



Academic Integrity Annual Report 2020-2021

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INTRODUCTION

The Academic Integrity Officer at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) prepares this report at the end of each academic year to promote transparency surrounding our academic integrity policy and procedures. It is the wish of the academic integrity (AI) personnel that this report be utilized by faculty and administration to promote a community of integrity and the educational philosophy mission of the academic integrity policy at USM.

The 2020-2021 academic year was marked by historic changes in higher education; the COVID-19 pandemic forced many members of the university community to serve students through new modalities. It also challenged many students to learn in the novel modalities and in different environments from which they were accustomed. The new modalities combined with the stress of financial and health uncertainty created environments that were conducive for increased lapses in academic integrity.

Much like other universities, USM saw a record number of reported academic integrity violations (Newton, 2020). It is difficult to pinpoint an exact reason for why there was an increase in academic integrity violations in 2020-2021. Did the stress of the pandemic and new instructional environments leave students feeling hopeless? Did the lack of routine cause students to procrastinate assignments? Did the prevalence of fully online courses give students a sense of anonymity or make classes seem less "real"? Did faculty not reframe their assessments and challenge students to think critically rather than regurgitate easily accessible facts? Could the surge in reported violations be the result of increased faculty access to students' digital footprints? These are questions that will likely be answered long after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended.

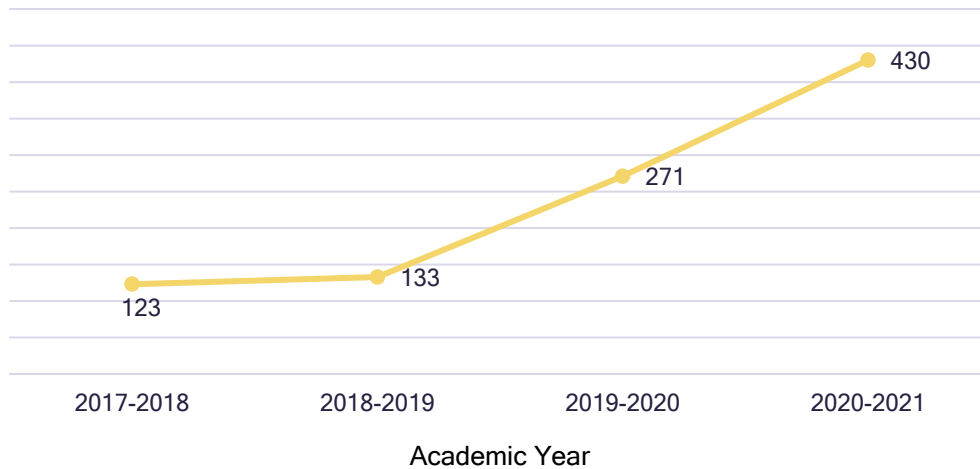
Academic integrity personnel suspect and have anecdotal evidence that all USM academic integrity violations were not reported in the 2020-2021 academic year and encourage you to view the following data with that consideration. Faculty hesitation about reporting academic misconduct and determining the amount of academic misconduct that occurs at USM is addressed in the Trends and Future Changes sections of this report.

BY THE NUMBERS

Overview of Violations

In the 2020-2021 academic year, a total of 430 reported academic integrity violations were recorded by academic integrity personnel. This represents a rise in reported violations when compared to previous academic years (Figure 1).

