Case Study **University of California at San Diego**

Building Academic Integrity

How One College Promotes Honesty in the Classroom

Academic integrity starts here.

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Catching college students who cheat often feels like a game of whack-a-mole. More than 60 percent of undergraduates — or, depending on which survey you believe, way more — engage in academic dishonesty at some point in their higher-education career. And while technology, especially software, can help identify plagiarism and other forms of cheating, it can also aid it.

Which is why Tricia Bertram Gallant, the academic-integrity director at the University of California at San Diego, believes focusing on catching wrongdoers and punishing after the misdeed isn't the right approach.

Instead, Bertram Gallant and her office aim to create a culture on campus and in the classroom where honesty is valued and where students don't cheat — not out of fear of getting caught — but because they choose not to. It's an idea that's gaining traction in higher education.

"Research suggests several systems and dynamics are at play in explaining the epidemic of academic dishonesty," said Jason M. Stephens, an associate professor in the school of learning, development, and professional practice at the University of Auckland, in New Zealand. "Wise intervention would suggest a multilevel approach to decrease cheating — and to do so in the long-term by creating a culture of integrity."

At the UC-San Diego campus, in La Jolla, Calif., administrators focus on promoting academic honesty to curb cheating, rather than punishment.

UC-San Diego's program, which started in 2008, is often held up as a model of that approach. It focuses on educating both students and faculty about why cheating is most likely to occur and how to avoid it. Faculty still use software programs to detect plagiarism — and students till get punished for cheating — but those are only part of the way the university handles the issue of academic dishonesty.

"Tricia is at the forefront of the work in academic integrity," said Holly Tatum, a professor of psychology at Randolph College, who has written on honor codes. "It's very evidence-based and uses research she and others have done to inform the policy."

Bertram Gallant, who is also a member of the board for the International Center for Academic Integrity, and wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on academic integrity, began as UC-San Diego's first academic-integrity director in 2006.

"I wanted to do everything we could so students could learn from an incident and move on and become more ethical students, citizens, and professionals, rather than pretend it never happened and

experience no learning from it at all," said Bertram Gallant, who wrote the book *Academic Integrity in the 21st Century: A Teaching and Learning Imperative.*

Here is how the system works at the university:

A professor reports a student is cheating, and the student is then sent to the appropriate person, usually the dean of student affairs. After a discussion, the student either acknowledges she cheated, or denies it, and can present evidence that's shared with the instructor. If the instructor agrees, the charge is withdrawn.

If not, the student will go before an academic-integrity review board of three faculty members and two students, and the student alleged to have cheated can have a student advocate; no one from the academic-integrity office is present. The average review is 45 minutes to an hour.

The student is then found responsible or not responsible for cheating. "We're very careful about language because this isn't a courtroom proceeding," Bertram Gallant said.

If found responsible, then the student must take

academic-integrity courses (at a cost of $50), and receives disciplinary action, ranging from a warning to dismissal. The instructor can also give an academic penalty or sanction. If the student isn't found responsible, she has the option to either receive the earned grade in the course or retroactively withdraw from the class.

About 70 percent of the students accused of cheating at UC-San Diego acknowledge they did so and of those who go to the review process, about 65 percent are held responsible.

If a student is found responsible for cheating and not expelled, she then takes the courses. These consist of three prerequisites that include:

- Writing a letter explaining the violation to someone the student admires or has a stake in the fact she cheated. The student explains what happened and why and asks for advice to help recover and move forward.
- Completing an online survey regarding ethical and moral dilemmas related through short case studies and the student's own feelings and experiences.
- Have a one-on-one meeting with a peer educator.

After finishing the prerequisites, the student then must complete an academic-integrity seminar, which consists of four classes; there are also a number of assignments, including writing about an ethical dilemma the student is facing currently (unrelated to the cheating violation), as well as a "personal ethical decision action plan."

The student may also be required to take up to three other workshops, which discuss how to collaborate with integrity, strategies and tools to prevent plagiarism, and how to properly use sources and "differentiate your ideas from others."

