

**Pasadena City College  
Academic Senate Faculty Survey**

**REPORT  
on  
STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICATION**

**MARCH 2010**

**Background**

In the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 4137), signed into law in August of 2008, the federal government called for increased accountability regarding accreditation standards and student achievement. The Act states that the U.S. Department of Education may not “require an accreditor to have separate standards, procedures or policies for evaluation of distance education. Accreditors must, however, require institutions that offer distance education to establish that a student registered for a distance education course is the same student who completes and receives credit for it.” (ACE Analysis of Higher Education Act Reauthorization)

In September of 2008, Dr. Barbara Beno, President of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (WASC) sent a letter to member institutions regarding the need for those institutions to begin evaluating what can be done to assure student authentication and academic integrity in distance education classes. Specifically, the Accrediting Commission wished to know what strategies member institutions, including Pasadena City College, currently use to authenticate students enrolled in distance education courses. With the Beno letter as a catalyst, Vice-President of Instruction Dr. Jacqueline Jacobs met with Sandra C. Haynes, Chair of the Distance Education Committee, and requested that the Committee look at the issues of student academic integrity and authentication that are currently in place at PCC for distance education classes. The Distance Education Committee, a Standing Committee of the Academic Senate, felt that a survey looking at these issues would be most useful if *all* PCC faculty, full-time as well as adjunct, AND including all teaching and learning classrooms, (both face-to-face, and distance education courses) participated.

The survey questions concentrated on some specific institution-wide concerns in relation to student academic integrity and authentication. What authentication strategies in curriculum and instruction were already being utilized by faculty? How were faculty and students informed about and provided with information regarding academic integrity and student authentication? What was the level of institutional commitment addressing the concerns?

Work on the Academic Senate *Faculty Survey on Student Academic Integrity and Authentication* began in the fall of 2008. Expertise in constructing the survey questions came from Sandra C. Haynes, with valuable input from the DE Committee, along with Dr. Frances Wu-Barone, Senior Research and Planning Analyst in the Office of Institutional Planning and Research. The WCET (Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications – A cooperative network of member institutions and organizations that provides a leading source of critical thinking and expertise on the evolving role of technology in higher education) *Survey on Academic Integrity and Student Verification in Online Learning* was used as a resource. The survey consisted of eighteen questions in four sections.

**Section I:** Faculty Information

**Section II:** Policies

**Section III:** Instructional Design

**Section IV:** Authentication/Verification of Student Identification

*The survey was distributed in paper form to over 1300 faculty in April of 2009. Three hundred and thirty-eight surveys were returned, a return rate of 25%. Of those, 40.2% were returned from full-time faculty and 59.8 % from adjunct faculty. Analysis of the survey results was undertaken by Sandra C. Haynes and Crystal Kollross, Interim Dean, Institutional Planning and Research. The following is a summary analysis of the survey results.*

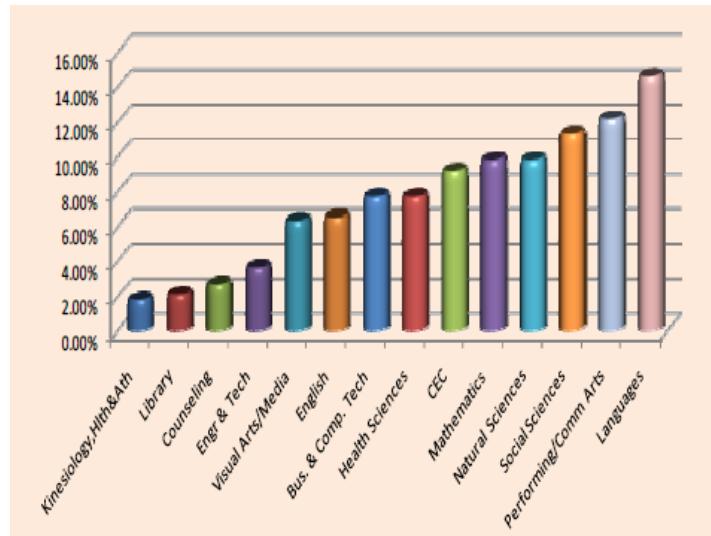
## Summary Analysis

The first three questions on the survey dealt with demographic information of respondents. Since the survey was sent out to all current faculty members, regardless of status, the return ratio of 40/60 full time faculty to part time faculty is a relatively accurate reflection of the college's faculty composition.