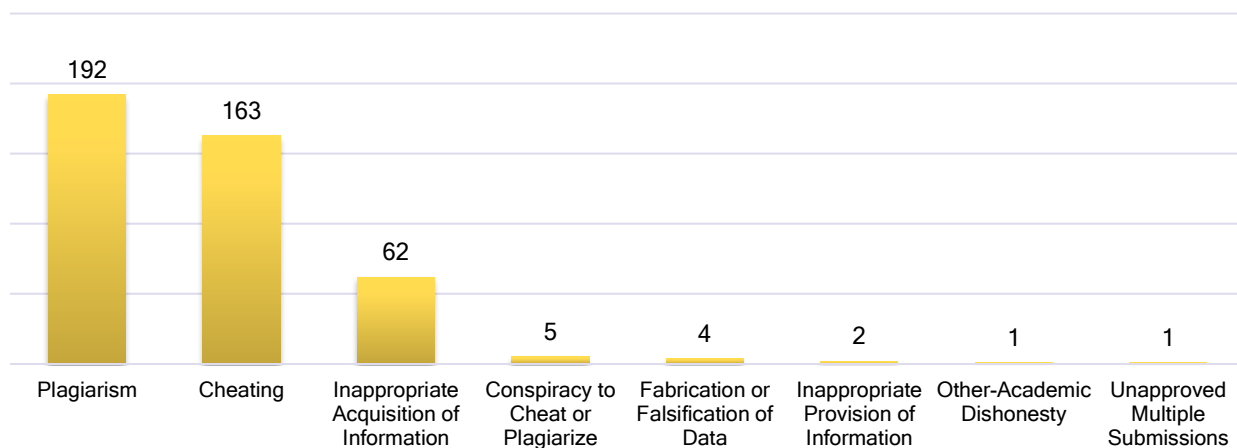
Figure 1: Reported Academic Integrity Violations



Violation and Sanction Information

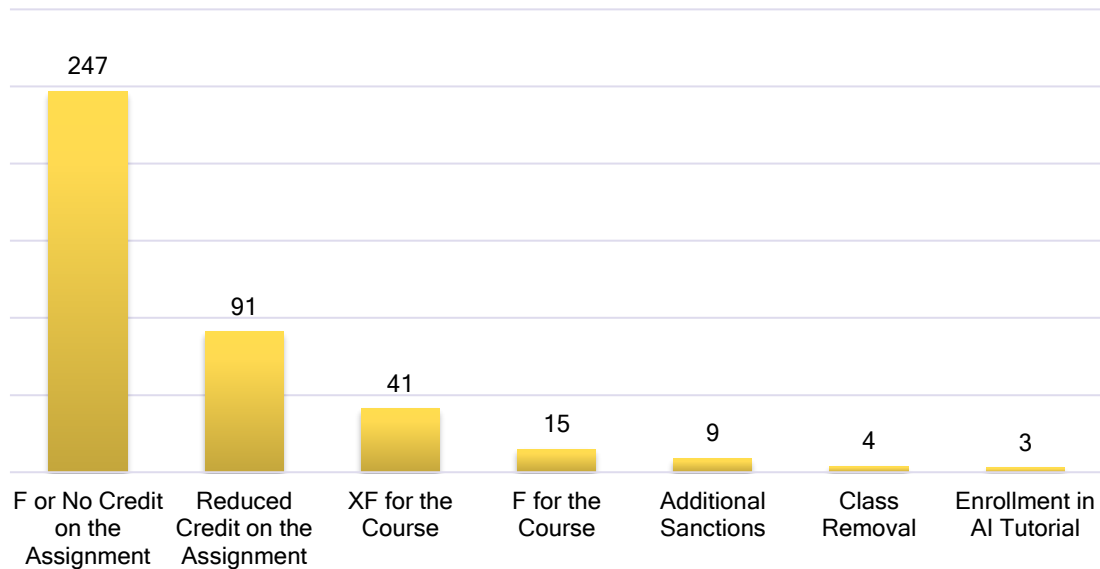
Initial Charges

Figure 2: Initial Charges in Academic Integrity Violation Reports



Final Sanctions

Figure 3: Final Sanctions in AI Violation Reports



Note: The above chart represents the final sanctions administered to the 410 cases in which students were found responsible.

