The Ethics of Business School Faculty: A Survey

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Abstract

A mail questionnaire completed by business school faculty and administrators across the United States revealed that both job applicants and business faculty are engaging in unethical behavior. The paper reports this finding by type of unethical behavior, by college of business accreditation status and by degree-levels granted at the institution.

Introduction

Professional ethics is an issue that has concerned university professors and administrators for many years. At the first meeting of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 1915, President John Dewey stated that the development of "professional standards, standards which will be quite as scrupulous regarding the obligations imposed by freedom as jealous of the freedom itself" would be one of the Association's priorities (1984 Edition, p. 131).

The Association adopted a statement on Professional Ethics in 1966 that sets forth idealized standards that "serve as a reminder of the variety of obligations assumed by all members of the profession" (1984 Edition, p. 133). The generalized statement essentially relates the practice of intellectual honesty to the professor as a teacher, a colleague, a member of the University, and as a member of his community. In the enforcement of standards the Association states that "the individual institution of higher learning . . . should normally handle questions concerning propriety of conduct within its own framework by reference to a faculty group" (1984 Edition, p. 133).

A review of the literature reveals very limited information about whether those in higher educa-

tion are complying with the AAUP standards of ethics, or what manner of ethical misconduct exists within the profession. As Stephen M. Cahn (1986, p. xi) has written: "Numerous books and articles have examined the rights of faculty members, but no corresponding literature exists regarding their responsibilities."

Much of the literature that exists is innocuous in its generality. Ethical dilemmas, case situations, and position papers are part of the literature but empirical evidence is not. Consider, for example, excerpts from Charles Oppenheim (1980, p. 4) on the subject:

According to Jacob Bronowski in his book "Science and Human Values", Scientists. . . do not make wild claims, they do not cheat, they do not try to persuade at any cost, they appeal neither to prejudice nor to authority, they are often frank about their ignorance.

The succeeding paragraph in Oppenheim's paper contained the following statements:

This is stuff that popular images are made of. It is also total nonsense. I have the highest regard for Bronowski but this passage shows considerable naivety. Scientists do cheat, they do appeal to authority and are rarely frank about their

ignorance. There is, unfortunately, too great a deference to original sources in our profession. If it appeared in print, it must be true because scientists are honorable men. Not at all. The reward system of science is, to put it crudely but accurately, publish or perish. The pressure to publish is pressure to cut corners. There have been many cases of cheating in science. Not all of these involve PhD students desperately creating results to help their PhD chances - though there is enough of that going on and I did it to get my PhD. It can involve the most eminent of professors, and I have personal knowledge of one well known professor who invented results regularly and consistently. You have all heard, I am sure, about Sir Cyril Burt who, it seems clear now, fiddled results of IQ tests to suit his own prejudices and in doing so influenced British educational practice for very many years. You probably also know that Mendel results were too good to be true. You may not know that the entomologist Theodore Cockrell was publishing two articles per week for many years - this - too, I regard as cheating. There is no way a person could be responsible for so much research - he was adding his name to papers written by co-authors who had really done the work. O.K. So let me sum up what I've said so far. I suspect that cheating in science occurs far more often than is usually thought to be the case.

Larkin (1981, p. 29) wrote "We send out lists of publications when we want to be hired or promoted, but do we fool ourselves that anyone out there in hiring and promoting land reads beyond our lists and goes to the articles themselves?"

Freedman (1988, p. A48) wrote "Plagiarizing among scientific researchers has sometimes been so blatant it disarms suspicion. It has frequently been accompanied by faked data and distorted laboratory results." He also stated:

While professors and students - like politicians, writers, artists, and businessmen - do see their peers and colleagues get away with fabricating credentials and advertising false claims based on

trumped up evidence, the seriousness with which most administrators and faculty members regard the questions of originality and plagiarism is a persuasive sign that academics still see honesty as fundamental to intellectual work, however they may approach or analyze its actual creation.

Arnett (1985, p. 10) in a paper on the status of ethics scholarship made a point that ". . . our discipline has traditionally and should continue to encourage boat rocking (dissent within the boundaries of the organization) and whistle-blowing (informing authorities outside an organization about what needs exposure and reforms) when such action is necessary."

