



“It Takes a Village”:
The Origins of the International
Center for Academic Integrity

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“It Takes a Village”¹: The Origins of the International Center for Academic Integrity (1992-2010)

The International Center for Academic Integrity (Center) has, for the last 30 years, been a leader in the international academic integrity movement. Other organizations have sprung up around the world in its likeness, but it continues to be a guiding light for research and practice.

So, how did it all begin? What is the origin of this Center that has persisted for 30 years despite being primarily led by a group of volunteers through recessions, leadership turnovers, and shifts in organizational structures? And what can we learn from the early years that might help the Center define its path for the next 30 years?

To answer these questions, I interviewed Don McCabe, the man resolutely credited with founding the Center back in 1992. In his usual style of humility and grace, Don rebuffs that accolade and instead talks about all of the folks who were key to creating the Center. So, in 2010, I not only interviewed Don, but 13 other founders and early leaders. And this is their story.

The “Grandfather” of Academic Integrity

While Don may rebuff being credited as the grandfather of the Center and the contemporary academic integrity movement, there is no argument that it was his research that catalyzed the formation of the Center and much of the research that has followed. So to start this story, we need to start with the origins of Don’s academic integrity research.

One urban legend among the Center membership is that Don became interested in academic integrity because he was dismayed with the amount of cheating in his business class at Rutgers. Don, however, quickly debunked that legend and instead credits his Dean at the time who advised him to establish a second area of research in case his first area went “sour” so that he would keep open his options for tenure. It was this, as well as his experience with the honor code while a Princeton undergraduate, which got him interested in studying academic integrity in business schools. According to Don:

I had gone to an honor system at Princeton. I was always intrigued as to why it worked. And I came out of a catholic high school where everybody cheated and then I go to Princeton, a place of secularism, and nobody cheated that I knew. I was always intrigued. Also, my son was a student at Princeton at the time. And I got involved in a conversation with him and some of his classmates about the honor code and it was clear to me, or seemed clear to me, that it was held in slightly different regard than when I was there. Not certainly negative by any means, just different. So I was curious to see what that was all about as well.

Specifically, Don said he was interested in examining the difference in the perceptions of cheating, and self-reported cheating rates, between students enrolled in honor code schools and those who were not. It was through this process of identifying schools to participate that Don got in touch with Sally Cole at Stanford (an honor code school).

Sally Cole was, at the time, the Assistant Director of the newly formed Academic Planning Office as well as a Judicial Affairs Officer at Stanford. In her role as Assistant Director for the Academic Planning

¹ McCabe, D. L. (2005). It takes a village: Academic dishonesty and educational opportunity. *Liberal Education*, 91(3), 26-31.

Office she collected and shared data with Academic Deans from “peer institutions” like MIT and “the Ivies,” as Sally put it, on perennial challenges they faced in areas like teaching loads, budget levels, class sizes and all other types of academic matters. As a Judicial Affairs Officer, Sally handled allegations of honor code violations and when she realized that honor code violations far exceeded those of behavioral misconduct, she reached out to the group of Academic Deans from peer institutions to launch a series of discussions about academic integrity.

It was around that same time that Don happened to reach out to Stanford because he wanted them to participate in his research. By the time Don talked to Sally Cole, he said that she quickly informed him:

we have this survey we were planning to do this year anyway, so if you are willing to use those form, or basically those forms with certain key questions, we’ll participate.

Don said “I don’t see why not. Send me those forms and I’ll take a look at them” and it turns out that the survey Stanford was planning to do was the one used by Bowers in his 1964 dissertation². This was the first that Don had heard of the Bowers survey, which was the first multi-institutional survey conducted on cheating. So, Don decided to use it so he would have a comparison data set from 30 years prior.

Don then released his survey (adapted from Bowers), which was completed by 6,096 students at 31 American colleges and universities³. However, once he had this data set, the question was – what should institutions do with their data? It was John Margolis from Northwestern University (which had participated in Don’s survey), who inspired the idea of a gathering of participating institutions. According to Don, John said:

McCabe, you know you’ve met every milestone you set for yourself. You’ve given me everything you’ve promised, and I have no complaints whatsoever, except for one. He said, I don’t know what the hell to do with all of this information!

