Fostering Academic Integrity and Responding to Violations

Northwestern State University offers many programs aimed at encouraging students to behave responsibly and at fostering a respect for academic integrity. Through the Student Handbook, lessons in Orientation, course syllabi, and departmental/college programs, faculty and staff address the issues of plagiarism and cheating in order to educate students and dissuade them from actively violating the academic and behavioral codes of conduct.

Despite these good works, it is necessary for the University to have processes in place to address violations of academic integrity. Because violations of academic integrity represent both academic and behavioral misconduct, the purpose here is to clarify and strengthen the University's current two-pronged system (see attached chart) by seeking to create a permanent record of violations of academic integrity in a centralized location (Student Affairs/Student Conduct).

Goals:

1. create and maintain a permanent record of violations (in Student Affairs) of academic integrity;
2. clarify the instructor's role in determining the academic penalty;
3. clarify that the academic process (Grade Appeal) and the Judicial Process are separate processes which each individually address issues involved in violations of academic integrity. One process does not supersede the other.

Judicial Process: Student Affairs/Student Conduct– The Instructor reports the violation to the Department Head/Director/Dean who will notify Student Affairs of the violation. The Instructor may suggest what the Student Affairs/Judicial Affairs process should be:
   a. That there should only be a notification, without action by Judicial Affairs or
   b. That there should be a Judicial Affairs process as well.

Academic Process: Grade Appeal Process – If evidence demonstrates that a student has plagiarized/cheated and the instructor assigns an academic penalty (failing the assignment, failing the class), the student may appeal that grade through the Grade Appeal Process.

The two processes (Academic and Judicial) are independent; however, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs recognize the benefit of working together on issues of student conduct. The Academic Process operates independently in issues of academic grade appeals as the Judicial Process does in issues relating to appeals of judicial sanctions. Both processes are essential to the University mission of preparing students to act as ethical members of society and in fostering value in the degrees awarded at Northwestern State University.