One important aspect of the UC-San Diego program, Randolph's Tatum said, is that its website "really defines cheating. Research shows that students don't agree on what cheating is — faculty doesn't even agree on what cheating is. We make too many assumptions."

Working differently with students who may have cheated is the first part of the program. Bertram Gallant's office also works with professors and instructors so they can better create a classroom where students are less likely to cheat.

"When cheating happens, it undermines learning," Bertram Gallant said. "We should be fixing our teaching in order to create more ethical classrooms where learning is the norm and cheating is the exception."

Heidi Keller-Lapp, a continuing lecturer in history at the university, said she was skeptical at first about how effective this culture of integrity would be, and thought the focus should be on finding cheaters.

"But because of all the research, I have become convinced this is the only way that is effective," she said. "Humans will always to find a quicker way, humans will always try to be efficient, and humans will always try to game the system. Trying to stay ahead of the newest method of cheating doesn't work."

As one part of creating of integrity, Keller-Lapp now requires all her students to take a three-part online tutorial she developed with the university's librarians on "how we cite, and more importantly, why we cite."

Harold Buchanan, a lecturer in finance at UC-San Diego's Rady School of Management, said he has found the help of the Academic Integrity Office to be invaluable. He owned and managed a hedge fund, and when he retired, began teaching; he just finished his second-year teaching enterprise finance to large lecture classes of juniors and seniors.

Bertram Gallant went over his syllabus, curriculum, tests, and other materials and in response he made several changes, both large and small. He added to the syllabus a section on academic integrity that recognizes his responsibility and the students'. He also added an academic-integrity statement to the start of each test, which students have to sign before they even open the exam — research has shown that not just in an academic setting, but in general, people are less likely to cheat if they have to sign something promising they won't before filling out a form.

On test days, he assigns students random seating in the lecture hall (so it's harder to plan cheating) and mandates that if a TA sees a cell phone or smart phone watch, it's an automatic zero on the test.

But much of the work goes on before the exam, such as clearly stating to students what will be on

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the test, and even more importantly, what won't.

"The grand responsibility as educators is designing the test so it's very connected to what students learn," Buchanan said. "Much of cheating is created from the stress of not being prepared. It could be the student hasn't studied enough, but it could also be that the professor hasn't done enough linking the contents of the class to the materials."

Something else Bertram Gallant emphasizes is to switch the typical teaching model — to work on problems and in small groups more in class and have students watch lectures online outside the class.

Tricia Bertram Gallant (left), director of UC-San Diego's Academic Integrity Office: "I wanted to do everything we could so students could learn from an incident and move on and become more ethical students, citizens, and professionals."

Photo by Bill Wechter for The Chronicle

The idea is that the more students interact with each other and their instructor, the more invested they are in the class and the less likely they are to feel all right about cheating.

And the more instructors focus on mastery of a subject, rather than grades, the less likely students are to cheat, Tatum said.

Buchanan agreed: "I've dramatically increased the amount of work we do in class related to calculations and let them solve in ad-hoc groups in the classroom. The TAs and I walk around the class and I get questions from students who would never talk to me otherwise, especially ESL students. If students are better engaged and better prepared, they are less likely to cheat."

Bertram Gallant hopes to do an in-depth assessment of her program later in the year, but from studies she has done, she knows that six months after taking the academic-integrity seminar, most students retained some of the information. There is also a low recidivism rate of cheaters.

The number of cheating reports from faculty has risen, from 300 in 2006 to an average of 750 and 900 annually in more recent years. While that may look like the program is not working, Bertram Gallant said that's the wrong analysis.

"The rates were always higher than what was re-

ported," she said. Rather, professors and others are more likely to report a student has engaged in academic wrongdoing if the punishment fits the crime — that is if it's too lenient, teachers won't want to bother going to the effort, and if it's too stringent, then teachers will hesitate to report out of fear of seriously damaging a student's future.

She also pointed out that many the students were reported for academic misconduct and went through the academic-integrity classes became peer educators because "their experience was so profound." The program started with two and now has 40, with a full-time staff member overseeing them.

