TODAY, 75% OF COLLEGE students admit to cheating, and of these students 95% have never been caught.\textsuperscript{1,2} Many students come to college with a “cheating mentality” they developed in high school or even earlier. Violations of academic honesty include plagiarizing papers, cheating on exams, and other misrepresentation or falsification. Not only are violations of academic honesty increasing across college campuses but also the methods of cheating have become more elaborate. Technological advances have made cheating easier to execute and harder for faculty to identify. Today faculty are faced with the challenge of structuring coursework and testing situations in such a way that violations of academic honesty are discouraged, as well as confronting and penalizing students who cheat. The purpose of this column is to discuss the various ways that students cheat and to outline how athletic training educators can promote a culture of academic integrity.

\section*{The “Cheating Mentality”}

When interviewing students regarding academic integrity, one student likened cheating to driving over the speed limit—everybody knows it is against the rules, but everybody does it.\textsuperscript{2} This type of thinking exemplifies the mentality of college students who disregard academic integrity. The competitive nature of academia and the pressure to earn grades to stay in an academic major can lead even good students to violate academic integrity. Students report that they cheat because everyone does it, they can get away with it, teachers look the other way, and they have seen prominent leaders cheat and get ahead.\textsuperscript{1,2}

Sometimes it is a matter of ignorance—in other words, students who plagiarize a paper often claim they did not know they were plagiarizing.\textsuperscript{3,4} Students maintain that their plagiarism results from a lack of understanding of how to appropriately cite information within the text of the paper. Students lift paragraphs verbatim, add a citation at the end of the paragraph, and believe that this is honest writing. What students learned in sixth grade about quotation marks is often forgotten.\textsuperscript{5} Students might not fully understand how to paraphrase; some think that changing the order of the words in a sentence is paraphrasing rather than summarizing ideas in their own words. In a study of students’ misconceptions and misunderstandings of plagiarism among 316 undergraduate students from two private colleges, results revealed that 8 of 10 papers were plagiarized in some way (e.g., verbatim passages, incorrect/no citations). Although this study was conducted with students at two small private institutions, it should be noted that cheating tends to be more prevalent on larger campuses.\textsuperscript{4}

Regardless of the reasons for cheating, students must be reminded that cheating is wrong, unethical, and immoral and cannot be justified. Academic honesty is especially important in health care. For example, when athletic training students are to document findings from physical assessments, it is critical that they embrace a truthful, accountable, and straightforward means of dealing with clients and other professionals. An athletic training student who cheated when being tested on a shoulder examination and rehabilitation protocol including the documentation of SOAP notes could find him- or herself in a position of accountability and liability when later trying to perform these duties.
in an employment situation. In addition, students who cheat without consequences might be future athletic trainers who represent the profession and their employers in unprofessional and unethical ways.

Students today have developed more technologically advanced methods of cheating, but old methods are still around, as well (see the sidebar). Students continue to bring crib notes to class with information written on water bottles, pens, and gum wrappers. Cheaters continue to wear baseball caps so their eyes can wander without others noticing, whisper answers, or exchange test papers when people are not looking. With the advent of photo cell phones, personal data assistants (PDAs), and text-messaging devices, however, students have become increasingly creative in their cheating methodologies. These methods enable students to refer to pictures of their notes on a cell phone, search the Web during an exam to find answers, and communicate with other students in and outside of the class to obtain answers. These new methods of cheating pose a new challenge for educators.

**Promoting a Culture of Integrity**

According to the NATA’s ethical standards, current ATCs are responsible for ensuring that future ATCs are ethical. Therefore, it is important that students learn that cheating is unacceptable in the profession. It is the professional duty of faculty to promote a culture of academic integrity in their classrooms. Faculty can take deliberate steps to prevent and discourage academic dishonesty. For example, when students are taking an exam in class, the faculty should observe the students taking the exam rather than using the test time to get work done. This can discourage students from copying or using notes or devices that are not allowed. Requiring that students leave their purses and book bags in the front or back of the classroom will prevent them from accessing cell phones, PDAs, or additional notes. Creating multiple versions of the exam will eliminate the problem of students looking to their neighbor’s test for the correct answer.

Taking time in class early in the semester to discuss academic honesty, plagiarism, proper referencing, and consequences for violations of academic honesty is critical; it sends a message to the students that upholding academic integrity in class is important. Do not assume that students know this information. Syllabi should contain a statement about academic honesty and the consequence for violations. Papers that have questionable characteristics should be questioned as potentially plagiarized. For example, is the quality inconsistent with the writing style of the student? Have font changes occurred throughout (often occurs with cutting and pasting)? Have poorly written paragraphs been interspersed into a basically well-written paper?

It can be very time consuming for faculty to research citations to determine whether all or parts of a paper have been plagiarized. A strategy that colleges and universities are using to discourage plagiarism is subscribing to a service that identifies plagiarized papers (see the sidebar on the next page). One such service, at http://www.turnitin.com, is used by thousands of institutions in over 50 countries. Each paper submitted is checked against three databases: over a billion pages of Internet Web sites, millions of published works, and tens of thousands of electronic books and student papers. A faculty member subscribing to this service receives an “originality report” that underlines and color codes plagiarized text and links it to its original source. It has been our experience that many plagiarized papers can be identified with this service. Although this might be a significant financial investment for some institutions, it is a definite time saver for the faculty. A less expensive means of identifying plagiarized papers is for the faculty to enter several of the unique key words in the paper into a major search engine.