

# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

*An interview with WCET and Tricia Bertram Gallant, UCSD*

This interview, between WCET’s Communications Manager, Lindsey Downs, and UCSD’s Tricia Bertram Gallant, focuses on academic integrity in higher education, with a specific focus on the use of educational technologies, student authentication, and the various institutional roles that may impact academic integrity within an institution.

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*During this transcription, Lindsey’s comments will be indicated as “L:” and Tricia’s responses “T:”*

L: Well, thank you so much for being here today. We're at SxSWEDU and we are here to talk with Tricia Bertram Gallant to talk about academic integrity in higher education. Thank you so much for being here today.

## BACKGROUND WITH ACADEMIC INTEGRITY 00:20 - 2:03

L: So, let's just get started with how did you get interested in academic integrity?

T: Do you want the short or the long version?

L: How about an intermediate version?

T: Okay! Well, Pat Drinan, whose name might be known, was one of the not quite original founders for the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) when it started. He was bringing the conference, the Academic Integrity Conference, to USD, where I was a PHD student. He wanted a student to help him. My Dean sent me over to him and I agreed to help him. And then he said, what are you doing your dissertation on? I was in my second year. And I said, I don't know yet! I haven't found anything I'm passionate about. His face lit up and he said why don't you do it on academic integrity? And I said, because I'd never even heard that term before today! Before you asked for help. So, he was just so passionate and so persuasive and I hadn't seen that in a faculty member in my department. He was in a different department. I said, if you want to do an independent study with me I'll look at the literature, see if there's anything interesting to look at, because I thought there wouldn't be anything interesting. So, he said okay. And that turned into our first journal article together. And that was in 2002, that the article, but the independent study. The rest is history.

L: That's such a great story, especially for students who may not know what they are doing yet. Just take the opportunity, take the change.

T: Yeah, talk to people. Leave the door open.

L: It led to a lifelong passion.

T: Yeah! Crazy.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY DEFINITION 2:04 – 5:57

L: Wonderful, thank you. What exactly, you mentioned you didn't know what academic integrity really was. But now, what would you define academic integrity as today?

T: Well, today we use the definition of the International Center for Academic Integrity. Just because it's positive. Which is the courage to uphold honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, even when it is difficult to do so. Obviously in the context of academics. I like that definition because it applies outside of academics. When I am talking to students and they are talking about, how do I know what's right to do or what's wrong to do on this particular assignment? Well, ask yourself: is it honest? Is it respectful? Is it responsible? Is it trustworthy? Is it fair? And if it undermines any of those values then it is probably not the right thing to be doing. It seems like a pretty simple definition. It's actually hard to execute. The reason I like that definition is because the word integrity itself doesn't have direct translation into all other languages, like Mandarin. But those other values do. Those are universal values. Different countries may prioritize them differently, different families different people. But everyone knows what honestly,

respect, responsibility, fairness, and trustworthiness are. Everyone knows what it means to have courage. To uphold those values even when it's difficult. So, it's more visceral I think than the word integrity is.

L: I love framing it in that way. One thing I've noticed when I have had the opportunity to teach, especially for international students, plagiarism is different in different areas, different backgrounds and different cultures. Having that instead as a background, in this classroom we are going to focus on these definitions.

T: Yeah, and then I like to talk about, not plagiarism, because it's such a negative word, right, all the isms. Writing with integrity. Why do we have you cite? This is a conversation I have with students. And they say, well, it's the rule. And I say, no what's the value what's the reason behind the rule? Rules have value and reasons behind them, we don't usually have them for no reason. So, why do we cite? Well, it's conversation. It's, hey Lindsey, I read this here I thought this and that way I am telling you what my path of thinking was. Then you can say, wow, I really think that's thought is brilliant. I'm going to go back and read what she read to see if I think the same thing or something different. So, once you explain it to students that way, they go: Oh okay, it's not a big deal.

L: It's preparing them too, for the future, when they have to apply that knowledge in different contexts.