David Rettinger, associate professor of psychological science at Mary Washington University and director of the International Center for Academic Integrity, admires the work at UC-San Diego and said students will cheat more if they only see college as a means to an end.

"Cheating is a sign of a much bigger problem — the commodification of higher education," he said. "You can treat the symptoms of cheating with software and proctoring, but if you want to treat the root cause, you have to have students buy into the value of higher education."

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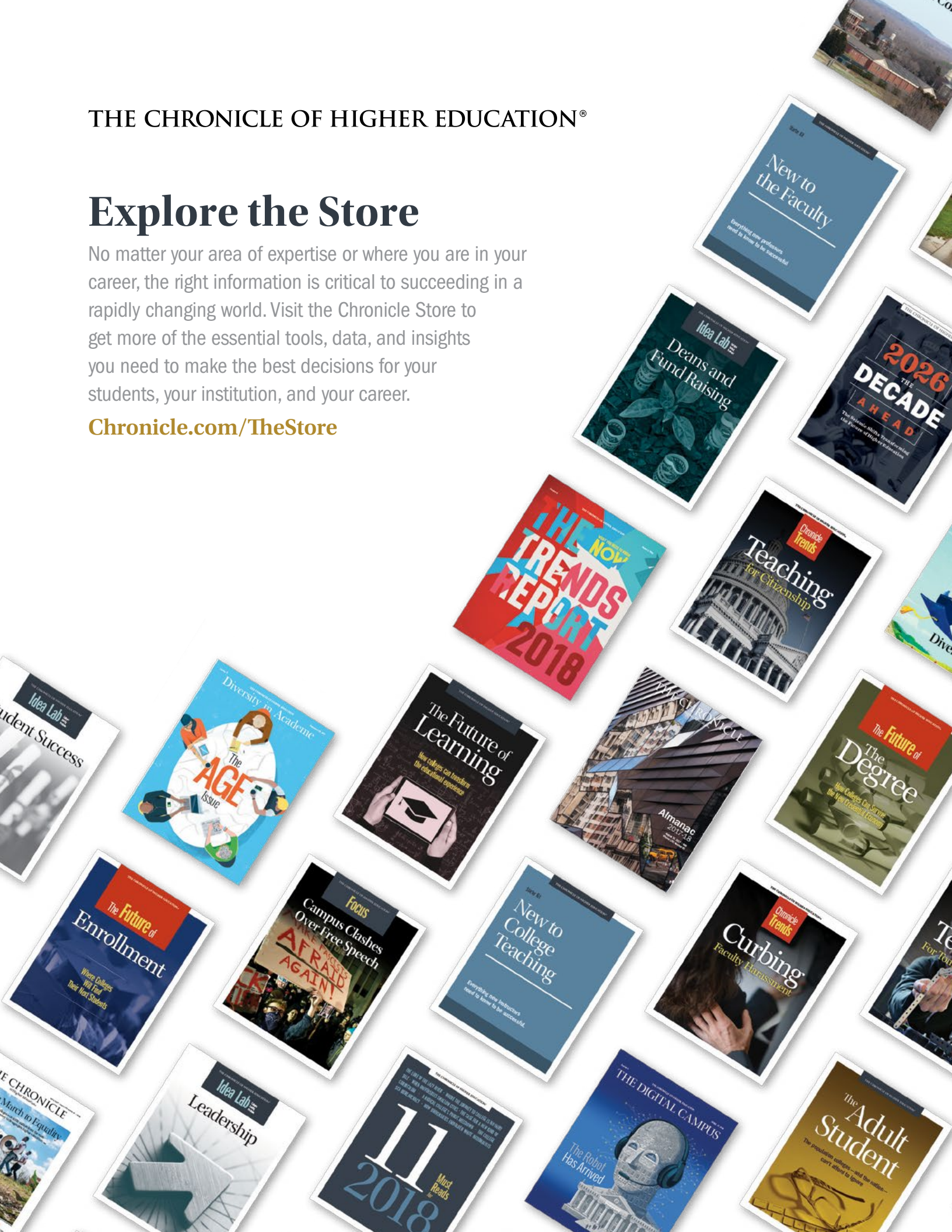
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