

Evaluation of Academic Dishonesty through Blackboard at Western Technical College

by Hannah Johnson

BLACKBOARD AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Introduction

Over the past ten years, online education has steadily become a popular educational learning format. Western has adopted Blackboard, a learner management system, into its classes, whether it be through traditional, blended, or completely online classes. I am aware that Western has several methods in place to prevent plagiarism and cheating. I created a survey in order to estimate how well Western has safeguarded against academic dishonesty through their Blackboard system.

Methods

After determining the area of focus for this research project, this timeline was created:

1. Conduct secondary research and create an annotated bibliography composed of at least three sources.
 - By March 20, 2016.
2. Create a proposal.
 - By March 26, 2016.
3. Use secondary research to find 2-4 potentially problematic areas in Blackboard-Western's online learner management system.
 - By March 30, 2016.
4. Create a survey to gather primary data about cheating loopholes in online classes. Ask teachers if they have stories or ideas to share.
 - By March 31, 2016.
5. Distribute survey to classmates and other Western students.
 - By April 4, 2016.
6. Collect survey data and prepare a formal report on the information.
 - By April 18, 2016.
7. Using all primary and secondary research, prepare a presentation on the subject.
 - By April 25, 2016.
8. Deliver presentation to the class.
 - Between April 25-27, 2016.

Review of Relevant Literature

Before writing my survey questions, I did some preliminary research for studies or articles published on similar subjects. These are the five that were the most influential to my primary research.

McAllister, Charles, and Paul Watkins. "Increasing Academic Integrity In Online Classes By Fostering The Development Of Self-Regulated Learning Skills." *Clearing House* 85.3 (2012): 96-101. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 26 Mar. 2016.

McAllister and Watkins focus in on middle and secondary schools and their use of online classes. During their research, they discovered that students in large lecture classes were more likely to work with their fellow classmates to learn, and that students in online classes were more prepared for the class and were more involved in class discussions. McAllister and Watkins also included their own research and incorporated it into their paper. This includes a list of how institutions can prevent academic dishonesty.

Mitchell, Regina L. Garza. "Ethics In An Online Environment." *New Directions For Community Colleges* 2009.148 (2009): 63-70. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 26 Mar. 2016.

Using specific 2-year college scenarios, Mitchell illustrates the many ways online education can go wrong, but can also be done correctly. Mitchell clearly defines the ethical standards that should be held for all institutions using online classes, for both the teachers and those higher up. She reinforces the idea that online classes should be a campus wide effort; one in which the librarians should be involved, and one the students should be asked for their opinions on.

Tella, Adeyinka. "System-Related Factors That Predict Students' Satisfaction with The Blackboard Learning System at The University of Botswana." *African Journal of Library, Archives & Information Science* 22.1 (2012): 41-52. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 23 Mar. 2016.

A sample study of 503 undergraduate students from the University of Botswana participated in a survey that examined students' satisfaction with the Learning Management System, Blackboard. The survey focused on net benefits, self-regulated learning, content quality, teaching/learning quality, and system quality. This article was used to dig deeper into the Blackboard learning system and compare it to how Blackboard is used on the Western Campus.

Veletsianos, George, Royce Kimmons, and Karen French. "Instructor Experiences With A Social Networking Site In A Higher Education Setting: Expectations, Frustrations, Appropriation, And Compartmentalization." *Educational Technology Research & Development* 61.2 (2013): 255-278. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

This research project is on how teachers use and view learner management systems. The study involved five instructors who were familiar with Blackboard and CollegeLMS but had never before used Elgg. Veletsianos and his co-workers used Elgg to view how these instructors used the newer system to bring social networking into their classrooms. While it produced some positive data, the instructors were mostly frustrated with Elgg.