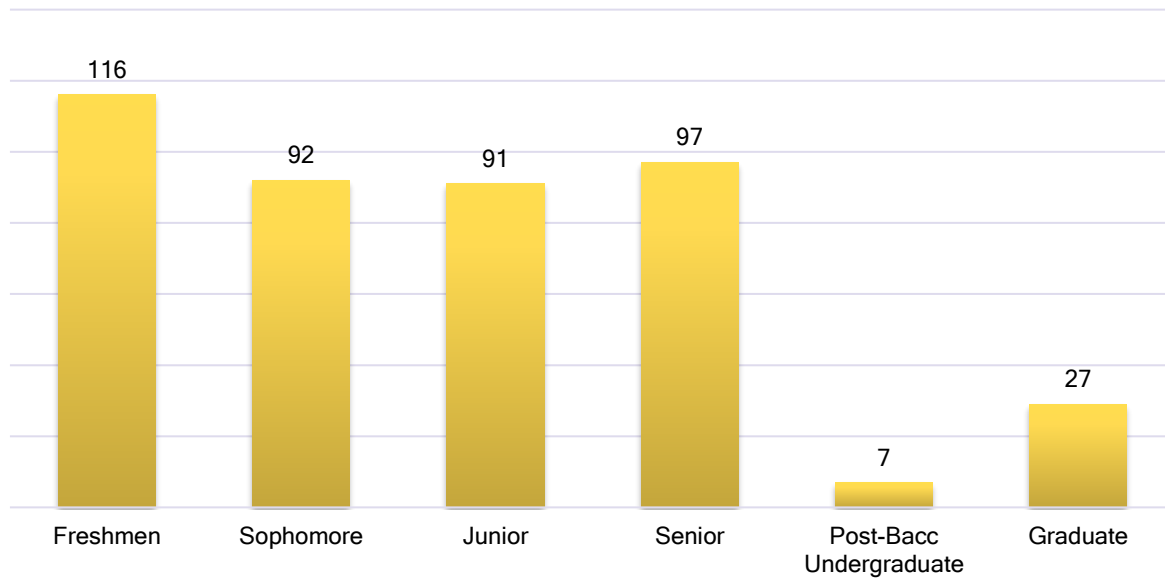
Students with Repeated Violations

Thirty-six students had repeated violations. The range of violations per student was from one to four.

Student Demographics

Classification

Figure 4: Academic Classification of Students in AI Violation Reports



College

Figure 5: Percent AI Reports by College of Student's Major

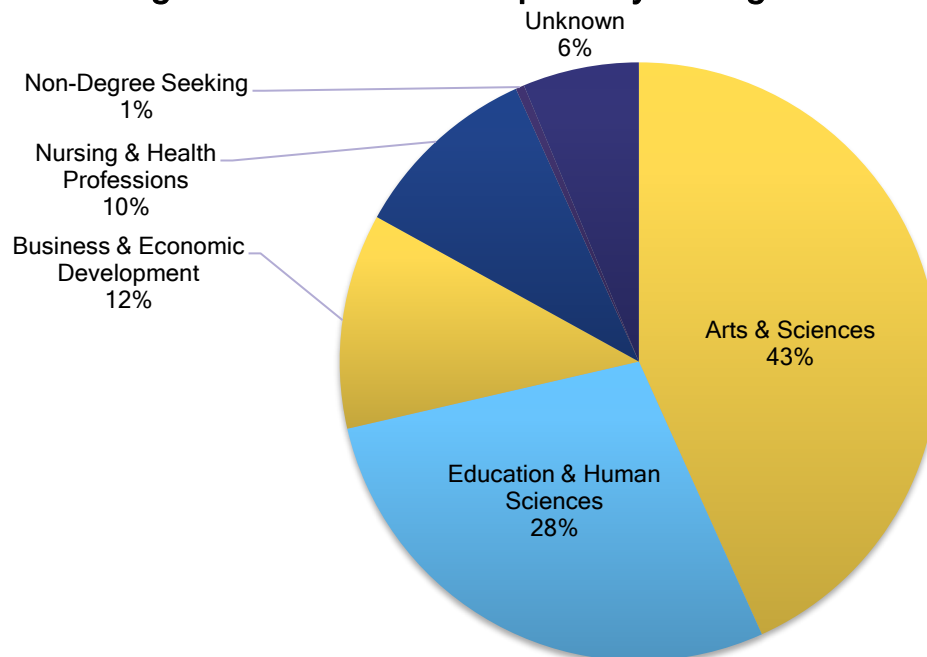
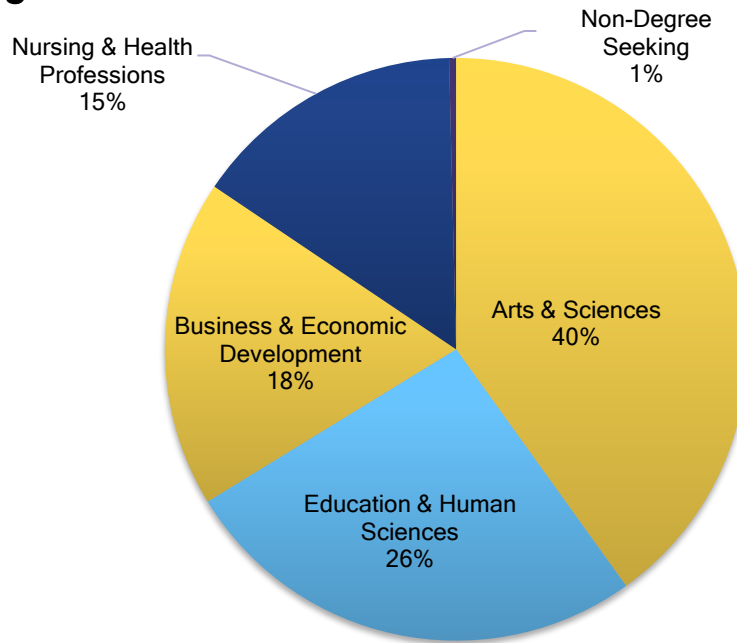


