1. The group began by responding to Helena Dettmer’s question about renaming the General Education (GE) Program, with Iowa Core or UI Core or CLAS Core under consideration since “core” suggests the heart or essence of something. While the GE Program is about providing a breadth and understanding of perspectives and methodologies, “General Education” as a name does little to discourage students and staff from framing GE requirements as “something to get out of the way.” Most large universities call these courses “core requirements,” “breadth requirements,” “distribution requirements,” or “general education” requirements. Small liberal arts colleges often use a name related directly to the school, which is possible because of the more unified mission of the institution.

During the discussion, participants agreed that it might be hard to stop students from seeing GE requirements as an obstacle since it can be the tendency to see any requirement this way, no matter the name. They also agreed that the use of Iowa or UI Core could be confusing since “Iowa Core” is the name of the Iowa statewide K-12 educational standards. Additionally, there was some concern that use of the word “core” might connote state mandates; some departments also have “core” requirements for the major which might add to the confusion. Clarifying the title as “CLAS Core Curriculum” might be a solution. Others suggested using “foundation” or “bridge” in the title. The name of the program should be clear so that potential students can identify and understand these requirements before choosing UI as a school. The group also recommended continual revitalization of the GE program.

[See http://www.corestandards.org/ for information on the “Common Core” or https://iowacore.gov/ for information on the Iowa Core.]

2. Helena Dettmer updated the group on the academic misconduct trends from last spring and the resulting expulsions. Students have found sophisticated ways to cheat, often involving technology and/or hiring someone to take a test or to complete other work for the student. The discussion then focused how to respond to this trend. For example, would allowing an instructor to fail a student for an entire course act as a deterrent? Currently instructors may fail a student who has cheated but are asked to first consult with the College. Most members agreed that the current system is working well, with the instructor giving the first-level sanction, a reduced or failing grade for the related assignment (or allowing a revision, for example). The College asks that all cases be reported so any patterns of misconduct by a student may be acted on. The College also applies the second level of sanction, with a first offense resulting in the student completing the Academic Integrity Seminar ($100 and 18-20 hours) before the hold on the student’s registration is lifted. Students who do not complete the AIS by the deadline must meet with the Director to discuss misconduct. Other students meet with the Director to discuss AIS answers. The process is time-consuming for students but is a kind of “pay back” for the instructor’s energy spent on reporting the incident, with the student’s awareness raised about academic integrity and its importance.
The group suggested that encouraging all instructors to ask the students to sign an honor’s pledge before an exam or before submitting a paper might also help students to stop and think about their actions and values. When an institution does this, with the integrity message stressed right before an exam or before a paper is written, there can be a significant drop in cheating, according to research done on the topic.

The conversation also turned to how to encourage all instructors to report fraud. It can be time-consuming, even though the online reporting form is helpful. Still, instructors must upload the “proof” using the misconduct and must email the student, meeting with the student whenever possible to discuss academic integrity. This takes time.

Still, if instructors do not do this, it can damage the reputation of a class and of a teacher, casting doubt on the fairness of grading if some students are known to be cheating and are not stopped. Students who cheat thus are passed along to another instructor. If everyone participates and reports misconduct, students might quickly learn cheating is not feasible.

Additionally, instructors should try to follow best practices for reducing fraud; this too takes time but may save time later since there can be fewer complaints and/or academic misconduct cases. At the bottom of this page are best practices suggested by faculty that appear on the CLAS web site: https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies

Suggested Best Practices to Stop Academic Misconduct

Students who see others cheat often rationalize that they have to cheat too in order to “level the playing field.” This can be true especially in larger classes that use a curve.

- It is best to stop cheating before it starts.
- Please remind students that your strict rules are there to protect all students and to assure students that the testing situation is fair.

Below are some best practices recommended by the CLAS faculty; if you have other ideas send them to me and we will add them to this list. We appreciate your help and your ideas and we are counting on them. Thank you.

- Create multiple forms of one exam; some instructors use up to five different formats. Use different questions or the same questions scrambled. Ask Exam and Evaluation Services for help with this project, if needed.
- Warn students that the exams differ and that misconduct will be apparent when the exam is graded.
- Plan to use assigned seating so friends do not sit together. This can be done formally in larger lecture rooms by creating labels with corresponding seat numbers from the room and by placing a label on each exam, handing out the exams randomly. (For smaller classes, this can be done informally by directing students to one side of the room or the other.)
- Tell students about the CLAS Code of Academic Honesty and remind them about the importance of academic integrity and the consequences of misconduct.
- Include a pledge on your exam that the students sign. Here is a sample statement: “I do my own work and I do not cheat. I understand that cheating hurts other students and that it diminishes my own learning.”
- Turnitin for any written work, including take-home exams (available as a feature on the ICON dropbox) and tell students how Turnitin works. For information on using this feature of the dropbox, visit this page.
• Check student IDs when collecting the exam and answer sheets since students at times try to take the test for another student.
• Make sure to give each student only one scantron form and that at the end of the exam only one is submitted.
• Require students to sit in alternate rows, if possible, with each row receiving different versions of the exam.
• Make sure all backpacks are closed and that laptops, phones, books, notebooks, papers, or other informational sources are left in the backpack under the desk or in the front of the room. This removes the temptation of looking at a cell phone. Tell students that if their phones or other device are visible, this will be counted as cheating. Many instructors also forbid translators, a policy which the College endorses since students should know or learn the vocabulary used in your class (unless related SDS accommodations apply).
• Announce that students must remain in the room until they turn in their examinations. Permission to leave the room is granted by the instructor only in emergencies.
• Proctor the exam by walking up and down the rows; the room should never be left unattended. Each proctor should oversee no more than 50-75 students.
• Stop cheating as soon as it is seen; move the student to a new location, noting the student’s name and where the student was in the exam when the misconduct occurred. When the exam is graded, review this exam carefully.
• Collect all copies of the exam when students are done, thus assuring exams are not posted online by a student at a site such as Clusterflunk.
• Use different exams if students take the exam on different days or at different times.

Be sure to report academic misconduct by using the online reporting form. The College tracks students who commit academic misconduct, even if the student moves to another UI undergraduate college.