So, Don, who came to academe from the corporate world, started to raise some money from his corporate contacts to bring the participating institutions together.

Around the same time, and unbeknownst to Don, Bill Kibler was at Texas A&M finishing up his dissertation exploring academic integrity through a moral development theoretical lens. Independently, Bill had drafted up this idea of a “Center for the Study of Academic Integrity” and had presented it to the Association for Student Judicial Affairs (ASJA, which is now known as the Association for Student Conduct Administrators) for consideration of adapting it into their organization. While ASJA thought it was interesting, according to Bill, they had no money to fund it.

But a colleague of Bill’s had read an article about Don McCabe and shared it with Bill along with the suggestion he reach out to Don. So, Bill did and since this was before the days, or at the earliest days of email, Bill actually called Don and, according to Bill:

I had a long conversation with this guy named Don McCabe who I’d never met before, didn’t know anything about him other than what I had read in an article. We struck up a conversation and he told me about this meeting he was having...this was probably in the late fall of 1991. And he told me about this conference he was going to have in March of ‘92...and he said “I’ve got

² Bowers, W.J. (1964). *Student dishonesty and its control in college*. New York: Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University.

³ McCabe, D.L. (1992). The influence of situational ethics on cheating among college students. *Sociological Inquiry*, 62 (3), 365-374. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682X.1992.tb00287.x>

some money. I want to invite you to come to this meeting.” So I was kind of the....odd man out in there in that the school where I was at the time, which was Texas A&M, had not participated in his study, meaning that I was not one of the representatives from one of the schools but he wanted me to come and make a presentation at that meeting about my dissertation and so I did that. And also got to participate in the entire conference and hear all of these presentations from other schools who participated in that study.

Don also invited a couple of other folks who were not study participants like Linda Trevino (who also studied business ethics and eventually became Don’s co-author) and Gary Pavela (because of the modified honor code at University of Maryland).

The First Meeting: March 1992

This first meeting occurred at the Newark/New Jersey airport hotel in March of 1992. It was hosted by Don and was largely a sharing event for the participating campuses to talk to one another about what they were doing and why. Don asked Jim Lyons to close the event by facilitating a discussion of “where do we go from here.” According to Bill, it was a very unstructured discussion but very interesting. Bill had brought along his thoughts about forming a Center for the Study of Academic Integrity because he really felt that there was a

need for a place that would try to bring some commonality to the language and some commonality to the studies that were going on. I was very struck by how dramatically different these studies were done on various campuses, because almost all of these were just campus-specific studies that had been done. And my favorite two examples...[were] the University of Delaware...[whose study] showed that 71% of their students admitted to cheating, [while] the University of Arkansas study showed that 25% of their students admitted to cheating. Does that mean that Delaware students are 3 times more dishonest than Arkansas students? Well of course not. It was just about the fact that they had defined cheating differently and asked their questions differently and so they got dramatically different results which meant, in terms of any comparison with any other schools or whatever, those two studies were useless. and so that was kind of one of my little crusades, I guess.

For Don, however, the key at that first meeting in March of 1992 was not to encourage research (which he was doing) but to have an organization that involved students. Don recalls:

I had done this project and had all of this information from students that suggested to me that the only way we were going to get our minds around this issue was to look to the students. So my objective was to form an organization that gave students equal standing and...they eventually agreed with me that the students were the key to this thing because they heard what the students had to say at this meeting. Students who were really committed. We had students from Duke, students from Virginia, we had students from Bryn Mawr, MIT (that was the other group that came that wasn’t in the original survey), and a couple of other students as well, Vanderbilt. There were only 2 faculty. As a result of that meeting, people quickly became to understand why I was so intent on including students in this process and nobody stood in the way of that decision.

