



Department Name
Research Title of Assessment
Assessment Report

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Title: Assessing the Moral Development of Students Who Engage in Academic Dishonesty

Type of Assessment: Learning Outcomes Assessment

Date of Assessment Implementation: July/2010

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Purpose of Assessment

Academic dishonesty cases made up 40% of the 2009-2010 judicial cases. To learn more about this issue, Judicial Affairs came up with a plan to identify the moral developmental level of students involved in academic dishonesty violations. By learning more about the moral development of students, we can formulate ways to best approach the developmental aspect of the judicial process.

The judicial process involves a student conduct meeting with the Director of Judicial Affairs to discuss the alleged violation, ethical and moral considerations, and potential sanctions. If the student is found in violation of the Student Conduct Code, the student is offered a settlement agreement with details of their sanction.

It is important that this process engage students at the appropriate level of moral development so that the student benefits from the experience and can use their increased sense of moral duty in future decision-making.

Targeted Learning Outcome

The Director of Judicial Affairs will be able to assess the level of moral development of students who engage in academic dishonesty.

Assessment Methodology

The theory used to influence the methodology is Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development (1984). Lawrence Kohlberg is a moral theorist in higher education. Kohlberg's theory is a hierarchical and sequential model that shows individuals moving through levels and stages of moral development. While Kohlberg's theory has limitations, the results of many studies using Kohlberg's framework demonstrate that as students progress through college, upper class students tend to show higher levels of principled reasoning than freshmen and sophomores. Additionally, the college experience has a positive influence on principled moral reasoning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). We will analyze all data collected and pay attention to any diversity-related issues.

A rubric based on Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development was created to identify the stages that might be applicable to the student. This rubric is to be filled out based on the student conversation with the Director. For each stage, sample statements reflect what a student might say if they are in that particular stage during the time of the meeting. The Director may identify all stages that might be applicable and make a determination as to the stage that is most accurate, based on a holistic evaluation of her interaction with the student.

Results

This assessment is still in progress.

Conclusion

The concept of this study was shared with fellow CSU judicial affairs offices and they too are interested in assessing the moral development of students who engage in academic dishonesty. The Cal Poly Pomona Judicial Affairs Office intends to collaborate with other CSUs to improve the methodology and implementation of this assessment.

Implications for Practice

By learning more about the moral development of students, we can formulate ways to best approach the developmental aspect of the judicial process. To promote development and growth, a student needs to be appropriately challenged. If disciplinary sanctions are too elementary or too difficult, a student's growth may not be maximized. It is important that this process engage students at the appropriate level of moral development so that the student benefits from the experience and can use their increased sense of moral duty in future decision-making.

References

- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *The psychology of moral development: The nature and validity of moral stages*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Pascarella, E. & Terenzini, P. (2005). *How college affects students: Vol. 2. A third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.