

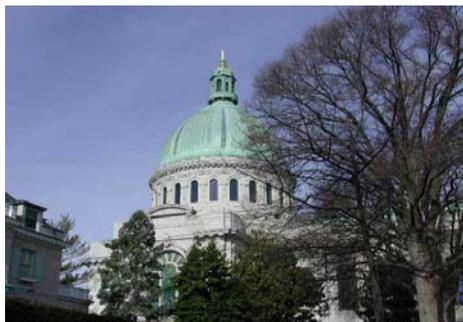


## What We Can Learn from the Corporate Ethics Scandals of the Past Couple of Years, Presentation at CAI Annual Meeting

By Dr. Albert Pierce, Director, Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics, United States Naval Academy

The theme of my presentation was broader than the principal focus of the conference, but it is relevant, I think, not only to the conference but to the work of CAI more broadly.

My premise was two-fold – that most of us spend our lives in organizations of various kinds, and that organizations put people under pressures that affect their behavior for better or for worse. The question I zeroed in on was, why do good people sometimes do bad things? I then identified five possible answers to that question, all of which have something to do with how organizations operate.



Naval Academy Chapel

A first possible answer to the question is what I call *the single measure of merit*. An organization starts out by saying,

*“This is important,”* identifying a goal that is relevant and central to the organization. It then, however, goes on to start acting as if *this* is the *only* thing that is important, and further that nothing else matters as long as *this* gets accomplished.

In the corporate world, for example, share value at the end of the quarter is important: corporate officers and board members have a fiduciary responsibility to the shareholders, so share value at the end of the quarter *is* a good thing. But if the company starts to act as if share value is the *only* thing that matters, and further that it doesn’t matter what you do to the books as long as you arrive at good share value at the end of the quarter, then good people may start doing bad things. They do so, in many cases, not out of personal venality – to get rich themselves – but rather because doing so will, supposedly, help the larger organization.

Avoiding this phenomenon requires that the organization’s leaders open up their lenses to a variety of constituencies and goods, and that they not place too much investment in any one measure of merit.

A second possible answer to the question is *perceived tolerances from above*. Employees or members of an organization not only listen to what the leaders *say*, but also watch what they *do*. They notice what leaders reward and what they punish, what they pay attention to and what they ignore, what they zero in on and what they avert their eyes from or turn their backs on. If and when employees detect a significant difference between what is written in the code of conduct or values statement, and how the organization’s leaders actually operate, then they will act according to what they perceive the organization practices and not according to what it preaches. And that may lead good people to do bad things, because they may think that that is what the leadership actually wants, expects them to do.

(Continued on page 2)

## December 2003 POLL QUESTION

**Should academic integrity infractions be handled under one student code of conduct?**

Choose one of the following:

- Yes, academic integrity infractions should be handled under one student code of conduct.**
- No, there should be separate codes of conduct for academic v. non-academic offenses.**

[Click Here To Cast Your Vote!](#)



## Results from October 2003 Poll

**Do CAI Members feel that students who sell research papers to online “paper mills” should be in violation of academic integrity standards?**

**80%** of respondents chose a. Yes, students are in violation of academic integrity standards

**20%** of respondents chose b. No, students are not in violation of academic integrity standards

**What We Can Learn from the Corporate Ethics Scandals of the Past Couple of Years, Presentation at Annual CAI Meeting,  
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The burden – and the blame – here are on the leadership, for it is those at the top who set the tone for the entire organization. Employees and members take their cues and clues from the leadership; they don't create them out of thin air.

A third possible answer to the question is what I call *the clash between the schoolhouse and the real world*. This is a recurring phenomenon in all sorts of organizations, illustrated well by what rookie police officers are often told, "I don't care what they taught you in the academy, here's how we do things in this precinct." Similar messages are sometimes sent to – and received by – new MBAs joining a corporation or new military officers joining an operational unit. What makes this phenomenon so effective is that new members, arriving bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, want to be part of the team, want to be in the club, want to be and to be seen as full-fledged members.

What is most insidious about this phenomenon, though, is that it is perpetrated on the least powerful members of an organization by those with considerably more power and influence. The legendary Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives in the 1950s, Sam Rayburn, is reported to have told newly elected members, "The best way to get along is to go along." That attitude and that message did not die with Mr. Sam, nor are they confined to Congress.

“ An organization starts out by saying, “**This is important**,” identifying a goal that is relevant and central to the organization. It then, however, goes on to start acting as if **this is the only thing that is important**, and further, that nothing else matters as long as **this** gets accomplished.

