Best Practices in Authentication and Verification of Students in Online Education

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Introduction

• Universities with online programs are challenged to:
  – provide positive identification of students enrolled in online courses
  – reduce the occurrence of cheating on assignments and tests
Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008

• Congressional bill
  – Public Law 110-315
• States that an institution that offers an online program must prove that an enrolled student is the same person who does the work*
• Intent is to reduce the amount of cheating that occurs in online courses

Higher Education Act

• Requires that accreditors must monitor the steps that colleges take to verify that enrolled student is same person doing the work*

• Policies for SACS accreditation began addressing this issue
  – Policy statement on Distance Education requires universities to demonstrate they have processes in place that reduce opportunities for students to cheat (SACS: CS 3.4.6 and CS 3.4.10, 2008)*


Academic Standards

• Colleges and universities have obligation to stress regulatory requirements
• Reinforce ethical academic standards
• Provide written evidence of the requirements

Federal Regulation

• Federal regulation of distance learning
  – Implies that cheating is more of a problem in online courses than in face-to-face classes
  – Online educators are being held to a higher standard than peers teaching in brick-and-mortar classes
At the Present Time….

• Official from U.S. Education Department state that regulations do not require colleges to put in place any new student-authentication technology beyond a secure log-in and password…..at this time….*

• Proctored testing is essential for program quality

Cheating in Online Courses versus Face-to-Face Courses

- No evidence that cheating happens more often in online courses
- A study of 1068 undergraduates found 81% of students felt that cheating in their online course was no more prevalent than within a traditional course (2008)
- Study of 635 undergrads and grads at medium-sized university
  - Cheating in online courses is no more rampant than cheating in live classes
  - Students were significantly more likely to obtain answers from others during online test or quiz

Watson, G. & Sottle, J. (2010, Spring). Do students cheat more in online courses? Online Journal of Distance Learning, 13(1).
Cheating

• 73.8 % of students in study felt it was easier to cheat in online class (King, Guyette, & Piotrowski, 2009)
• A study by Grijalva et al. (2006) found no significant difference between cheating on regular paper assignments and web-based assignments
• No one checks photo IDs when students enter a classroom


Cheating

• In 1940, only 20% of college students admitted to cheating

• Today, 75 to 98% of college students have cheated (http://education-portal.com/articles/75_to_98_Percent_of_College_Students_Have_Cheated.html)
Cheating

• Cheating to pass or get ahead?
  – Cheaters have higher GPAs [http://oedb.org/library/features/8-astonishing-stats-on-academic-cheating]

• Primary reasons:
  – Campus norm
  – No honor code
  – Penalties not severe
  – Faculty support of academic integrity policies is low
  – Little chance of being caught
  – Incidence is higher at larger, less selective institutions

• Administration / Institutions as role models
Authentication

• The process of proving to a system that you are who you say you are.

• Authentication can be performed using one or more of the following:
  – Something you know (username and password).
  – Something you have (smartcard)
  – Something you are (finger print, hand writing, voice pattern)
Technology Vendors

- Increased anxiety by distorting and exaggerating what was being required by HEOA
- Will profit from the regulations
- May not safeguard student’s privacy
  - Fingerprints
  - Images inside of student’s home
- FBI-like requirements
  - Fingerprints from encrypted mouse, monitoring of eyelid movements, webcam surveillance, keystroke recording
  - Eye iris identification
Vendors

• Securexam Remote Proctor
• Webassessor
• Acxiom Corporation
• Webcam Invigilation
• Respondus Lockdown Browser
• Proctor U
Respondus Lockdown Browser

• Used by:
  – 10 public universities from Utah System of Higher Education
  – Also state’s Library system
  – CSU School of Nursing

• Integrates with Blackboard Vista

• Prevents students from printing, copying, visiting other URLs, or accessing other applications during an online assessment

• Locked into assessment until submitted for grading
Respondus Lockdown Browser

• Cannot prevent all cheating
• Also integrates with ANGEL, Blackboard, Desire2Learn, Moodle, and WebCT
• Campus-wide licensing
  – $2000-$6000 per institution based on student enrollment numbers
• Free 2-month pilot license
  – Some restrictions
Proctor U

- Live online proctoring service
- Students pay per exam ($17/1 hour exam; $20/2 hour exam)
- Three step authentication process
  - Webcam
  - Monitor student’s computer screen in real time
  - Multi-factor process
Challenge Questions

• Derived from public data sources
• Manage by a 3\textsuperscript{rd} party
• Student cannot predict questions so fraud would be difficult
• Questions about the student’s own demographics
  – Where lived in past
  – Type of car owned