Mary Olson, from Oakton Community College, attended that first meeting to get help for her college but also because she wanted Oakton to be affiliated with other institutions that cared about academic integrity. Mary was impressed with the student involvement, and that people were respected as people, whether students, faculty, or administrators and that really “appealed” to her. As Mary said “it was very egalitarian” - it didn’t matter if you were from the most prestigious university or not because:

there was a mutual commitment to an idea. The curiosity of it. Wanting to help one another with

no hidden agendas. Nobody was running for office or had anything at stake other than finding things that they could bring back to their own institutions. The inclusion of students and faculty and administration all together was significant. We didn't have any speakers. It was like "okay, here's a problem" and we could solve anything. And that felt really good. The people were certainly terrific and that's what kept me coming back.

The meeting ended with a large gathering of all attendees to engage in a conversation facilitated by Jim Lyons. According to Mary, Jim's "remarks were just so different from anything I had heard before. It was the most excited I had been in an academic setting...it felt very alive and that things were possible." And, according to Don, the results of that discussion facilitated by Jim was that

yes, people wanted to keep getting together...to provide a forum where people could get together and discuss the issue of academic dishonesty and improve their own policies and perhaps share what they knew, what they were learning.

This, then, marked the official beginning of the Center.

The Early Evolution of the Center

In the beginning, the annual meetings continued in this manner. They weren't structured as traditional conferences, with external speakers coming in to tell the participants what they should think or know. Instead, the meetings were focused on discussions and problem solving. Members, or Don from his research, would bring forward different projects or problems and everyone would split into groups to tackle the presented problems/projects. As Mary recalled, everyone present at these meetings believed they could solve any challenge. The meetings were very involved and engaging. One or two people would step up, or be asked, to lead a group. Mary herself, at her first meeting, was asked to lead a discussion of how to create and improve academic integrity policies. For Mary, then, the purpose of joining the Center early on was quite clear and simple - you joined to be a part of these meetings and so Don would do his research on your campus.

In those early days, the operation of the Center was also quite simple. Don relayed that it "operated off of my dining room table for the first two years." Don credited that "slow build," in part, to the initial, and unfortunate, identification of the Center as an "honor code organization" because of the enthusiastic participation by honor code schools in the meetings and the research. However, Don was adamant to point out that the intent of the Center was never to focus on honor codes, and he recognized a need to break beyond that stereotype in order to pave the way for the integrity conversation to occur across multiple types of schools, colleges and universities.

When Pat Drinan (University of San Diego) attended the second meeting in 1993 and joined the Center, he immediately bought into Don's vision. Pat, who had himself been a product of an honor code school (the University of Virginia), could clearly see the potential of the Center which, in his words, was to:

have a deeper reach into the academy...[because]...there was such a need for not only diffusion of best practices but for deep conversations about how essential academic integrity is in the academy. Other organizations like NASPA paid some attention to it, but there had not been a broader effort to engage faculty and higher education administrators (or necessarily students) in the discourse.

It was just two years later, in 1995, when the Center experienced its first evolution from "Don's project" into an independent non-profit organization. Sally Cole, who was supposed to have become the second President, ended up as the Center's first Executive Director (and she held that position until 1999) and

Wanda Mercer, who was to have been Vice-President, stepped up into the President role for two years (1995-1997)⁴. However, it would be a misrepresentation to infer that the non-profit organization status now meant that the Center had an office space, staffing, and a solidified structure. In reality, the operations moved from Don's dining room table to Sally's.

Despite these humble beginnings, Wanda Mercer insisted that the goal at the time was to “become a national player.” So, during the initial years of the non-profit organization, a lot of time was spent on finding funding. They needed money to pay the Executive Director (and any other staff that came along) and they needed money to achieve the mission. This changed the focus of the leadership, from tackling interesting academic integrity problems and challenges, to working to justify and substantiate the Center's existence; strategic planning for the long term; and, looking for an institutional home for the Center.

The stars aligned for the Center at the 1996 fall conference being hosted by Duke University. A keynoter at that conference was Elizabeth Kiss, incoming Director of Duke's newly formed Kenan Institute for Ethics. As a result of her participation in that conference, Kiss (also an alum of an honor code school, Davidson College), became very impressed with the Center. So, when Sally (the Executive Director) asked if the Kenan Institute would be interested in hosting the Center, Elizabeth was intrigued. So even though Elizabeth hadn't even begun her position yet, and the Institute was just a thought (not an enacted reality), she started enquiring with the Kenan Institute's Board about the possibility. At Elizabeth's second Kenan board meeting in the spring of 1997, there was a “yes” vote to move forward with carving out a path for the Center for Academic Integrity (CAI) to be hosted by Duke at the Kenan Institute for Ethics.