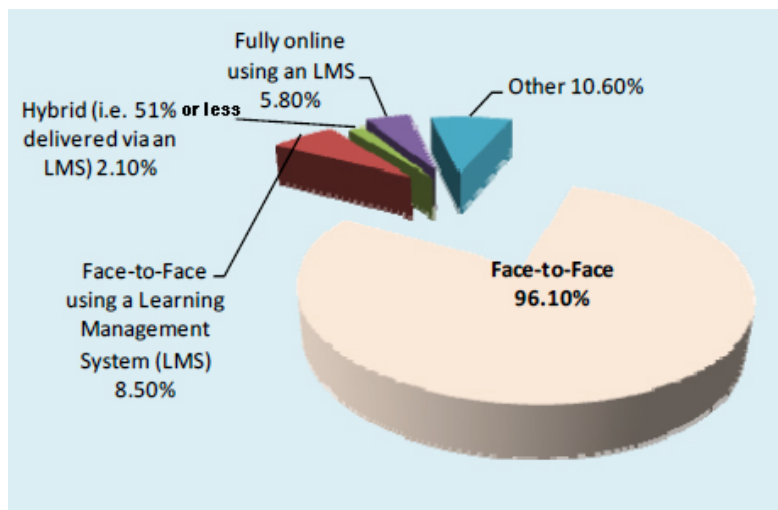
All of the college's fourteen instructional areas were represented in the survey, with the highest representation from the Languages Division. There seems to be a slight over-representation of faculty from the CEC at 9% and an under-representation from the English Division at 6.5%. See Figure 1.

The next several questions dealt with instructional modalities. The first question in this series was designed to elicit the most common modes of instruction on campus. At 96.1%, face-to-face teaching of courses dominates instruction at PCC. See Figure 2. The respondents were then asked to indicate which, if any, types of Learning Management Systems (LMS) they used. Thirty-one percent of faculty responded that they have used Blackboard/WebCT, the in-house PCC LMS, or a version of it. On the other hand, 64% of the faculty indicated that they have had no exposure to any LMS. There was minimal use of the other LMS systems listed. Three percent of faculty had used Moodle while only eight percent of faculty had used one of a variety of publisher-supported LMS systems such as Course Compass, Page Out, Sanako, Comp Class, Simnet, and WebBoard to name a few.

**Figure 1:** Respondents by Division



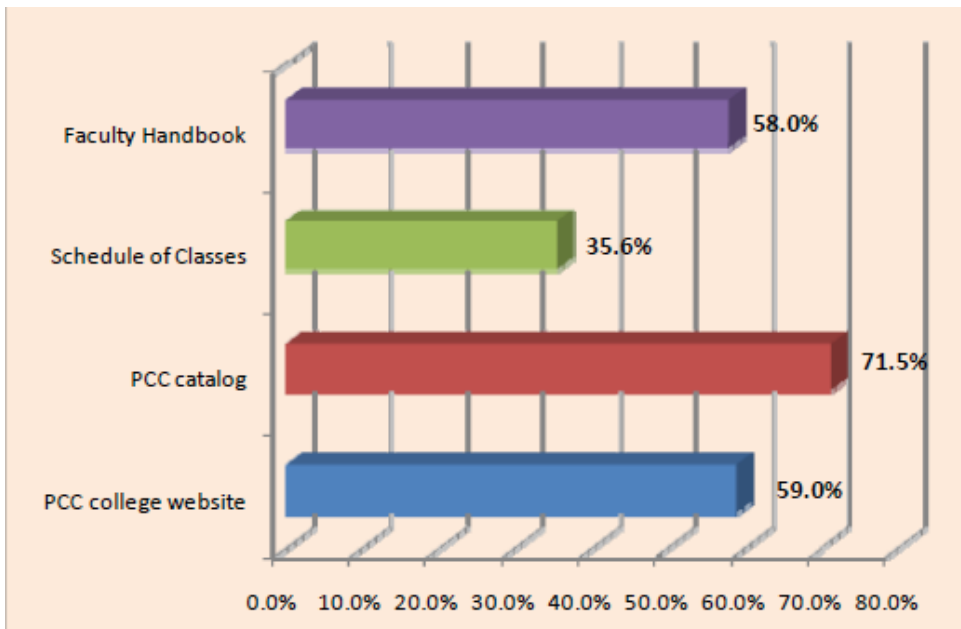
**Figure 2:** Types of Instructional Modalities