The purpose of this paper is to empirically investigate: a) whether unethical behavior has been perpetrated by faculty in colleges of business across the United States; b) the types of unethical behavior (if any); c) the extent of knowledge of such unethical behavior by faculty and administrators; and d) whether universities have taken disciplinary actions against faculty guilty of such unethical behavior.

Methodology

A proportional double-stratified random sampling design was developed for the survey (mail questionnaire). The design was applied to an American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business directory of (254) accredited and (393) associate member schools. From the directory, 25 accredited schools and 40 associate member schools were randomly selected (10 percent of the population in each strata). The 65 schools were further stratified such that all of them within each strata were forced to be from different states. Upon identification of the 65 Colleges of Business thus drawn in the sample, each Dean's office was requested to provide a list of faculty and administrators by name, rank, academic area, and the name of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (or equivalent).

Upon receipt of the roster from each College of Business, a random sample of three faculty

members was selected within each academic area: a professor, an associate professor, and an assistant professor. The Dean of the College, all departmental chairs, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs also were included in the sample. A pre-tested questionnaire was mailed to each individual thus drawn in the sample, with a cover letter and a postage-paid return envelope.

A follow-up mailing was made to the entire sample approximately four weeks after the initial mailing. Those who had already responded were asked to disregard the follow-up.

The sample design yielded the following results:

1. No. of Universities identified 65; No. responding 51; percent response 78.5%.
2. No. of AACSB Accredited Schools identified 25; No. responding 21; percent response 84.0%
3. No. of AACSB Non-Accredited Schools identified 40; No. responding 30; percent response 75.0%
4. No. of Vice Presidents identified 44; No. responding 15; percent response 34.1%
5. No. of Deans identified 41; No. responding 24; percent response 58.5%
6. No. of Departmental Chairman identified 188; No. responding 57; percent response 30.3%
7. No. of Faculty identified 619; No. responding 259; percent response 41.8%

Total number of questionnaires mailed out 892; No. returned 355; percent response 39.8%

Methodological Limitations

It is apparent to the authors *ex post* that the wording of the questions used to gather data may have distorted the results of the survey. For example, the question "Do you know of a case(s) where a job applicant's resume falsely claimed

employment history?" could be answered based upon actual cases known by the respondent or based upon information picked up in the grapevine network. This weakness in question construction may lead the reader to question the reliability and validity of this study. However, in a subsequent multi-disciplinary study the questions were re-worded to be more specific (eg., "Please indicate the number of job applicants in your area or department who have made false claims about employment history"). Initial analysis of the multi-disciplinary study data generally supports the findings of this study.

Empirical Results

Four specific areas of potential unethical behavior were identified: Misrepresentations involving (1) employment history, (2) publications, (3) degrees earned, and (4) papers presented. Each respondent was asked about their knowledge of a case(s) where a faculty member falsely claimed any of the four.

The results of this research are discussed in two sections. Section I contains the results generated from faculty responses to the questionnaire (See Table 1). Section II contains the results generated from administrator responses to the questionnaire (See Table 2).

Section I: Faculty Responses

Two-hundred-fifty-nine (259) faculty from thirty-five (35) states responded to the questionnaire. Sixty-three (63) percent of the respondents were from AACSB-accredited institutions and thirty-seven (37) percent were from non-AACSB-accredited institutions. Thirty-five (35) percent were from universities that granted doctoral degrees, fifty-two (52) percent were from institutions that granted the master's degree, and thirteen (13) percent were from baccalaureate degree granting institutions. Thirty-three (33) percent of the responses were from professors, thirty-five (35) percent were from associate professors, and thirty-two (32) percent were from assistant professors.

Job Applicants. - One of the survey questions was "Do you know of a case(s) where a job applicant's resume falsely claimed: (a) employment history?, (b) publications?, (c) degrees earned?".