Figure 6: Fall 2020 Percent All Enrollment by College



Source: Institutional Research - The University of Southern Mississippi

GPA

Table 1: Grade Point Average Descriptive Statistics of Students with Violations

Descriptive Statistic	Last Term GPA (n = 304)	Cumulative GPA (n = 314)
Minimum	0.083	0.083
Maximum	4.000	4.000
Median	3.000	2.792
Mode	4.000	3.000
Mean	2.843	2.735
Standard Deviation	0.861	0.715

Gender

Figure 6: Gender of Students with AI Violation Reports

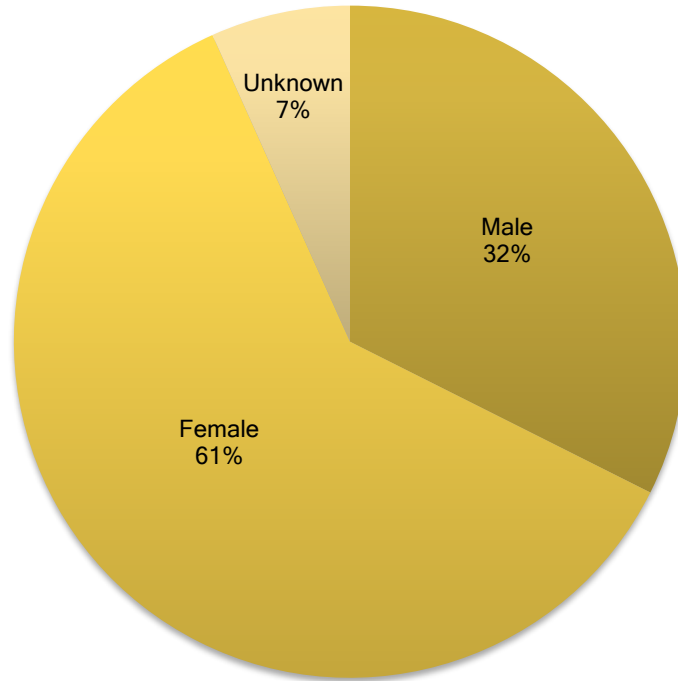
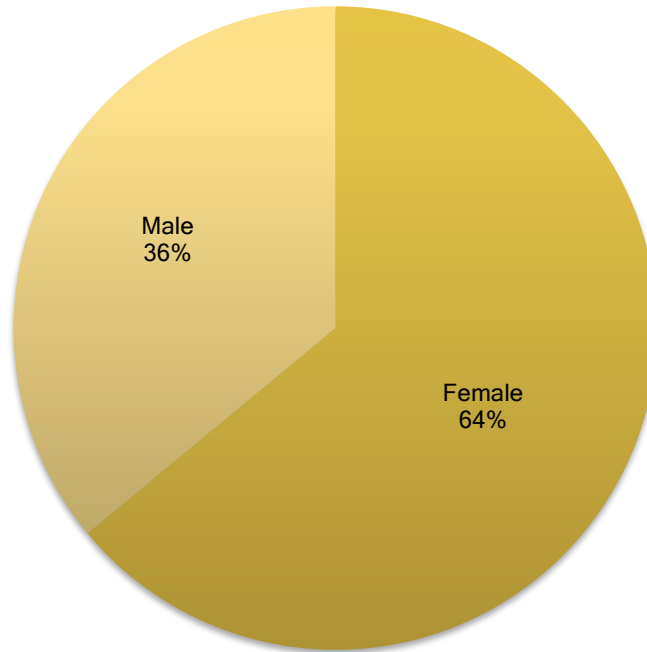