Section II of the survey asked faculty about their familiarity with the College's policies and procedures on academic honesty and integrity. The first question in this section was meant to establish the extent of faculty awareness of the definition of academic integrity. Eighty-two percent of the respondents indicated they were familiar with the stated definition and 74% indicated that they knew the college's policy on student conduct and academic honesty. The college does have an official policy and procedures on Student Conduct and Academic Honesty – Policy number 4520. [http://www.pasadena.edu/ipro/policies/pcc\\_4520.pdf](http://www.pasadena.edu/ipro/policies/pcc_4520.pdf). The policy on

Student Conduct and Academic Honesty (Policy 4520) can be found on the College's website, although it is not easy to find. Seventy-two percent of respondents indicated it could be found in the College Catalog, which is also correct. Where it cannot be found is in the PCC Schedule of Classes or the current Faculty Handbook. See Figure 3. Communication of the policy to students is also important. Fifty-six percent of faculty indicated that they put the policy on their syllabus. In order to validate that data, a random sample of Spring 2009 syllabi from five different academic divisions was reviewed for a policy statement. That review found that over 70% of the syllabi in four of the five highest responding divisions did have a policy statement regarding student conduct and academic honesty.

**Figure 3:** Where is the Policy on Student Conduct and Academic Honesty found?

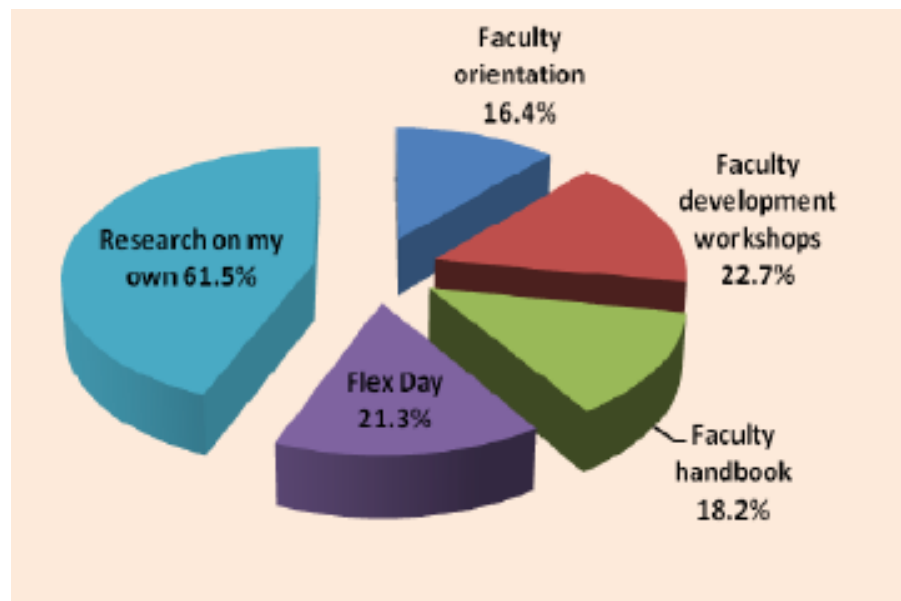


Section III of the survey was designed to elicit information on which classroom strategies faculty thought were effective in promoting academic integrity. Using a scale of 1 through 5, with 5 being the most effective, faculty were asked to rate sixteen different strategies on their effectiveness. The two strategies that were used the least were student portfolios and high-rigor open book exams. The two strategies faculty felt were the most effective were proctored exams and assignments that required written work from the student. Although proctored exams had the highest effectiveness rating at 34%, survey respondents also indicated that 32% don't use the strategy.

