

For Immediate Release



Global study: students in Lebanon, Egypt, and the UAE view cheating as a friendly gesture

Beirut, Lebanon- 03/03/2011 - With a seemingly clean conscience, students are taking more and more liberty to cheat at schools and universities, according to Professor Donald McCabe of the Rutgers University Business School.

Speaking at AUB's Olayan School of Business (OSB) on February 17, 2010, McCabe, the founder of the Center for Academic Integrity (www.academicintegrity.org), expressed his concern about the global rise in academic dishonesty.

"There's a fair amount of cheating going on, and students aren't all that concerned about it," said McCabe.

Over the last twenty years, Professor McCabe has compiled information on academic integrity from hundreds of schools worldwide, including Lebanon. With the collaboration of OSB professors Tony Feghali, assistant professor of business information and decision systems, and Hanin Abdallah, assistant dean for student services, McCabe has collected fundamental data on Lebanon without having to make a single visit to the country.

McCabe's seminar, "Promoting Academic Integrity—a Worldwide Concern," brought him to Lebanon for the first time.

McCabe first defined academic integrity by identifying a few direct examples of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, the adoption or reproduction of original creations of another author, fabrication, the falsification of data, deception, providing false information to an instructor concerning a formal academic exercise, any attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise, and bribery—the paying for completion of a project.

McCabe suggested school and university staff are contributing to the increase in academic dishonor. "Faculty report high levels of cheating," he said, "but don't feel it's their responsibility." McCabe indicated a possible explanation, referring to the Gulf: "I noticed that expat faculty in the UAE were reluctant to report cheating in fear of ending up on an airplane back home."

Many students justify cheating, said McCabe. In America, students have come under severe pressure from growing competition from China and India, which gives students more incentive to cheat, obtain higher grades, and, subsequently, to secure future positions in the market.

Arab students, however, have a different reason for cheating. McCabe found that a large number of students in Lebanon, Egypt, and the UAE view cheating as a friendly gesture, often referring to it as a form of sharing knowledge and success.

More reasons given for cheating were in McCabe's researched list. Some blamed their parents for giving grades too much importance; others gave the excuse that courses were too hard, and a few claimed that the material was trivial. McCabe found that different majors reveal

contrasting levels of cheating: "Engineering and business students always used to lead the pack, but engineering students have cleaned up their act. The group that's replaced them is communication majors."

Students' top motivations for not cheating were peer environment, self-respect, and the severe consequences of being caught.

McCabe gave a few words of wisdom on solutions to prevent academic dishonesty. "Sit down with your students. You can't impose honesty on them, but being willing to listen will help."

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Note to Editors

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Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of more than 7,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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