T: Right. I give students the example of... you're citing at work and having lunch with a colleague. And you say oh, we could save the company a million dollars if we do this, this and this. You and I start talking over lunch and we come up with this brilliant idea to save the company a million dollars. We going to prep our packet and take it to the boss next week or something. Three days later you find out that I went to the boss and said that I came up with this idea alone. I am going to save the company a million dollars. And I'm getting a promotion and a raise. And what are you feeling like? All you're doing when you're citing, when you are writing with integrity, is that you are acknowledging the people who influenced your ideas, your words. Gave you thoughts that you're now building upon. And we do it every day, hey did you read the New York Times today? We are always doing it in casual conversation, it's the exact same thing in writing. It's not that complicated.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND TECHNOLOGY 5:58 – 9:35

L: No, not at all. Especially when you give that that foundation. So, as you know, WCET is interested in educational technologies and teaching with technologies, moving toward that technology area... how do you think the increase in use of tech on campuses and in classrooms has impacted academic integrity topic?

T: Well, we were in a session earlier today, where I talked about technology as a frenemy. It's both a friend and an enemy. A different way of saying it is, it's how you use it. I think that technology is what it is. It's going to exist and it's going to go leaps and bounds beyond where it is now. In five years, it's going to be totally different. I think that the major issue with technology is that it gets layered upon twentieth century education. People try and teach, they try and take their twentieth century pedagogies and insert them into technology, or underneath technology. If I go online and take my twentieth century lecture and I'm just going to do that online, everything will work out great. Right? Or, I'm going to take my twentieth century education and we're going to give kids iPads. That will make it twenty-first century education. So, I think the problem is that we layer technology on or around education without changing our pedagogy. What we need to do is say that technology is fundamentally changing the ways we view knowledge and information. And we to adapt education to fit in with those new constructions. Not necessarily to just go with the flow, we can challenge it. But we can't ignore it or just layer it upon the way that we used to do things and think that's going to work

out. So, the more we do that, where we just take twentieth century education and layer on or around technology, we're going to get increased cheating. Because I'm asking you to memorize the periodic table of elements. But why do I need to memorize that when I can look it up in five seconds online on Google? So, wouldn't it be better if I asked you to apply the periodic table to complex problems? And then allowed you to look up that information if you can't remember what the elements are? That might not be the best example, I'm not a chemistry teach, so I probably should choose chemistry examples. The point is that there are some studies that show if we test higher order on Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning, if we test higher levels of thinking we actually encourage memorization of stuff that needs to be memorized, because some something does, you can't Google everything when you need it. So, we not only get that information memorized but we're testing students at a higher order which makes THEM develop their thinking and reduces the cheating. So, we're accomplishing all goals instead of saying in CHEM 101 we have to test memorization, in CHEM 102 maybe we'll get to application. No, you get to application, it's like, in Med School they start with problem solving classes, they are making you apply stuff right at the beginning. So, technology is our frenemy and it can work to enhance education but it can't just be layered on without changing anything about education.

## CHEATING AND ONLINE EDUCATION 9:37 – 11:55

L: A lot of practitioners especially in online education, or a lot of skeptics of online education, believe that cheating happens a lot more frequently in an online environment. What would you say to them?

T: Well, the research is inconclusive. There's hasn't been a lot of foundational research that is conclusive about that. Research says online education: cheating. Face-to-face education: no cheating. Some studies say there's more, some say there's less. It's all over the place. Because it really comes down to pedagogy again. You can't study one class and then say there's more cheating in online education. I would say that if you took a twenty-person face-to-face classroom and you compared it to a 4000-online education classroom, there's probably more cheating. Even proportionally there's more in the online class. Why? It's more anonymous, I don't get to know my students, I don't know my students voice, I don't know the way they think. I don't know them. Twenty-person class I can get to know them. But if you take a 400-person face-to-face class and a 400-person online class...is there going to be more cheating in the online class? I have not seen any proof of that. And I would argue that I can contract cheat just as easily in the face-to-face class just as easily as I can in the online class. The problem to me comes to.... if I am repeating all the same mistakes from face-to-face education that lead to cheating in online education, then I am going to get a lot of cheating. So, it comes right back to pedagogy again.

L: And I think, something I've said and a lot of our members and our steering committee members say: good teaching is good teaching whether it's online or face-to-face. You must apply those good principles.

T: Exactly, and we have something that we call the trusted seal rubric. It says here's the best integrity practices for online programs and classes. And they aren't different than face-to-face but we packaged them for online classes because people think they have to be different. But we tell the face-to-face person the same exact stuff.