Plagiarism Detection

• Turnitin Originality Check
  – Electronic dropbox tool that compares submitted papers to repository of papers previously submitted to Turnitin, Internet and print sources

• iThenticate
  – Website service that generates originality reports
  – Cost: licensing fee based on type and size of organization

• SafeAssign
  – Offered by Blackboard to LMS clients
  – Free to Blackboard enterprise clients
  – Provides “percent match” information
Plagiarism

- Dustball
  - Ignores text in quotes
  - Cost: $8/month for up to 50 uses then $.25/use
- PlagiarismDetect.com
  - Cost: $.50 per page
- Searchmaze
  - Free service that alerts you to text taken directly from Internet websites
- Plagiarism Sleuth
  - Free service that alerts you to text taken directly from Internet websites
Best Practices

To Reduce Cheating
Suggestions

• Use of test proctors
  – Either on every exam or just the comprehensive final exam
  – Final exam is heavily weighted and proctored
• Randomize questions on exams
  – Scramble questions and reorder questions
• Change type of assessment
  – Objective (multiple choice or true/false) to more subjective (essays and research papers)
  – More discussions, writing assignments, quizzes, group work
• Shorten time for tests
  – 1 ½ minutes per question
  – Do not allow students to back track
• Lower assessment’s value in relation to other course assignments
• Use of online exam sites from publishers of most textbooks
Other Options

• Not as many big exams
• Do not release scores until all students have completed quiz/exam
• Increase number of assignments
  – Makes it difficult and expensive to recruit others to help
• No strategies will totally eliminate cheating
Papers

• Make assignments clear
  – Do you allow collaboration or not?
• Break down course assignments into a series of steps leading to the major writing assignment
• Assign paper length less than or equal to 6 pages
  – Most paper mills have papers greater than 6 pages
• Require abstract of paper
  – Difficult for student to write a synopsis of paper from paper mill
• Require recent references (last year or so)
• Use plagiarism detection of some type
Ethical Behavior

- Course in ethical behavior and moral development
- College experience should instill a prominent level of ethical behavior
- Program student handbook should have information about academic integrity and definitions of academic misconduct
- In every course
  - Provide ethical expectations
  - Syllabus should contain section about cheating, plagiarism and consequences
  - Provide link to student honor code
  - Develop a contract and have students sign it at beginning of course
- Students caught cheating pay a consequence
Nursing and Ethics

- Nursing has high level of ethical practice inherent in the profession
- Important component of nursing practice
- Supported by nurses’ professional peers
- This should be translated into student clinical experiences and course work
Communication and Contact

- Single best means of identifying individual students in a course is through communication and contact
- Know your students
- Ask students to provide a writing sample at beginning of semester
  - Learn student’s voice and manner of writing
Questions?????????
References/Resources


References/Resources


Securexam Remote Proctor

- Used by Troy University, University of South Alabama, University of West Alabama
- Mirrored sphere suspended above a small pedestal
- Plugs into a standard port on home computer
- Groove for scanning fingerprints, a tiny microphone, and a camera
- $150-$200
- Only works with Windows operating system and Internet Explorer browser
Securexam Remote Proctor

- Student sits in front of computer
- Places finger on pedestal
- Digital fingerprint and photo taken with camera compared with one recorded at registration
- Test opens online via course management system
- Student cannot view anything else online
Webassessor

- Used by World Campus, online arm of Pennsylvania State University
- Human proctors
- Web cameras
- Software that recognizes students’ typing styles
- Students must have broadband connection
- Cameras $50- $80 (student cost)
  - Allow proctors to view a student’s face, keyboard, and workspace
Webassessor

- Kryterion charges institutions $20,000 for set up of software and training
- Also charges each time students sit for an exam
- Proctor can prevent student from starting the exam or completing the exam
Acxiom Corporation

- System gathers information from a variety of databases, including criminal files and property records
- Uses the data to ask the student questions, such as street lives on, house number, previous employers
- If student answers the questions correctly, given access to the exam
Acxiom Corporation

• National American University Online presently testing system
• Also Colorado community college consortium evaluating its use
• Approximately $10 per student
Webcam Invigilation Method

• Students purchase basic webcam
• Attach to top of computer or laptop so student’s face can be seen
• Exam is scheduled at same time for all students
• All webcam images are displayed at monitoring headquarters
• Monitor how often students change pages and how long it takes to answer questions
Webcam Invigilation Method

• Students not allowed to leave exam area except for bathroom break
• If cheating is suspected, student is disconnected from exam
• Must either reschedule exam or present case to educational institution