Fourteen (14) percent of the respondents knew of a case(s) where the job applicant's employment history was falsified; thirteen (13) percent knew of a case(s) where the job applicant falsely claimed publications; and thirteen (13) percent knew of a case(s) where job applicants falsely claimed degrees earned.

Cross-classification analysis reveals that:

1. associate professors were more knowledgeable of job applicant falsification of resumes than were either professors or assistant professors.
2. relatively more faculty at non-AACSB-accredited institutions knew of job applicant falsification of employment history and degrees earned than did faculty at AACSB-accredited institutions; however, false claims of publication were equally known by faculty without regard to AACSB status;
3. relatively more job applicant falsification of resumes was known by faculty at master's degree granting institutions than either doctoral or baccalaureate degree granting institutions.

Faculty Members - The question was "Do you know of a case(s) where a faculty member falsely claimed (a) employment history?, (b) publications?, (c) degrees earned?, (d) "presentations of a paper?"

Nine (9) percent of the respondents knew of a case(s) where a faculty member had falsely claimed employment history; twelve (12) percent knew of a case(s) where a faculty member had falsely claimed publications; eleven (11) percent knew of a case(s) where a faculty member had falsely claimed degrees earned; and nine (9) percent knew of a case(s) where a faculty member had falsely claimed "presentation" of a paper(s).

Cross-classification analysis reveals that:

1. associate professors were more knowledgeable of false claims of credentials than were other ranks;
2. faculty at AACSB-accredited universities were more aware of a case(s) of falsely claimed publications, but faculty at non-AACSB-accredited universities knew of relatively more cases of falsified employment history, degrees earned and "presentation" of papers;
3. faculty at master's degree granting institutions knew of relatively more falsified claims of employment history, publications and degrees earned than faculty at doctoral or baccalaureate degree granting institutions;
4. faculty at baccalaureate degree granting institutions were more aware of false "presentations" than were faculty at doctoral or master's degree granting institutions.

Disciplinary Action. - The question was "Have disciplinary actions been taken against faculty members at your university for false claims of: (a) employment history?, (b) publications?, (c) degrees earned?, (d) presentation of papers?"

Five (5) percent of the respondents indicated that disciplinary action had been taken at their university against faculty who had falsely claimed employment history; four (4) percent indicated disciplinary action had been taken against faculty who had falsely claimed publication; six (6) percent indicated disciplinary action against falsely claimed degrees earned; but only one (1) percent indicated that falsely claimed "presentation" of papers had led to disciplinary action.

Cross-classification analysis reveals that:

1. professors were most knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against false claims of publication; relatively more associate professors knew of disciplinary action taken against false claims of employment history and false claims of

degrees earned;

2. faculty at non-AACSB-accredited universities were most knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against false claims of employment history and degrees earned; faculty at AACSB accredited institutions were most knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against false claims of publications;

3. faculty at baccalaureate-degree granting institutions were relatively most knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against false claims of employment history and degrees earned; masters-degree granting institutions were about equally knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against false claims of employment history, false claims of publication, and false claims of degrees earned; and those at doctoral degree granting institutions were least knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against falsified credentials of faculty.

Section II: Administrator Responses

Ninety-nine administrators from thirty-four (34) different states responded to the questionnaire. Sixty (60) percent were from AACSB-accredited Universities and forty (40) percent were from non-AACSB-accredited institutions. Thirty-five (35) percent were from doctorate degree granting institutions, forty-nine (49) percent were from master's degree granting institutions and sixteen (16) percent were from baccalaureate degree granting institutions. Sixteen (16) percent were vice-presidents, twenty-five (25) percent were deans and fifty-nine (59) percent were chairs of departments.

Job Applicants. - The question was "Do you know of a case(s) where a job applicant's resume falsely claimed: (a) employment history?, (b) publications?, (c) degrees earned?"

Thirty-three (33) percent of the respondents knew of a case(s) where the job applicant's employment history was falsified; twenty-three (23) percent knew of falsely claimed publications; and thirty-two (32) percent knew of falsely

claimed degrees earned.