## ENCOURAGING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AT YOUR INSTITUTION 11:56 – 18:44

L: So, moving on to some practical ideas. Institutions need to do something to increase academic integrity and decrease cheating. Today you said that we're not going to be able to erase it all, but what are some starting out tips for institutions that maybe don't have a strong program. What can they start out doing?

T: My advice for the institution of course is different than advice for the individual instructor within the institutions. When I speak to faculty I say you don't have to wait for the institution to get on board. There are things you can do. You can't control the admissions process, you can't control what your university/college/high school does. You can only manage this little space, which is your class. What can you do in that class? I talk about four things: 1. Communicate integrity. What is it, why does it matter, why do you care, why should they care. 2. You can create space for integrity, which includes designing good, meaningful assessments and showing students how the learning objectives are tied to the assessment. Your standards for completing those assessments will help them reach those learning objectives. Not making it super easy to cheat, like giving them memorization exams and giving the same exams year after year, section after section. All that stuff creates space for integrity. Then (3) infusing integrity into the curriculum when you can. That doesn't just mean just talking about integrity on the first day and in your syllabus, but can you infuse a lesson? If you're teaching instructional engineering I'm pretty sure you can infuse a lesson on academic integrity in there. If you're teaching history you can include a lesson on integrity. So, it's mentioning to students that it isn't just about not teaching in school; this is about honestly, fairness, respect, trustworthiness throughout your life and your profession. So, when you talk about it it's not so, I broke the rules... and being preachy. And then (4) leveraging the cheating moment when it does occur. Not ignoring it. creating a teachable moment. Those four things an instructor can do regardless of their institution.

What the institution should do, obviously, is have an infrastructure that supports the faculty member. So, if they do detect cheating is the policy fair and efficient, for both professor and student? Is it a supportive structure? Are faculty fairly rewarded for paying attention to integrity? Is it part of the tenure and promotion or merit increase or whatever system they have of faculty promotion? Do they have someone the faculty can call and say I've caught someone cheating what do I do? So, there's so much they can do on their own, but it would be nice for that to be an institutional infrastructure. I always say that institutions have a responsibility to create a healthy ethical environment in which people feel like their ethical choices will be supported. And then, that includes some infrastructure, and some communication. That integrity is talked about and mentioned and it seems like an important value that's role modeled within the institution. And then faculty have a nice kind of bed upon which they can build their class. And then it's not like, my professor Lindsey wants this, but professor Tricia doesn't care. So, there's some consistency between classes.

L: I love having the support and resources for them when they don't know what the next step is.

T: When I first took my job, people used to ask me about what I do and I would say... I talk faculty down off the ledge. Faculty would call me and it was like their spouse cheated on them. They'd be like, oh my god, why would someone cheat in my class? What am I going to do? Well, they teach 17 - 20-year-olds. They are 17 - 20 year olds! They are going to cheat, I mean, it's going to happen. I had one teacher, she said Oh my god, this student plagiarized. What should I do? What should I change? What should I change about my classroom? What should I change about my assignment? Which is great, most don't ask that. And I said, you know, I haven't seen you in here before. How many cases of plagiarism have you had? How long have you worked here? Twenty-five years. How many cases of plagiarism? This is my first one. And I said, I think you're doing okay. So, I tell faculty: you can do all the right stuff. You can communicate integrity, you can create space for integrity, you can infuse integrity and leverage teachable moments. And you will still get students who cheat. Because they are human beings who make bad decisions when they are stressed or when they are tired. And it's okay. That's a teachable moment. You should view that as...I often say to faculty to kind of... knock them off the rocker,

you should say, YAY a student cheated in my class today. Instead of Oh no, a student cheated in my class today. What a difference to say, wow! I have this prime moment to help this student understand ethics, and life, and work. And not this, oh gosh I have to be a policy officer, attitude. And trying to get faculty to see that as an educational spotlight instead of a detriment or a downside of their job is critical.

L: I really like that, especially how you phrased it as a spotlight.

T: When you learn, it's proven in research that we learn a lot from our mistakes and failures, but if someone helps us. Because if not, we want to bury our head in the sand, forget we did it, maintain our perception of self as a perfect person who never screws up. The truth is, when you screw up you can learn a lot if someone helps us.

L: Yeah, like touching a hot stove. I did it! Someone explained to me...

T: Yeah, they said don't touch it! And then you touched it and you learned.

L: And now I don't do that anymore.