- Dr. Albert Pierce  
Director, Center for the Study of  
Professional Military Ethics

A fourth possible answer to the question is what often happens when trouble erupts in an organization -- *the tension between integrity and loyalty*. In an excellent book on law enforcement ethics by John Kleinig, I came across a quotation from an unnamed former senior law enforcement official in New York City, but the point is by no means unique to law enforcement. "When your organization wants you to do what is right, it asks for your integrity, but when it wants you to do something wrong, it asks for your loyalty." To be sure, loyalty is a good thing, but like all good things it can be perverted.

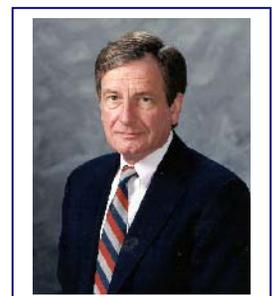
When an internal problem becomes a public controversy, this phenomenon often kicks in. This is the "draw the wagons in a circle" syndrome, the notion (hope?) that if we all just clam up, this, too, shall pass and we can ride it out. That sometimes means doing something other than telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Here, too, the individual member is often motivated not by personal gain, but by a sense of what is best for this organization she has come to admire and value.

A fifth possible answer to the question is a *too narrow reliance on the letter of the law as the sole arbiter of right and wrong*. As with loyalty, obeying the law (or the rules and regulations) is a good thing, but this good can be perverted into "if it isn't illegal, it must be OK." The law generally is a fine guide to right and wrong, but the law sometimes doesn't exhaust moral wisdom.

This was the argument of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Obeying the law, especially in a good, liberal, democratic society, is – and should be – the default position. But there can be those times when moral imperatives require us to go beyond, or even violate, the letter of the law. Those are lonely, dangerous moments. Recognizing those moments, and acting appropriately, require moral judgment and moral courage, but organizations tend to emphasize the law, the rules, the regulations as the guides to daily life and activity in the organization, which militates against taking moral initiative when it is called for.

I conclude with the obvious and true observation that not everything about life in organizations militates against "doing the right thing," but it is well for all members of organizations – which means all of us – to recognize those aspects of life in organizations that can pull, prod, push, drive, or even force good people to do bad things.

In 1998 Dr. Pierce was appointed as the first ever Director for the Study of Professional Military Ethics at the U.S. Naval Academy. Dr. Pierce is a graduate of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. with a major in politics, and he holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. in political science from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. His numerous publications include "Just War Principles and Economic Sanctions," *Ethics & International Affairs*, Volume 10, 1996" and *Crisis Management in the White House and the Pentagon*," in Preston Niblack, editor, *Managing Military Operations in Crises* (RAND, 1991).



For more information on the Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics, please contact Dr. Albert Pierce, at [apierce@gwmail.usna.edu](mailto:apierce@gwmail.usna.edu) or visit their website at <http://www.usna.edu/Ethics/>.

## Cheating

By Lauren Andres, Stacey Moore, John Jowers, Christi Kern, Zabrina Andres, and Briana Monahan, University of Maryland Honor Council

Crunch time, game time, time to panic, or just finals: by any description the exams at the end of each semester strike fear into the psyches of college kids everywhere. It's the time of year when frappuccino consumption rivals oxygen intake, librarians become family, and highlighter stains are the new nail polish. Our once erratic sleeping patterns fail to exist altogether, and any bizarre behavior is explained by the phrase "It's finals."

It's also a good time to talk about cheating. Contrary to popular belief, cheating is not a victimless crime. Hiding a crib sheet or peeking at someone else's paper may seem to only affect the perpetrator, but this is a false idea. The aftershocks of academic dishonesty don't register on the Richter scale, but they are felt by a community far greater than one.



Other students in the course are the first victims. Cheating taints the quality of the curriculum and a semester's worth of work for everyone who participated. If there is a curve, our classmates become collateral damage as soon as it is drawn to include dishonest numbers. We trust each other to ask for help instead of taking it, to have equal academic opportunities, and cheating severs that trust. It just isn't *fair* to work hard and earn a B while a cheater scams an A. Cheating is something people tend to take personally, and it insults everyone else in the room, including professors and teaching assistants.

Those who are not enrolled in a particular class also suffer. In the spring of 2003 the University of Maryland's business school processed a dozen cases of cheating involving cell phones, and public outcry was nearly unprecedented. Students across campus were furious at the poor judgment and lack of integrity shown by their peers.