Cross-classification analysis reveals that:

1. at least 40 percent of vice-presidents and deans knew of falsified job applicant resumes; chairs of departments were much less knowledgeable;

2. administrators at AACSB and non-AACSB-accredited institutions were about equally knowledgeable of job applicant falsification of resumes. However, administrators at non-AACSB-accredited institutions were relatively more knowledgeable of false employment history claims of job applicants;

3. administrators at baccalaureate degree granting institutions were relatively more knowledgeable of falsified employment history of job applicants, but relatively less knowledgeable of falsified job applicant claims of publications and degrees earned. Only minor differences in knowledge of job applicant falsification existed among administrators at doctoral and master's degree granting institutions.

Faculty Members. - The question was "Do you know of a case where a faculty member falsely claimed: (a) employment history?, (b) publications?, (c) degrees earned?, (d) "presentation" of a paper?"

Sixteen (16) percent of the administrators knew of case(s) where a faculty member had falsely claimed employment history; twenty-one (21) percent knew of falsely claimed publications; twenty-three (23) percent knew of falsely claimed degrees earned; and sixteen (16) percent knew of falsely claimed "presentations" of papers.

Cross-classification analysis reveals that:

1. vice-presidents and deans were more knowledgeable of false claims by faculty members than were chairs of departments. Relatively more faculty members falsely claimed publications and degrees earned than "presentations" and employ-

ment history;

2. relatively more false claims by faculty members was reported

by AACSB-accredited Universities than non-accredited. False claims of publication was the primary abuse at AACSB-accredited Universities, but false claims of degrees earned was the primary abuse at non-AACSB-accredited Universities;

3. doctoral degree granting institutions reported false publications claims and false "presentation" claims as their leading abuses; master's degree granting institutions reported false degrees earned and false publications claimed as their leading abuses; and baccalaureate degree granting institutions reported false degrees earned and false employment history as their most serious abuses.

Disciplinary Action. - Thirteen (13) percent of the administrators who responded to the questionnaire reported that disciplinary action had been taken at their university against faculty members who had falsely claimed employment history; ten(10) percent reported disciplinary action for false publications; eighteen (18) percent reported disciplinary action for false degree claims; and only three (3) percent reported disciplinary action against false "presentations."

Cross-classification analysis reveals that:

1. vice-presidents were most knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against false claims of degrees earned; while deans and chairs were most familiar with action taken against false claims of employment history and degrees earned;

2. faculty at AACSB-accredited institutions were slightly more knowledgeable of disciplinary actions taken against false credentials than were faculty at non-AACSB-accredited institutions;

3. faculty at masters-degree granting institutions were most knowledgeable of disciplinary action taken against false credentials, while faculty at baccalaureate-degree granting institutions were

least knowledgeable.

Discussion

For three-quarters of a century university teachers have been concerned with ethical behavior within the profession. Members of the profession have adopted a set of idealized standards that guide them as they go about the process of earning and enjoying a living, and they have charged the institutions with which they work to deal with questions of misconduct on an individual basis in consultation with a faculty reference group.

During most of this 75 year period ethical misconduct within the profession has been almost nonexistent, or nonpublicized. The Academic profession has been highly respected for the intellectual honesty and integrity of its members; it has compared favorably with the clergy in terms of honesty, devotion to duty, and etc. Even the concept of professional accountability has been largely ignored in the past.

Today, however, the academic profession has been denigrated by a small number of very serious cases of scientific misconduct reported broadly in the general and academic media. Scientific misconduct has been classified by the American Association of Universities into four broad categories: falsification of data; plagiarism; abuse of confidentiality; and deliberate violation of regulations applicable to research (1984 Edition, p. 52). Olswang and Lee defined scientific misconduct as "falsification of true discovery, theft of others' discoveries, or the violation of accepted scientific procedures in making discoveries" (1984, p 52). The Chronicle of Higher Education published guidelines suggested by Wheeler calling for universities to "detect, investigate, and report possible scientific fraud" (1987, p. A4).

