

# Conference scrutinizes academic integrity

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Approximately 30 Auburn faculty members spent their sunny Tuesday afternoon cooped up indoors; but, for good reason. The group spent an hour and a half at the "Preventing Academic Dishonesty; the All Academic Honesty Code" seminar to learn strategies to fight cheating in the classroom.

The featured speakers of the seminar were Sharon Gaber and Charlotte Sutton. Gaber is the associate provost of academic affairs and Sutton is the chairwoman of the Academic Honesty Committee.

"The reality is the academic integrity of this University is at stake," Gaber said. "It's an important issue."

Between the spring and fall of 2006, 128 students were turned in for cheating. Gaber and Sutton pointed out tips that help discourage academic dishonesty in school.

They suggested using different versions of tests, remaking tests each semester and calling doctors' offices to check on medical excuses.

"We need to be diligent," Sutton said.

Sutton also recommended locking up tests, not just in offices, but in file cabinets. She also suggested professors walk around during exams and have students use the restroom before class so they don't leave in the middle of a test.

At the same time, Gaber reminded the faculty and staff to respect students and not be overly paranoid.

"We are not intentionally trying to catch students, we are not trying to hurt students.

Gaber said.

Other tips Gaber and Sutton mentioned were using [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) and Googling essays to see if the work is plagiarized.

Toward the end of the seminar, the speakers gave audience members the opportunity to chime in.

Several asked questions about what to do during certain instances while others used the time to warn fellow staff about new techniques students use to cheat.

Gaber emphasized that professors send a letter to the provost about a cheater, even if the student admits to what they have done.

"It's really important that you go ahead and send it forward," Sutton said.

The punishment each student receives depends on his or her personal actions. So even if it a small instance of cheating, turn a student in so he will be punished appropriately.

Every student has the chance to offer an explanation in his or her hearing in front of the Academic Honesty Committee.

The seminar particularly emphasized the growing problem of falsified medical excuses.

Keeping documentation of a student repeatedly using an excuse from the same doctor will give the professor the opportunity to check with the office.

There has already been an instance where a student was selling doctors' excuses. She was caught when a friend turned her in.

The "Preventing Academic Dishonesty; the AU Academic Honesty Code" seminar came at an excellent time.

Final exams are only about two months away, and the stress tends to take a toll on students.