A yes from Kenan was just the first step though. Now, the Center's leaders had to determine if this was the path for the future on which they wanted to travel. To make this determination and to chart their vision, five leaders (Mary Olsen, Sally Cole, Don, Jeanne Wilson (University of California, Davis) and Patrick Drinan) sequestered themselves for days in a cabin in the Sierras. In the end, they decided they were interested in this partnership with Kenan but only under specific terms (including remaining a separate, independent non-profit organization). Elizabeth Kiss referred to this meeting as a “seminal meeting” for the Center.

The Center shared their proposal with the Institute and Duke, and eventually an agreement was reached. So, in the fall of 1997, the Center (and Sally) moved from Stanford to the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke. According to Wanda, this partnership provided the Center with “a little more permanence and [the] grounding [it needed], and it seemed particularly appropriate to move into an ethics program.” Elizabeth sums it up this way:

I was this brand new, wet-behind-the-ears director and I was saying ‘let's bring this national association here. So I think some people thought it was crazy. But I think it was a great relationship that helped both the Kenan Ethics Program and the Center. For CAI, it was a really important step in the growth process of the organization and the institutionalization of CAI. I also think that in that stage in the organization's development, it was helpful to have the Duke affiliation. And certainly from my perspective, it was really great to have this intensely practical and academy-related topic that Kenan was committed to, an anchor that was real and tangible.

According to Jim Lancaster (Appalachian State University), this move to Duke transformed “a loosely affiliated group of interested persons” who almost came together accidentally because they were “interested in the same thing” into an institutionalized Center, giving it form and focus.” The core focus, Elizabeth recounts, was to continue to promote academic integrity on college campuses, to understand the

⁴ For a full listing of the Center's Presidents and Directors, see <https://academicintegrity.org/about/board-of-directors>

state of academic integrity and to be an incubator or promoter of additional research on academic integrity.

The Center's tenure at Duke wasn't free of strife or challenges. There was always a push and pull between the independent Center and Duke, especially for the Executive Director (ED) who only worked part-time for the Center and part-time for Duke. So, when Daisy Waryold took over as Executive Director in 1999, she categorized the Center as being in its adolescence stage - about 12 years old - and "trying to find our way into adulthood". Thus, Daisy's main responsibility at the beginning was to shore up the financial structure (having been handed the finances in a literal shoe box), create a "hit by the bus manual" (so anyone could take over), and work as a marketing professional to increase membership (including by making cold calls to universities around the country). Daisy recounts:

I can remember buying a map and putting all these universities all over it and trying to motivate myself to make these cold calls. I would be looking at this map, thinking 'how am I going to build this thing without any, really, resources?' But I think it worked. The critical thing was [getting] the website [up] and getting some help.

Daisy thought that while the Board was fantastic at the time, there was a lot of responsibility on her (and the office) to really get things done because the Board was all volunteers. It was really a one-person show for the first couple of years. Then a membership coordinator was hired to help build the membership base. So, for most of Daisy's tenure as ED (1999-2004), the main foci were on the annual conference and growing the membership.

After Daisy left the Executive Director position in 2004, the Center had an interim Director (Mindy Dalgran) for a year, until Tim Dodd (Board President at the time) became the Center's fourth Executive Director. Tim was passionate about the mission of the Center, and he saw the Center becoming more and more relevant to society. He recalls that:

the Center was a catalyst for the emerging conversation around academic integrity and [we decided] that we were going to provoke that conversation through multiple means. We would provoke it through the dialogue that would develop within the membership. We would provoke it certainly at the conference. We would provoke through the dissemination of information like the Fundamental Values Guide. We would provoke it by being the "go-to" organization for media who are going to do stories on integrity. And I think that...we did become the "go-to" organization in the media's eyes. We were in enough media rolodexes, getting calls from the New York Times regularly, getting calls from the Chronicle of Higher Education, getting calls from the Wall Street Journal, getting calls from the Christian Science Monitor and even the secondary markets began to see us. Stories would break nationally, and the secondary markets would immediately go to Don or me or Gary [Pavela] or whatever, to get commentary and so that aspect, insinuating ourselves in the media rolodexes was very, very important.