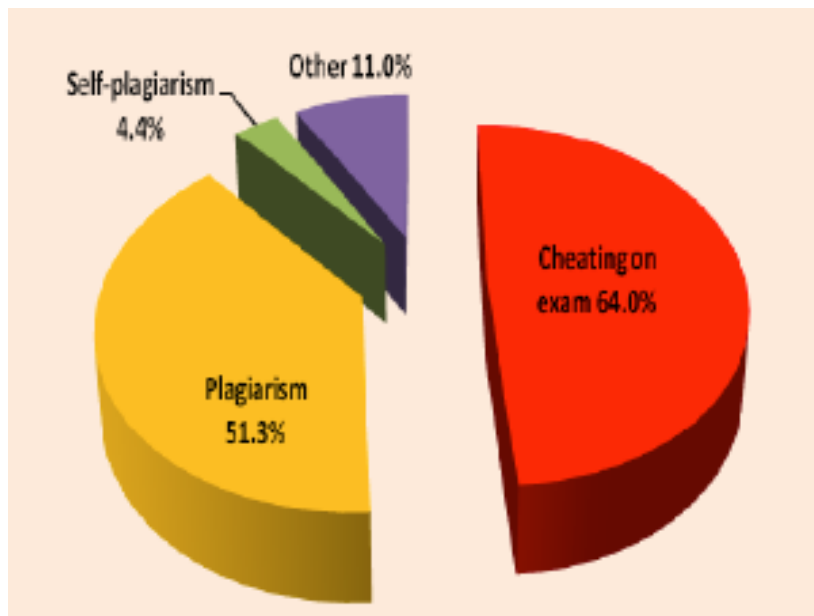
Six other strategies were also included in the survey for faculty who teach distance education courses. None of the six listed were used by a majority of the respondents. As matter of fact, a majority said the didn't use any of these strategies, which included the plagiarism detection tool Turnitin.com, which is available for use by all PCC instructors and is linked from the PCC website. The only strategy used by 40% of respondents was "challenge questions." Equally of concern is the highest response to the question about how faculty learned about academic integrity strategies. Over 60% responded "Research on my own". See Figure 4. This figure would suggest that the college has not done enough to provide faculty with the skills, information, and training to implement academic integrity strategies.

**Figure 4:** How Faculty Learned about Strategies Promoting Academic Integrity

Plagiarism detection tools can also be an important strategy used by faculty to ensure academic integrity. Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents said they employed no plagiarism detection tools in the past two years. Only 19% have used the plagiarism detection tool *Turnitin.com* subscribed to and supported by the College. Furthermore, 79% of respondents indicated that they witnessed a student violation of the academic integrity policy ten or more times in the past two years. See Figure 5.



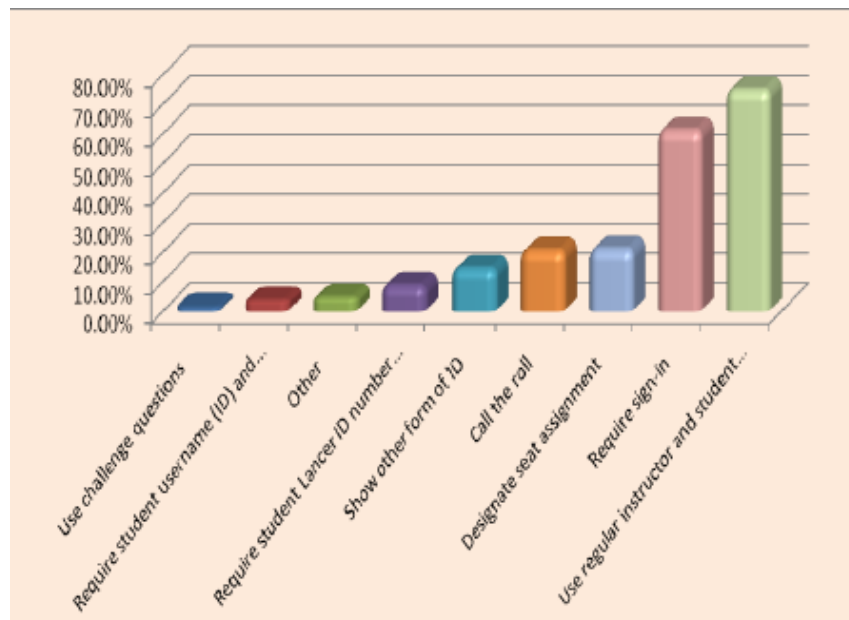
**Figure 5:** Types of Academic Misconduct Witnessed by Faculty



