

**15. Do you consider the use of the following material (not provided by professor) ethical?**

Old notes:

Ethical

Not Ethical

Old Homework:      Ethical      Not Ethical

Old Exams:      Ethical      Not Ethical

Old Projects/Programs:      Ethical      Not Ethical

Old Papers:      Ethical      Not Ethical

Old Lab Materials/Papers:      Ethical      Not Ethical

Internet Sources:      Ethical      Not Ethical

In-Class Peers:      Ethical      Not Ethical

Students Who Have Completed the Class:      Ethical      Not Ethical

**16. Do you consider the use of the following materials (not provided by the professor) cheating?**

Old Notes:      Cheating      Not Cheating

Old Homework:      Cheating      Not Cheating

Old Exams:      Cheating      Not Cheating

Old Projects/Programs:      Cheating      Not Cheating

Old Papers:      Cheating      Not Cheating

Old Lab Materials/Papers:      Cheating      Not Cheating

Internet Sources:      Cheating      Not Cheating

In-Class Peers:      Cheating      Not Cheating

Students Who Have Completed the Class:      Cheating      Not Cheating

**17. Would you support an official campus-wide archive of old course materials (submitted by professors) that would be accessible by all students?**

\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_ No

**18. Would you personally benefit from the creation of a campus-wide archive?**

\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_ No