As the Center grew in its prominence, it reached another crossroads in its trajectory - it needed to find a new home. In 2007, the Center moved from Duke University to Clemson University and gave up its status as an independent non-profit organization. So, as a university program, the Board of Directors became an Advisory Council with no fiscal responsibility but rather primarily programmatic and content responsibilities. The Council, with Teddi Fishman as the Executive Director of the Center, focused once again on the annual conference and on bringing value to its members.

It was in 2010 that the Center added International to its name. However, even at the beginning of the Center, there were signs that at some point, it would become international. Don was doing research with colleges and universities around the world and as early as 1996, members from outside of the U.S. were

attending the conference from Australia, Canada, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and other middle east countries.⁵

The Center's Initial Accomplishments

When the Center was formed in the early 1990s, many ethics-focused organizations were forming, but Mary saw the Center as “leading the charge for integrity” or as John Margolis would say “getting [integrity] on the radar screen”. At the time, there was a general thought within higher education that integrity was “important,” but yet something that students, faculty and administrators didn’t think about very often. So, the goal of the Center was to try “to get people thinking about [integrity] in a broader way.” Despite this goal, the primary activity continued to be hosting the annual conferences because the Center did not have sufficient resources or bandwidth to coordinate many other activities.

However, the Center received its first major grant - a two-year grant from the Hewlett Foundation - in 1995 to support its fundamental operations. The Directors used this funding to hold in-person Board meetings twice per year so that they could develop a mission and a strategic plan for the future. It was during this time, according to Wanda, that the Directors “realized we had to do more...we were just not going to be a kind of loosely organized group supporting academic integrity. We wanted to be a group that promoted integrity, encouraged dialogue, promoted principles of integrity and [created] ongoing discussions.”

The first major attempt to accomplish this mission was through the development of the Fundamental Values project, which was funded by a second Hewlett Foundation grant in 1998. According to Sally, the purpose of the Fundamental Values project was to:

to identify and affirm the conditions under which student honesty would flourish. And we had the wisdom to recognize that it was an issue with campus climate that we were talking about. It was not just the student behavior but the environment/the settings in which a student decides to cheat or not to cheat.

Elizabeth reflects on the momentous accomplishment of the Fundamental Values Project:

So I think part of what was so motivating through that process of doing the Fundamental Values was the great synergy between people with different strengths and that’s a serendipitous thing. Mary Olson was in a position to have a colleague do the design work on it. Sally is such a good thinker about these things. And I’m really good at facilitating groups. At one stage of the process, we had something like 200 words up on the board around all four sides of the room. So I was like, ‘okay, we have to start getting rid of redundancies and start picking the best word to represent an idea’ and just started facilitating that process of coming to the five values. I think that was my personal contribution to it. We (Elizabeth Kiss, Jim Larimore, Gary Pavela, Don McCabe, Bill Kibler, Pat Drinan, Mary Olson, and Sally Cole) called ourselves The Durham 8.”

During the process of creating the original Fundamental Values document, Mary recalls that they “weren’t thinking in grandiose terms at the time...[that this would be] a contribution for the ages.” However, Wanda and Pat recalled believing that the document would fundamentally alter the conversations happening on college campuses and potentially impact the international academic integrity movement. Wanda says: “We were becoming more grandiose, we were trying to embrace the issue of

⁵ As a side note, the name change mattered. In 2011, the first conference outside of the United States occurred in Toronto. In 2012, Mohamed Abou-Zeid from the American University in Cairo (Egypt) became our first Board President/Advisory Council Chair from outside of the United States, followed by Tracey Bretag from the University of South Australia (Australia) and Chris Lang from the University of Toronto (Canada).

integrity through the Fundamental Values Project to promote and shape a national discourse about integrity, which [would] become a benchmark for accreditation, assessment, intellectual discourse and professional ethics.”