The purpose of this paper is not to inquire into the circumstance surrounding the scientific misconduct of a relatively few highly publicized cases in which there was "falsification of true discovery" or "theft of others' discoveries";

rather, this paper inquires into the mundane aspects of university ethics. Universities are engaged in a profound effort to build character and educate responsible citizens as they communicate knowledge. Hahn (1986, p. 47) believes that "when a college properly does its job in promoting learning, the inculcation of ethics should follow." It is the professor who is the model for this "inculcation of ethics." Only through the adherence to the principles of honesty and integrity in scholarly work can those in higher education convey higher values and ethical decision-making skills to students.

The relatively few high-visibility cases of scientific misconduct may be only a symptom of the real problem. This paper presents data which supports the contention that university faculties and administrators are no longer model "inculcators of ethics." Ethical misconduct has been found among those being recruited into the profession and even among those already employed within the profession. Knowledge of the existence of such unethical behavior makes it incumbent upon faculties and administrators to be more aggressive in fulfilling their responsibilities. These responsibilities now must include a thorough verification of credentials in the recruitment of new faculty; continually monitoring the professional growth of existing faculty; and taking those actions necessary to review and maintain strict adherence to the honesty and integrity of those in higher education. Why would members of the profession risk their reputation; why would they denigrate their profession; why would they abrogate standards of the profession? Answers to these questions may never be known but the authors of this paper call upon universities to detect, investigate, and report possible ethical misconduct of faculty as they (faculty) represent themselves to the university, their peers, and their students.

Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are: (1) unethical behavior has been perpetrated by faculty in colleges of business; (2) four kinds of falsification of credentials were reported; (3) college of

business faculty and administrators know that unethical behavior exists; and (4) universities have taken disciplinary action against faculty who practice unethical behavior. These conclusions are subject to the methodological limitation specified in the body of the paper.

Approximately forty (40) percent of the faculty respondents reported knowledge of unethical behavior perpetrated by either faculty or job applicants for faculty positions. Approximately sixty (60) percent of all vice-presidents, deans and departmental chairs reported knowledge of unethical behavior perpetrated by either faculty or job applicants for faculty positions.

Ethical misconduct of job applicants was reported most frequently, but a large percentage of faculty members knew of unethical behavior of employed faculty.

Knowledge of disciplinary action against ethical abuses was reported less frequently than was ethical misconduct, but the survey results indicate that some self-policing is in existence.

Recommendations

The authors of this research effort found a cooperative and responsive cohort group for data gathering. Ethical misconduct does exist within the profession, but there now seems to be willingness to acknowledge its existence. In a similar sense, then, perhaps the profession is ready to explore ways to minimize such misconduct. The authors invite others to join in the effort initiated by this paper to the end that the profession achieve a "purer" ethic.

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Table 1: Faculty Responses to Questions of Ethical Misconduct
Classified by Title of Professor, Accreditation Status
and Degrees Offered, in Numbers and Percents

	TALLY		TITLE			STATUS		HIGHEST DEGREE		
	YES	NO	PROF.	ASSOC.	ASST.	AACSB	NON-AACSB	PhD	MBA	BBA
Percent responding	N/A	N/A	33	35	32	63	37	35	52	13
Number responding	N/A	N/A	(85)	(90)	(81)	(161)	(96)	(90)	(134)	(34)
JOB APPLICANTS: FALSE										
1) Employment History (%)	14	86	12	19	10	12	16	8	19	12
(#)	(34)	(210)	(10)	(16)	(7)	(18)	(15)	(7)	(23)	(4)
2) Publications (%)	13	87	14	15	8	13	13	9	16	12
(#)	(32)	(211)	(11)	(13)	(6)	(20)	(12)	(8)	(20)	(4)
3) Degrees (%)	13	87	10	22	4	9	19	3	20	12
(#)	(32)	(211)	(8)	(19)	(3)	(14)	(17)	(3)	(25)	(4)
FACULTY MEMBERS: FALSE										
1) Employment History (%)	9	91	7	13	4	8	11	2	14	9
(#)	(22)	(222)	(6)	(11)	(3)	(12)	(10)	(2)	(17)	(3)
2) Publications (%)	12	88	12	14	10	14	10	9	16	9
(#)	(30)	(214)	(10)	(12)	(7)	(21)	(9)	(8)	(19)	(3)
3) Degrees (%)	11	89	9	20	1	9	13	4	16	9
(#)	(26)	(217)	(7)	(17)	(1)	(14)	(12)	(3)	(19)	(4)
4) Presentations (%)	9	91	9	12	3	7	12	2	11	15
(#)	(21)	(225)	(7)	(10)	(2)	(10)	(11)	(2)	(14)	(5)
DISCIPLINARY ACTION:										
1) Employment History (%)	5	95	6	8	2	3	7	3	5	11
(#)	(10)	(194)	(4)	(4)	(1)	(4)	(6)	(2)	(5)	(3)
2) Publications (%)	4	96	6	4	2	6	1	4	5	0
(#)	(8)	(196)	(4)	(3)	(1)	(7)	(1)	(3)	(5)	(0)
3) Degrees (%)	5	95	6	11	0	4	7	2	6	11
(#)	(11)	(193)	(4)	(7)	(0)	(5)	(6)	(1)	(7)	(3)
4) Presentations (%)	1	99	1	1	2	2	1	0	2	4
(#)	(3)	(199)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(0)	(2)	(1)