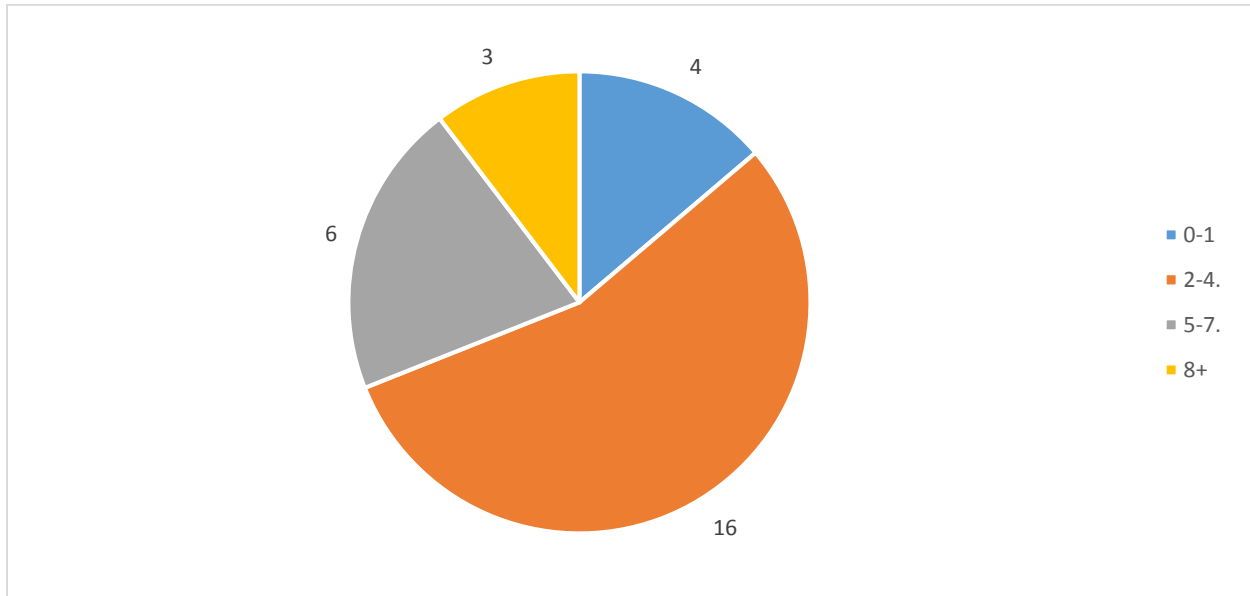
YOUNG, JEFFREY R. "Online Classes See Cheating Go High Tech." *Education Digest* 78.5 (2013): 4-8. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.

Jeffrey Young explores how easy it is for students enrolled in online courses to cheat, and how institutions are taking steps to prevent this from happening. Young tells the story of how some students worked together to pass an online class with flying colors, without opening a textbook or studying at all. When confronted, the students defended themselves stating that the institution was naïve to think this wouldn't happen. Researchers have and are continuing to develop software to prevent this from happening in the future. Because this is still happening, despite efforts to stop it, more research must be done to prevent academic dishonesty.