Sally agreed with Wanda: “I think all of us that were involved were extremely proud of that document. It represented our best thinking and the response of the colleges around the country was...overwhelming...Sometimes it was required reading for new faculty or it was discussed in student orientation.”

And according to Jim: “it was a very seminal experience because it literally got everyone on the same page thinking about how we talk about it and truly at the fundamentals, what are the values and where do we go from there. And I think that was a turning point for the organization.”

The Center’s leaders used this opportunity of the Fundamental Values Project to make its first major push for increasing membership. To start, they asked for presidential endorsements of the Project. Donald Kennedy, Stanford President, wrote a letter to presidents of private universities and Arthur Hughes, University of San Diego President wrote a letter to presidents of religiously affiliated colleges and universities. The leaders then sent the Fundamental Values document to 4,000 U.S. college and university presidents and saw, as a result, its first real bump up in membership. By 1997, the Center had about 200 members.

It was in 1999 that the Center received its third grant, this time from the John Templeton Foundation, to develop and test an Academic Integrity Assessment and Action Guide. The purpose of the Guide was to take Don’s research and extend it out to: 1) provide the steps that institutions needed to take to move forward on creating cultures of academic integrity; and, 2) to help institutions analyze and understand their survey findings so that they could address problems and barriers to culture creation, as well as celebrate what they were already doing well. Twelve schools participated in the one-year project to test and develop the Guide and the final guide was released in 2001.

Another early accomplishment for the Center was “The State of Academic Integrity,” an annual newsletter sent each fall to university and college presidents in the United States. Daisy was proud of this newsletter because it took a lot of effort to keep the list of presidents up-to-date and to provide content to the newsletter. She said they would include “the latest statistics about cheating in the U.S. and then it would give them reasons why their institution needed to be a part of the movement. Give them 10 tangible reasons and from that we got tangible memberships. It had an executive summary “why does this matter to me?” that had visual appeal.”

It was these activities, primarily the Fundamental Values project and the State of Academic Integrity newsletter, which are credited with contributing to a substantial growth in Center membership. According to Tim:

back in 1997, when I was first attending the conferences, membership was probably under 200 schools at that time. By the time I left in 2007, we were 400 and something schools. Doubling the size of the organization was certainly important and you think of the number of copies of fundamental values guides that have been distributed over the years. And you know you’re talking about in the 10s of thousands and that really did become an amazing publication that is. It was accepted without rebuke or rebuttal as the statement on academic integrity in higher ed. And that’s impressive! People would go to the website and order it and it became the training material for schools undertaking academic integrity projects.”

Tim also believed that the annual conference itself was responsible for attracting new members and was

truly our signature effort and I mean far and away the most impressive that we did. We recruited good people to present. People got value from that conference. The formal program was always very, very strong and the informal interactions were always deeply appreciated...I [myself] found the conference absolutely enthralling, as everybody who goes to the conference did! I loved the mission of the conference. The idea that students, faculty, and administrators came to the table on equal footing to have this very important conversation [about academic integrity].

In 2004, the Center received its fourth grant, again from the John Templeton Foundation, to establish the Templeton Fellows Program. One senior and four junior scholars were selected to receive the grants to support their academic integrity related research. This was a massive project at the time because it was thought to continue the Center's projection as the leading thinker and research producing organization on academic integrity.

The Early Strengths of the Center

The interviews with the founders and early leaders of the Center made it clear that a true and shared passion for integrity and honesty, without the self-righteousness one might assume with such folks, was the driving force for the creation and initial development of the Center. However, passion without commitment are dreams that fail to turn into reality. So, the commitment of the initial founders, board members and Executive Directors, as well as of Elizabeth Kiss, is the true strength that enabled the Center to come to fruition. It just seemed that at the founding of the Center, there was "great synergy in terms of different people's strengths, and that's a serendipitous thing" (Elizabeth).