T: There's this street in San Diego where I got a warning, not even a ticket. But now I always slow down on that street, I always check my speed on that street. We're not that far off from Pavlovian conditioning right!? We're not that complicated. So, people can learn a lot from getting caught cheating.

## STUDENT IDENTITY VERIFICATION 18:45 – 21:23

L: So, on the institutional side, that we had started into, student identity verification. That is an important factor in ensuring quality, rigorous assessment. What are your thoughts about those approaches?

T: That falls into the creating space for integrity. We don't want to turn ourselves into a policy state. But we have an obligation to society to ensure the integrity of our degrees. So, we are in this betwixt and between situation. We want to trust our students but we have to ensure the integrity of degrees. And we know that people, whether it's in a 400-person classroom or 400-person online class, there will be people who will have someone else take their exam or class for them. We know that's going to happen. I am still struggling with that betwixt and between, to tell you the truth. I think there's real value in using technology to help us authenticate the identity of our class/exam takers. I think we have an obligation to society to do that. At the same time, it's bordering on that line where we are having to do that because we don't get to know our students. We're not in contact with our students and so it worries me that we're solving one problem with creating another in many ways. So, we are solving the problem that we don't get to know our students anymore so we need to use these things to check who is in our class, instead of saying that not knowing our students is the problem in the first place. So, I'm really torn on it. I think that it come back to always two questions: what are the best practices to ensure quality teaching and learning? And, how do we ensure that the grades and degree, that the grades that we give and the degrees we confer have integrity? And balancing those two things is critical.

L: Yes, I think you have to be able to verify that if you need to prove it. but also help build those skills to get to know your students. That's going to change a lot more than just this, knowing your students in that way.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST CONTRACT CHEATING 21:24 – 23: 38

WCET and several of our members and annual meeting attendees participated in the International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating, with the white boards. We really enjoyed that last October. Can you tell us a little bit about that day and what the impact was?

T: It went better than expected but not as good as I'd hoped. I would have hoped more institutions participated, but at the same time, it's our first year. We had institutions from all over the world; we had one in Africa we had at least one in Australia. So, it wasn't just a U.S thing. I know several participated but they didn't quite.... the people in charge weren't quite social media savvy. So, they didn't get the whole idea of tweeting live. They said, don't worry about it, we'll tweet about it a week from now. And I was like, that's not really the point... it was supposed to be a splash on the day. So, I think that the second year will go better. I hope we're going to do a second year.

It went really well on our campus. We made the smart decision of, instead of being somewhere and trying to make students come to us... we went to this area where students are always hanging out. My students, my volunteers, setup stations. They had student go through stations, there was a station for Business Management and Engineers, and this is how integrity applies to the real work. They made them go through all the stations, then sign a self-integrity pledge before they got their pizza. And do the white board pledge before they got their pizza. We had 80 or so students, which is good.

L: You have them more to think about than just the, I mean, I love the white board activity, but that sounded like it was so much more and so much more valuable.

T: Yeah, they had to do a lot more. Again, Pavlovian conditioning. So, I know a lot of schools did the white boards. Humber college in Ontario, Canada did a thing where they went around to staff and did a staff video and got staff to do the white boards.

## BIGGEST CHALLENGE: REPHRASING CHEATING AS A TEACHABLE MOMENT 23: 39 – 27:28

L: So, just some kind of quick fire questions.... What do you think, for you, has been one of the bigger challenges you've faced in this arena?

T: It's not a challenge for me but it seems to be a challenge for other people in understanding what I do. Please have said, how do you do this job? It must be so depressing. Because I've seen probably 6000 cases of cheated reported to my office now. And I've said, because, I view this as teachable moments. I've seen students...we've had nine years now where we've had a course, a program, that students take after they have violated the policy. I have seen students say things like, why has no one else ever taught this to us before? I never knew how important integrity and ethics were before. I've seen many students go through the process and then become volunteers with our office. And become very strong advocates. Most of our volunteers have been through the process. So, the challenge, for me, is getting people to see... it's like I said in the session we were in earlier, there are some bad people doing bad things. We need to stop them and we can't let them graduate with our degrees attached to their names. But that's such a majority of the cheating going on. It's the bad cheating... but the majority of the cheating going on are good kids making bad decisions. The challenge for me is getting people to hear this message and open their minds and hear this message. And so, every time I walk in front of an audience, I know that I've got to get them to think that I could cheat. This is me she's talking about.