Cheaters depreciate the value of degrees hanging over the mantels of alumni, and any employer who catches a subordinate cutting corners can assume everyone of their ilk behaves the same way. Innocent job applicants sharing nothing but a college can be turned away because of someone they've never met.

And cheating is not only academic. The practice is habitual, and tends to seep into other aspects of life. Every year people cheat on their girlfriends, their income taxes, their car inspections... and it probably isn't the first thing they've cheated on.

Good luck with finals everyone, hang in there.



**2004 CAI  
Conference  
October 08-10  
Kansas State  
University!!!**

### Kansas State Welcome

By Brent Depperschmidt, Honor Council Chair,  
Kansas State University

Kansas State University is pleased to invite you to the 2004 International CAI Conference. As the oldest land grant university under the Morrill Act, Kansas State opened its doors in 1863. The 664-acre campus in Manhattan, Kansas is 125 miles west of Kansas City in the rolling Flint Hills of northeast Kansas. Kansas State has a rich history and tradition with academic success as K-State is the first in the nation among state-supported schools in Rhodes, Truman, Marshall and Goldwater scholarships.

K-State is a comprehensive university and a major center of teaching, research and service with an enrollment of nearly 23,000 students in its nine colleges: Agriculture; Architecture, Planning and Design; Arts and Sciences; Business Administration; Education; Engineering; Human Ecology; Veterinary Medicine; and Technology (located in Salina).

The university hosts a wide variety of cultural and entertainment activities for students, community and visitors, including NCAA Division I Athletics in the Big XII Conference, Broadway productions, concerts, lectures and exhibits.

We look forward to sharing a part of our academic tradition with you next year.



## Letter from the President

December 15, 2003

Like many of you, I've just finished giving exams, and also like many of you, I wish elves would appear in the night to grade them.

When the academic pressure is on, as it is at the end of a term, students often feel desperate and perhaps inclined to take shortcuts they wouldn't consider without the pressure. At this time of year, as in the late spring, they've typically produced final papers and face stiff examinations in courses. Unfortunately, incidences of plagiarism and cheating increase.

My institution is in the fourth year after implementation of an honor system that articulates our institutional values and provides the structure for supporting those values. That hasn't, to my way of thinking, done anything about the *pressures* faced by college students that may cause them to cheat. Nor can it. But it has raised awareness of these problems and their consequences, and it has provided me with a powerful tool to help students understand their quandary and face it head on. I spend considerable time discussing integrity with my students: regarding the honor system itself, regarding professional ethics in English studies, and framing assignments that challenge them on the subject of honor in various ways.

A few weeks ago, two students knocked on the door of my home. This is not so strange at a small liberal arts college, as those of you at similar institutions (and others!) will attest. One student was someone I knew well, and the other someone I had never met. They came with a problem regarding acceptable collaboration on a final project in a course in a different department than mine. The particulars are not important here.

Nor is the outcome, really, although the students worked out a satisfactory compromise with the professor that worked to everyone's benefit.

What is important is the climate of trust and shared goals that students expect to encounter when they approach members of the academic community for clarification and help. The evening spent with these students accomplished a number of things, but nothing more important than their leaving with the certain knowledge that we were after the same result—solving their problem without a breach of integrity. Standing in the door watching them head back to their dorms, I thought about how few times in my decades of teaching before the implementation of an honor system students have come to me with a problem *before* they made an unethical choice. Almost never, I can tell you.

Experiences like that make the piles of exams just a little less burdensome to tackle. I'm convinced that most students want to live with integrity, and they want our example and support. I'm not expecting the elves, but even if they come, I'm pretty sure all this high-mindedness means I have to grade these things myself.

Have a joyous holiday season—



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Have you looked at the CAI website lately? Some of the new things added to the website include:

- ❑ Sample Integrity Weeks – How to Get Started Page
- ❑ What Are High School Students Like – How to Get Started at the K-12 Level
- ❑ Pennsylvania Department of Education Brochure -
- ❑ Stanford University Posters and Brochures – How to Get Started Page

## WELCOME!

The Center would like to extend a special welcome to our newest CAI members. We hope that you have a long and fruitful relationship with us.

- Ashland University
- University of Cincinnati
- Central Piedmont Community College
- Westmont College
- Oklahoma State University
- Azusa Pacific University
- St. Xavier High School
- Victoria University of Technology
- Rhodes College
- San Jose State University
- University of Victoria
- Texas Christian University
- Tennessee State University
- Johnson C. Smith University
- Phi Kappa Phi
- Pellissippi State Technical Community College
- Simon Fraser University
- La Salle University
- Eastern Kentucky University
- Merrimack College