The focus on institutional, rather than individual membership, was also cited as a strength and an intentional choice. As Mary noted, "we wanted institutional members because that meant that the institution was committed, rather than just that particular individual. And we recognized that what we were doing required institutional backing." Too true. Academic integrity cannot be brought about by a single individual, but as Don has said "it takes a village" (McCabe, 2005). According to Daisy, the institutional membership encourages the active individual members to build awareness among key people on their campuses, champions, so that the realization that that academic integrity is important spreads and flourishes.

Finally, Pat and Don both emphasized the student-centered nature of the organization as a key strength, through both the inclusion of students at conferences and on the board, but also in the focus of the Center on the ethical development of students. Although there were often debates about whether the organization should also look at faculty or research integrity, for example, the more focused approach seemed to work best, while hoping for "spill-over effects to other ethical areas." Pat saw the Center as a "model and lighthouse about how to get more transparency and light into the academy so we can touch other ethical issues too. You can say there are two fundamentals to the academy: teaching/learning and research. And, we're touching primarily the teaching/learning function." Specifically, countering the narrow and outdated "prevention, policing and punishing" model of cheating, and instead harnessing the understanding that cheating is a normal behavior for young people and so the focus should be on creating cultures of integrity where, when cheating happens regardless, it is responded to developmentally.

The Early Challenges for the Center

The founding and building of the Center was not without its challenges, as for any non-profit organization that is simultaneously trying to start a social movement or the spread of adoption of a value like academic integrity. The following five themes emerged as key early challenges.

The Unstable Table. In the first few years of the Center, Don was the core, the orbit around which all of the other active members circulated. Don held and communicated the passion, and he was the one doing the majority of the research and therefore the one most in touch with institutions around the country.

However, once Don wanted to step back away from formal leadership responsibility, Mary said “it was harder to find the people who had the vision and the ability, institutionally as well as personally, to take on more responsibilities.” This challenge was reflected in the instability at the head of the table - the Executive Director. Between 1997-2005, there were four different Executive Directors, none of whom were full time because they split their time between the Center and Duke University.

The Elusive Member. Identifying and targeting who the Center’s members should be seemed to be a perpetual challenge in the early days. There wasn’t a natural group of professionals that the Center appealed to because few if any people had academic integrity as their main job or even a large portion of their portfolio. Colleges and universities either had honor codes (run by students who rotate in and out quickly), decentralized faculty-run systems, or policies run by student conduct offices (who typically were members of a different association). So, typically at the conferences, the Center would attract new institutions who were just learning or starting a focus on academic integrity, but then they’d get what they need and not return. There was also a constant debate about whether the Center was a higher education organization or a K-12 organization or both. According to Tim “Don was very, very much the dominant voice on including high schools and for quite logical reasons.” Obviously, students start cheating a long time before college, but it was a “very, very tough challenge” to infiltrate the complex high school system (through boards, superintendents, and principals). And, Tim thought that by widening the Center to include high schools, there was a

danger of conflating missions. Character development in the high schools is a very different focus and academic integrity is a small if not totally obscured element in that conversation in the high schools. At the top of the character development stuff is addressing bullying, addressing respect. These are all good things to address but our institution, our organization, was really focusing on academic integrity as the gateway to those conversations. High schools do that in reverse in many ways.

The Curse of Money. Every non-profit organization struggles with money, and the Center for Academic Integrity was no different. When the Center didn’t have any money, the leaders were always focused on trying to find it. And when they did have some money from grants, the limited staff struggled to maintain focus and energies on all of the Center’s activities. According to Mary, we “debated [where to find money] until we’re blind.” They debated different ways to pull in more money. For example, having members serve as Center consultants who would go out into the field to help institutions, but figuring out who gets paid and how seemed complicated. They debated about asking for-profit private industries or people for funding, but, Mary says, “we were always afraid of potential scandals in the future.” So the Center avoided such asks even though there was some thought that they might have led to “some good, fruitful relationships that broaden us beyond “academic integrity” to helping people realize that “academic integrity” is connected to broader personal, professional, business, etc., integrity.” The founders and original leaders also talked about finding stable foundation support, but that never panned out either. Tim mentioned that they had even hired a fund-raising consultant at one point, who was unfortunately not very good. According to Tim:

We face that conundrum of never being big enough to grow ourselves. There’s that sort of critical mass or critical size of an organization where you can then hire distinct skill sets and focus on distinct projects. We’ve never been able to dive into donor exploration. You hope for that first big donation which allows you to expand the organization which allows you to develop a development feature, but we never got there.