It was also evident that faculty take violations such as cheating on exams seriously. A majority of the faculty indicated that they would take some action in the event of student misconduct, with only 7% saying they would let it slide. In fact, 65% of faculty indicated that they would fail a student on a specific task or assessment if they violated the academic integrity policy. A majority of the faculty (88%) said they would speak to the student directly. Twenty-eight percent said they would consult with the Division Dean for a course of action and 11% said they would file a Student Misconduct Report with the Vice President of Student and Learning Services.

Section IV of the survey dealt with authentication and verification of student identity. Although authentication and verification are considerations in face-to-face course modalities, it has become an increasingly significant issue in online and hybrid courses, particularly in regard to the Higher Education Reauthorization Act which requires institutions that offer distance education courses to establish that the student who registered for the course is the same student who completes the work and receives course credit. Faculty were asked to indicate what strategies they used to authenticate student identity, whether in face-to-face classes or the online environment. In particular, they were asked to address how effective they felt two specific types of student authentication/verification strategies would be in any class modality. Biometrics (the automatic identification of living individuals by using their physiological and behavioral characteristics) was the strategy considered to be the most effective yet has been used by less than 1% of respondents; at this time, PCC does not have the resources in place to support biometric identification. The strategy used the most by faculty to ensure student authentication/verification in an assessment setting was regular effective instructor-and-student contact/interaction (75%), followed by sign-in sheets (61%). After these two strategies, there was a considerable drop in the other strategies that were employed. See Figure 6.

**Figure 6:** Strategies used in an Assessment Setting to Authenticate Students



## Action Implications

- ✓ Academic Integrity and Student Verification are important issues for both face-to-face and online courses. With the increasing use of the Internet for communication and research, there is increasing campus-wide concern about issues of academic integrity. The Institution should continue to enforce the policies that are in place, which articulate both faculty and student responsibilities, and support faculty and staff in the handling of academic integrity matters.
- ✓ According to the *Academic Senate Faculty Survey*, 77% of faculty have not used a plagiarism detection tool in the past two years. The college pays for faculty access to Turnitin.com, one of the most highly regarded plagiarism detection tools available. The survey results in this regard provide an impetus for professional development and faculty workshops, for instructors who might benefit from knowledge about the potential of the tool as an “originality checker and plagiarism preventer.”
- ✓ Considering the importance of student conduct and academic integrity, the college should make the information on academic integrity more widely available in both print and electronic form.
- ✓ Encouraging the use of a LMS may increase communication with students and reduce cheating, by using the various assessment settings, rubrics, password protected exams, timed assessments, and a variety of additional testing strategies. An LMS can also help address issues of faculty and student interaction, especially if tools such as email, instant messaging and chat rooms are actively employed to communicate. On the *Fall 2008 PCC Student Survey*, interaction with faculty outside of class had the third lowest satisfaction rating out of seven items with regard to the student’s instructional experience at PCC.
- ✓ Faculty use of Learning Management Systems other than that supported by the college may not support student verification or the privacy and security measures mandated by FERPA, The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) which is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/students.html>.
- ✓ Share the Shatford Library resources and materials on plagiarism and research techniques with students.

Although this survey does not answer all the questions the College needs to address regarding student authentication and verification, it does provide valuable insight into the current awareness of faculty on this issue. By concentrating on specific campus-wide concerns in relation to student academic integrity, in both face-to-face and distance education courses, this survey gathered information from a wide swath of teaching faculty regardless of instructional modality. The survey illuminates potential and real problems that need to be addressed by faculty and the College as PCC looks to expand distance education courses and deal with issues of academic integrity in all classroom settings. The College needs to articulate and support policies and procedures to promote academic integrity and student verification in the 21st century classroom.

Sandra C. Haynes, Chair, Distance Education Committee  
Crystal A. Kollross, Interim Dean, Institutional Planning and Research

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