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Table 2: Administrator Responses to Questions of Ethical Misconduct Classified by Title of Administrator, Accreditation Status and Degrees Offered, in Numbers and Percents

	<u>TALLY</u>		<u>ADMINISTRATORS</u>			<u>STATUS</u>		<u>HIGHEST DEGREE</u>		
	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>V.P.</u>	<u>DEAN</u>	<u>CHAIR</u>	<u>AACSB</u>	<u>NON-AACSB</u>	<u>PhD.</u>	<u>MBA</u>	<u>BBA</u>
Percent responding	N/A	N/A	16	25	59	60	40	35	49	16
Number responding	N/A	N/A	(15)	(24)	(57)	(60)	(39)	(35)	(48)	(16)
JOB APPLICANTS: FALSE										
1) Employment History (%)	33	67	40	42	25	27	38	29	29	44
(#)	(31)	(63)	(6)	(10)	(14)	(16)	(15)	(10)	(14)	(7)
2) Publications (%)	23	77	40	42	11	22	23	26	21	19
(#)	(22)	(72)	(6)	(10)	(6)	(13)	(9)	(9)	(10)	(3)
3) Degrees (%)	32	68	40	46	21	30	31	29	35	19
(#)	(30)	(64)	(6)	(11)	(12)	(18)	(12)	(10)	(17)	(3)
FACULTY MEMBERS: FALSE										
1) Employment History (%)	16	84	13	21	12	15	15	11	17	19
(#)	(15)	(79)	(2)	(5)	(7)	(9)	(6)	(4)	(8)	(3)
2) Publications (%)	21	79	33	21	18	25	13	23	21	13
(#)	(20)	(75)	(5)	(5)	(10)	(15)	(5)	(8)	(10)	(2)
3) Degrees (%)	23	77	33	29	14	20	23	17	25	19
(#)	(21)	(72)	(5)	(7)	(8)	(12)	(9)	(6)	(12)	(3)
4) Presentations (%)	16	84	13	21	14	20	8	26	10	6
(#)	(15)	(78)	(2)	(5)	(8)	(12)	(3)	(9)	(5)	(1)
DISCIPLINARY ACTION:										
1) Employment History (%)	13	87	7	17	11	13	8	6	17	6
(#)	(11)	(71)	(1)	(4)	(6)	(8)	(3)	(2)	(8)	(1)
2) Publications (%)	10	90	13	12	4	10	5	9	10	0
(#)	(8)	(74)	(2)	(3)	(2)	(6)	(2)	(3)	(5)	(0)
3) Degrees (%)	18	82	20	17	12	15	15	11	21	6
(#)	(15)	(68)	(3)	(4)	(7)	(9)	(6)	(4)	(10)	(1)
4) Presentations (%)	3	97	7	4	0	2	3	6	0	0
(#)	(2)	(76)	(1)	(1)	(0)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(0)	(0)

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