And opening up their minds to hear the message. Because otherwise people stand up here and look down at these horrible cheaters and they think, how could they? How dare they? And that's not a healthy way to do it. So, my biggest challenge is switching people's minds and getting them to open up their brains so they can see that they too could be cheaters, and probably are. And also, that there's nothing wrong with these kids that we're talking to. They have lots of stuff going on. There are some wrong ones. But it's not as black and white as people think.

L: Well yeah, you brought up speeding. Who doesn't speed? Very few people who don't speed.

T: Right, that guy in the audience who said, frankly, I don't think rolling through stop signs and speeding is not the same as cheating in school. But yes, you do that but you don't do the other thing. This is not cheating. But what they do is bad! It's that typical, there's that concept called ethical fading. Where we allow the ethics to fade from our brains so that we can continue to engage in the behavior. And that's what most of us do with speeding or stop signs. But there is also this thing called outcome bias. If I said to you, do you think that speeding is immoral? You'd say, no, it's definitely illegal. But not immoral. But if I said, what if someone was speeding and they killed somebody? You'd say that person was immoral. It's called outcome bias. Because there was a bad outcome all the sudden the same behavior you were okay with a second ago, now you're not okay with it anymore. It's so pervasive. That gentleman that was in our session that said that lived up to that ethical fading phenomena. Well, what I do is not bad. We're talking about what they do. What the other does.

## ROLE OF INSTITUTION'S EXECUTIVE TEAM 27:29 – 30:03

L: Kind of speaking about students and a lot of president's or board of education, especially when external media report on cheating, maybe by student athletes, that's such a big deal. What should the role, we talked about faculty roles, student roles, institutional roles, what's the role of the big roles on campus?

T: I want every president to be Nan Keohane. Nan Keohane was the president of Duke University. I forget during what period of time. In the nineties when they had done a survey of students at Duke that showed students were cheating at Duke, she stood up at the bully pulpit and said to all the media and everybody and said...we have a cheating problem at Duke. And no one looked at that and said oh my gosh, Duke students are cheaters. They said, if they are cheating at Duke they are probably cheating at my school, other schools, your schools. I have not seen another president since then with that kind of courage, to stand up and say that. If every president just admitted that they have cheating at their school we could tackle this problem. But they don't want to admit it. because they don't want to be the one. And it probably needs to start from the Harvard's, the Dukes, the Stanford's. It needs to start from the big leagues, the AACU and the Big 10s. and not in the cheating scandal, bad apple kind of way. But literally, we have a cheating problem. That's the best thing they could do. And they would say that's the worst thing they could do, for donors and other reasons. But I would think in this case honesty is the best policy. And that it would really help actually bring some attention to this issue and some seriousness to the issue. Just like we've done with diversity. Just like universities gave shone a light and said we have a diversity problem. No one is looking at them and saying you're horrible! Unless you're not doing anything about the diversity problem. And we need to get to that same place with regards to cheating. You'll only be viewed as horrible if you say yes, we've got a cheating problem and we're not going to do anything about it. So, we were able to do it for diversity, so I still have hope we can do it for cheating.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION 30:04 - END

L: So, we are almost out of time, and sorry we went over time a little. I do have one selfish question, always looking for book recommendations! What do you recommend?

T: This is the question I've thought about the most! There's so many good ones! One of the best ones I read recently, it's call [Lying by Sam Harris](#). The reason I like that one: it's a little book, you'll read it in an hour or two. When I started this job, and had the word integrity in my job title, I realized how many white lies I told on a daily basis. A lot of white lies. And he talks about, he basically wrote the book I would like to write, how white lies seem innocuous and okay. But really, they erode trust in relationships and in society. It's a phenomenal book that I would recommend reading. I could list a whole bunch of others but...

L: Oh, this is great, perfect. Well thank you so much, we really appreciate you taking the time.

T: Yes, of course, I appreciate all of the work you all do...

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*WCET thanks Tricia Bertram Gallant for sitting down with us during this interview and providing her advice and insights this important topic! Thank you to SxSWedu coordinators for helping us with the logistics of this interview.*

*For questions/comments on this interview or WCET, please contact Lindsey Downs, WCET Communications Manager, at [ldowns@wiche.edu](mailto:ldowns@wiche.edu)*