In the end, the Center continued to survive mostly on membership and conference fees.

The Barrier to Institutionalization. One of the earliest challenges for the Center was convincing

accreditation agencies and stable organizations like the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) that academic integrity should be integrated in what they do. However, Pat noted that because the Center was primarily run by volunteers, it wasn't easy to do the sustained work required to develop such partnerships. To that point, Pat wondered:

how do you move a volunteer organization to a sustained campaign rather than an intermittent campaign” when “most of the enthusiasm comes from people at lower levels of the organization, like students themselves, student personnel, student affairs people, some faculty? At some point, the leadership of higher education and foundations need to recognize the power and potential of this movement to make a difference in the academy and have them nurture it. It needs to get that kind of leadership higher in the academy.

The Conspiracy of Silence. Let's be frank. Higher education institutions, faculty, and leadership, do not really want to talk about academic dishonesty and misconduct. So, a tremendous challenge for the Center was the conspiracy of silence that surrounded this topic. When a scandal or event caused a surge of media coverage, the Center was called upon for expertise, but then the news cycle would quickly move on to something else. Governing boards and accreditation agencies just didn't want to touch the topic. As Mary noted, institutions

don't want big numbers to come out about how many people are cheating in their institution or conversely, how few people are being brought up on charges when everybody knows the numbers are far greater than that. So it's a dicey issue. Everybody wants to be associated with “we're the good guys, we have an honor code, we pursue a life of honor and dignity” and nobody wants to talk about the other side of the coin. And it's hard to do it without being [viewed] as a negative person [or organization].

Conclusions: A Look to the Future

This origin story was written in 2022, even though the interviews were conducted in 2010. Arguably, the Center's leaders between 2010-2022 should be interviewed so we can write the story of the third decade of the Center's existence. But, what can we learn from the founders and leaders of the first two decades?

First, to borrow a turn of phrase, “nevertheless, we persisted.” The Center faced multiple leadership and foundational challenges over the first 20 years, crisis of revenue, and uncertainty of focus and purpose. Yet, nevertheless, we persisted. According to the founders and early leaders, we persisted largely because of the passion for the cause. This is even more remarkable when you think about integrity being at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs – despite struggles at the bottom (in terms of shelter and security), the Center continued to reach for the idea that cultures of integrity could be created at colleges and universities around the world. The future will undoubtedly continue to present challenges to the Center, but I hope that we learn from the past that we can persist.

Second, that first 20 years also taught us that the Center has a responsibility to endure. At least in the United States, there are no other prominent higher education organizations that will carry the academic integrity banner. American accreditation agencies still are not attending to the importance of academic integrity, and there is little research being published or presented at major education conferences like the American Educational Research Association, the Association for the Study of Higher Education, or at the Association for Student Conduct Administrators. The Center, along with its sister organizations, have a responsibility to continue our work to keep academic integrity on the radar screen of higher education institutions and higher education affiliated organizations, especially given the 21st century threats to integrity via technology and the contract cheating industry.

Finally, we should learn from the first 20 years is that Bill Kibler was right – it is critical for the Center to be research-driven. After all, the Center only came to be because of Don’s research and the desire of institutions to use the data he collected to transform their institutions. Under the leadership of David Rettinger, we have managed to revive and revise the McCabe Survey, which is currently being deployed at multiple colleges and universities in the U.S. and beyond. This data, along with data collected through the Academic Integrity Rating System (AIRS), will likely propel the Center through the next 20 years. Data inspires action, and data-drive actions are the only way for institutions to make real progress on creating and maintaining cultures of integrity. And cultures of integrity are the only way to truly ensure that we maintain the quality and integrity of higher education in the twenty-first century.