Figure 7: Fall 2020 All Undergraduate Student Gender



Ethnicity

Figure 8: Race/Ethnicity Percentage of Students with AI Violation Reports

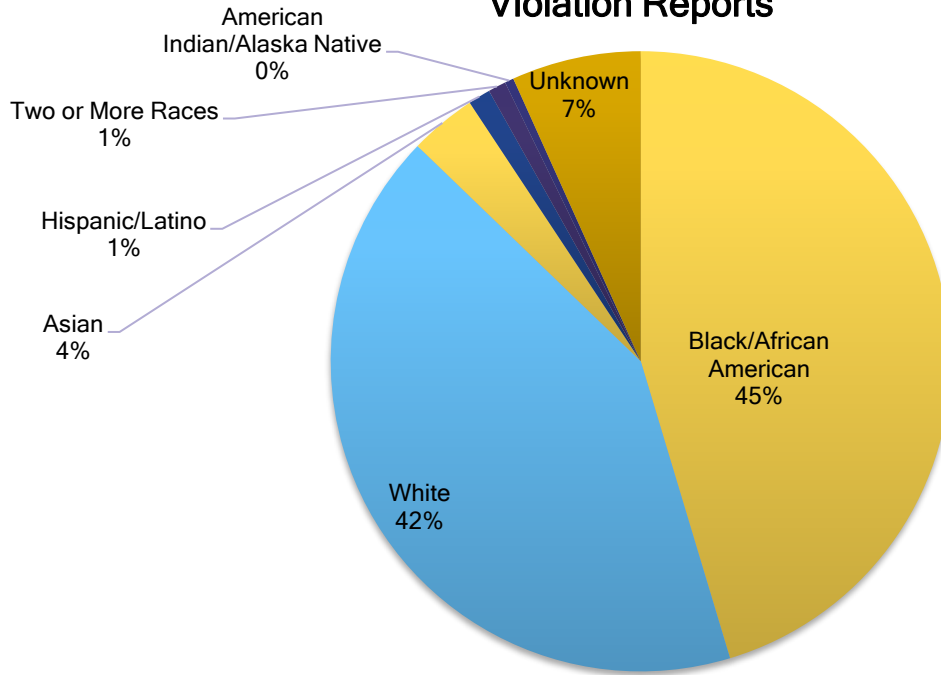
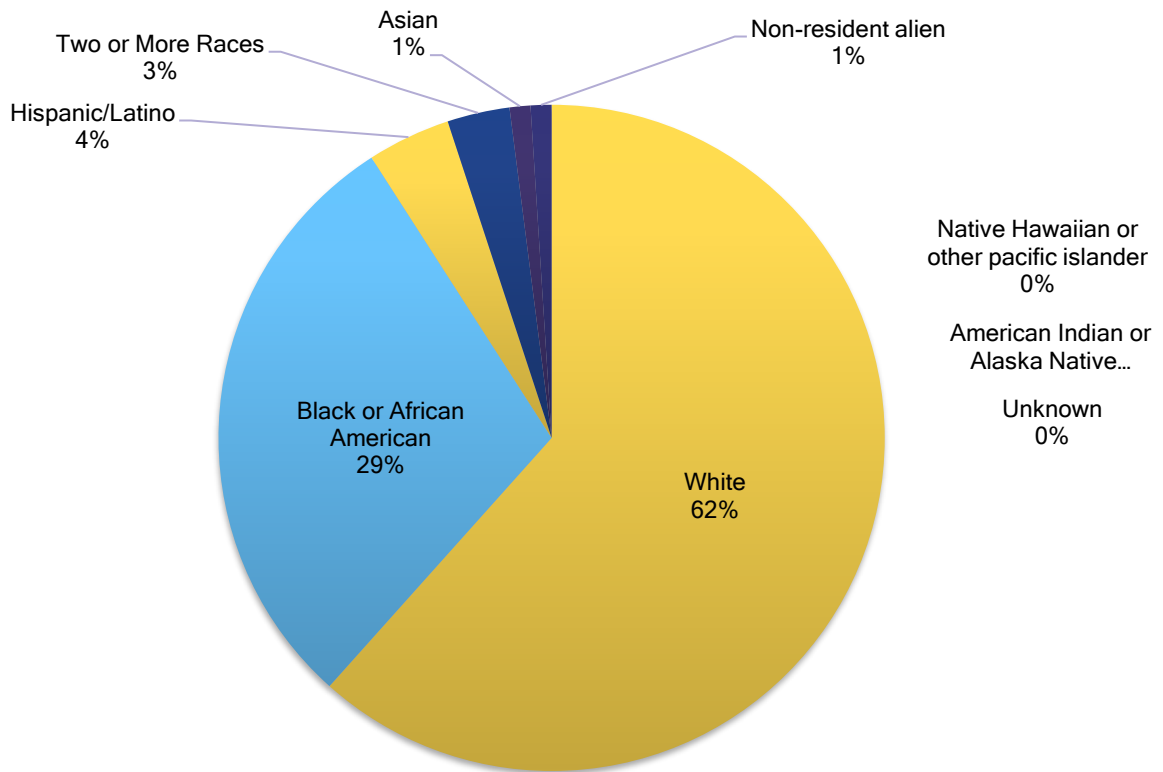


