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[Students act on compromised Duke Community Standard](#)

posted on November 1st, 2007 by Stephen Bryan

The revised Duke Community Standard implemented this fall calls on students to act if they observe a violation of the DCS. As [explained](#) on our website, acting can take a variety of forms, from confronting an individual quietly about the observed behavior to reporting the behavior to university officials, either anonymously or not. This week two students came forward to report cheating in one of their respective courses. It's not always easy to muster the courage to act. Kudos to these students for showing their commitment to the DCS and helping to promote an environment of academic integrity at Duke.

This entry was posted on Thursday, November 1st, 2007 at 4:55 pm and is filed under [Academic Integrity](#), [Duke Community Standard](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

4 Responses to “Students act on compromised Duke Community Standard”

1. *Elliott Wolf* Says:
[November 6th, 2007 at 10:32 pm](#)

I think it's premature to tout this as a positive development. That these students acted because the Duke Community Standard was compromised is based on the premise that the DCS was actually compromised, i.e. that the student they accused of cheating actually cheated. Given that this incident occurred only last week, any **judicial** action against said student is still in its initial stage, and s/he is entitled to the presumption of innocence. This post is seemingly predicated on s/he being guilty, undermining that presumption. If the student actually cheated, this is a positive development within the context of the DCS as it is written, but it is too early to make that determination.

2. *Stephen Bryan* Says:
[November 6th, 2007 at 10:49 pm](#)

If you read closely the obligation to act, which follows from the DCS posted on our website, you'll see that the obligation is imposed when a student witnesses behavior that he or she **perceives** to be in violation of the Standard. One of the possible options is to confront the individual about the behavior– to seek clarification from that person about the perception– to either confirm what was observed or refute it. However, approaching one's peers about questionable behavior is indeed a difficult task, and in these two cases the students brought the information forward to the Office of **Judicial Affairs**. Thus, these students acted on what they perceived to be a compromised Duke Community Standard. Whether or not it was actually compromised remains to be seen.

3. *Elliott Wolf* Says:
[November 7th, 2007 at 1:49 am](#)

First, there is the possibility that the students are lying, in which case the issue of “perception” is irrelevant. While this seems remote, the probability is not zero and thus this eventuality should not be discounted. Settling this question would require additional evidence, presumably to be considered during the **judicial** process. Until that happens, however, it is premature to conclude that “these students acted on what they perceived to be compromised Duke Community Standard.” This eventuality also invalidates the blanket statement that these students are “showing their commitment to the DCS and helping to promote an environment of academic integrity at Duke;” if they are lying (again, a remote possibility, but one that must be considered), they’re not helping much of anything.

Second, the **Judicial Affairs** website says that the Obligation to Act involves students “taking constructive action if they witness or know about behavior they perceive to be inconsistent with the DCS.” The “perception” is about the nature of the alleged behavior, not the finding of fact as to whether or not it occurred. In this case, the reported behavior was cheating, which is clearly against University policy and in contravention of the DCS. As such, the issue not whether “behavior they perceived” was in contravention of the DCS, but whether they accurately perceived it. It is also important to note, however, that the quote on which your argument is seemingly based is not part of the DCS itself as approved by the student body, but is merely expository. The DCS itself has no mention of “perception,” but merely says “I will act if the standard is compromised”

Third, the title of the original post is “Students act on compromised Duke Community Standard,” which clearly implies that the DCS was actually compromised, again suggesting an assumption of guilt.

4. *Michael Gustafson* Says:
[November 7th, 2007 at 10:30 am](#)

I’ll mention that I first read this that I thought someone had hacked into the duke servers and students pointed it out to someone - I guess “Compromised DCS” made me think someone had re-written it or something.

I agree with Elliott about the importance of language when it comes to allegations of violations of the DCS. The third obligation is that, “I will act if the Standard is compromised.” The next section opens this up a bit with, “Students affirm their commitment to foster this climate by signing a pledge that includes taking constructive action if they witness or know about behavior they perceive to be inconsistent with the DCS, which may include violation of university policies.”

So I believe the intent of the posting was to indicate that there are students who are, in principle, following the new guidelines about the obligation to act. But I think, at present, stating in the title of the post - which is copied in the nav bar of the **Judicial Affairs** website with only the title and no context unless one clicks on it - that the standard was compromised seems to skip several intermediate steps and is troubling.

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