Figure 9: Fall 2020 All Undergraduate Race/Ethnicity



Source: National Center for Education Statistics - College Navigator - The University of Southern Mississippi

Age

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Age of Students in AI Violation Reports (n = 402; age unknown for 28 students)

<i>Descriptive Statistic</i>	<i>Value (years)</i>
<i>Median</i>	20
<i>Mode</i>	19
<i>Mean</i>	22
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	5.9
<i>Minimum</i>	18
<i>Maximum</i>	71

TRENDS

The data in the previous section are not analyzed, nor will conclusions be drawn in this report; it is presented for the knowledge of the Southern Miss community and for transparency.

Based on consideration of the 2020-2021 year in the Academic Integrity Office, we want to call attention to two patterns that merit further discussion.

Examination of the patterns of submitted academic integrity reports by race of student reveal some clear and concerning patterns. Specifically, about 45% (196/430) of all the academic integrity reports are for African American students, yet our student population is only 29% African American (College Navigator, NCES). Research indicates that students of color do not have higher rates of academic misconduct (Martin et al., 2011). The racial gap in students reported for alleged violations of the Student Academic Integrity Policy requires further investigation and discussion in the year ahead.

A second pattern to note is the overall underreporting of cases of alleged misconduct. We know that many more students engage in misconduct than are reported, and then we also see a lack of timely reporting when potential infractions are identified. In many cases, academic integrity personnel hear of violations after a sanction has been dispensed by a faculty member or from other faculty within the academic unit, rather than earlier in the process as outlined in this policy.

In 2017, Stiles et al. found that 46.84% of college students self-reported that they had cheated while enrolled in college. Our university reported a total enrollment of 14,606 (College Navigator, NCES) for the Fall 2020 term yet experienced only 430 reported academic integrity cases (including students with multiple violations) for the entirety of the 2020-2021 academic year. This means less than 3% of USM students were reported for academic integrity violations. We recognize that many violations will go undetected; however, reporting all suspected or known violations gives the Office of Academic Integrity a clearer perspective of a student's academic misconduct as well as what is happening at the institution.

In the year ahead, the Office of Academic Integrity will work to raise visibility of the protocol and timelines associated with the Student Academic Integrity policy and work with colleagues to increase the reporting of cases throughout the University.

FUTURE CHANGES

The Academic Integrity Policy currently under revision, with a new version to be presented to Southern Miss Administration in the Spring 2022. In Fall 2021, the proposed changes were discussed with the Undergraduate Council, Graduate Council, Council of Directors, Faculty Senate, and the academic deans. Final Revisions will be completed by the end of the Spring 2022 term, which will include these and other changes:

- Division of policy from procedural elements,
- Expansion of the Academic Integrity Appeals Board
- Creation of a simpler avenue for faculty reporting of alleged misconduct,
- Transition of the process from paper to digital reporting.

REFERENCES

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