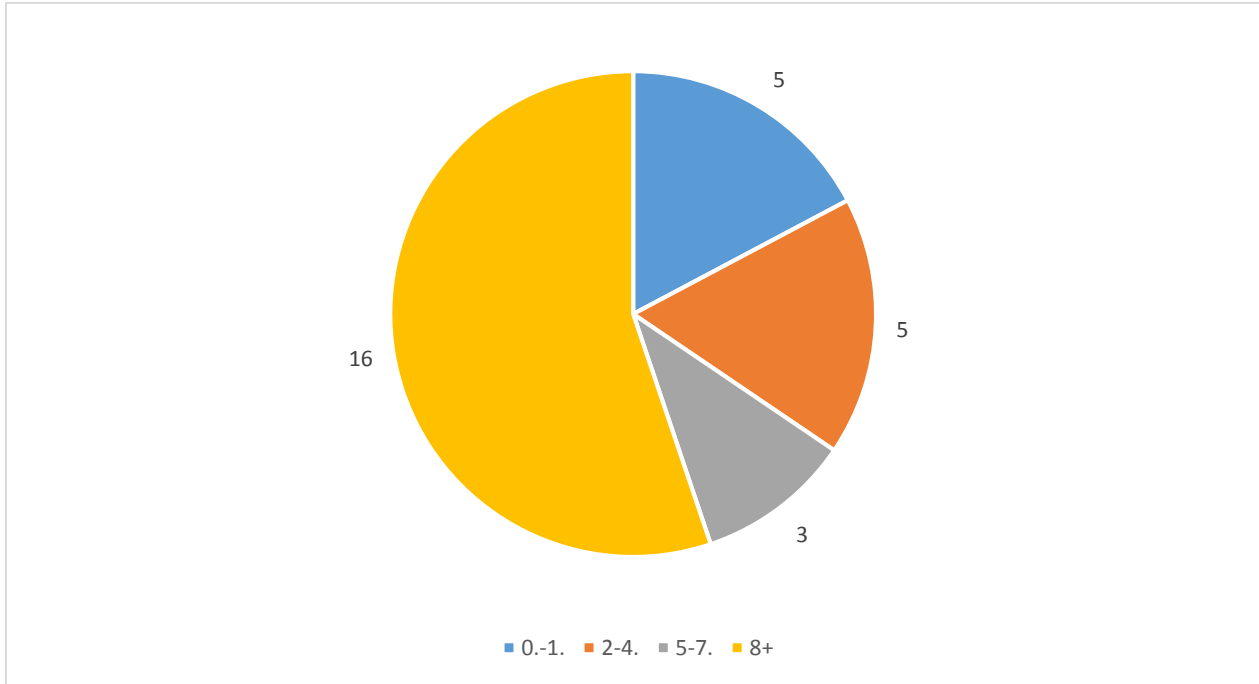
Research results

After drafting the survey questions, I published them through Google Forms. Throughout the week, a total of twenty-nine students were surveyed.

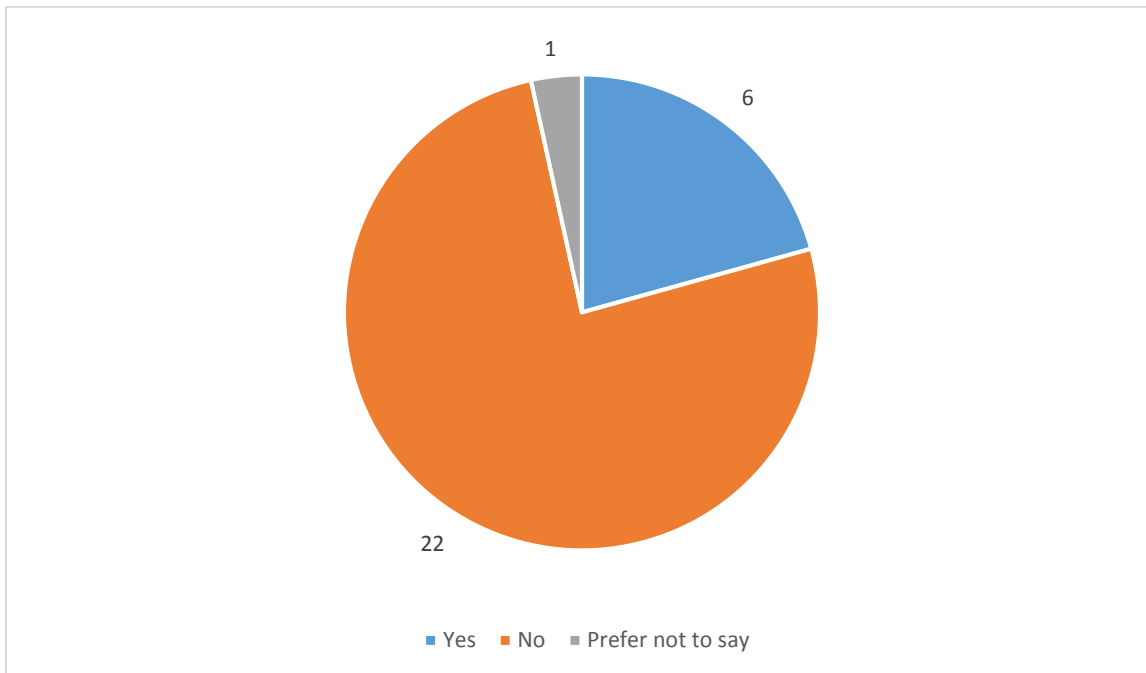
1. How many blended or completely online classes have you enrolled in/taken at Western Technical College?



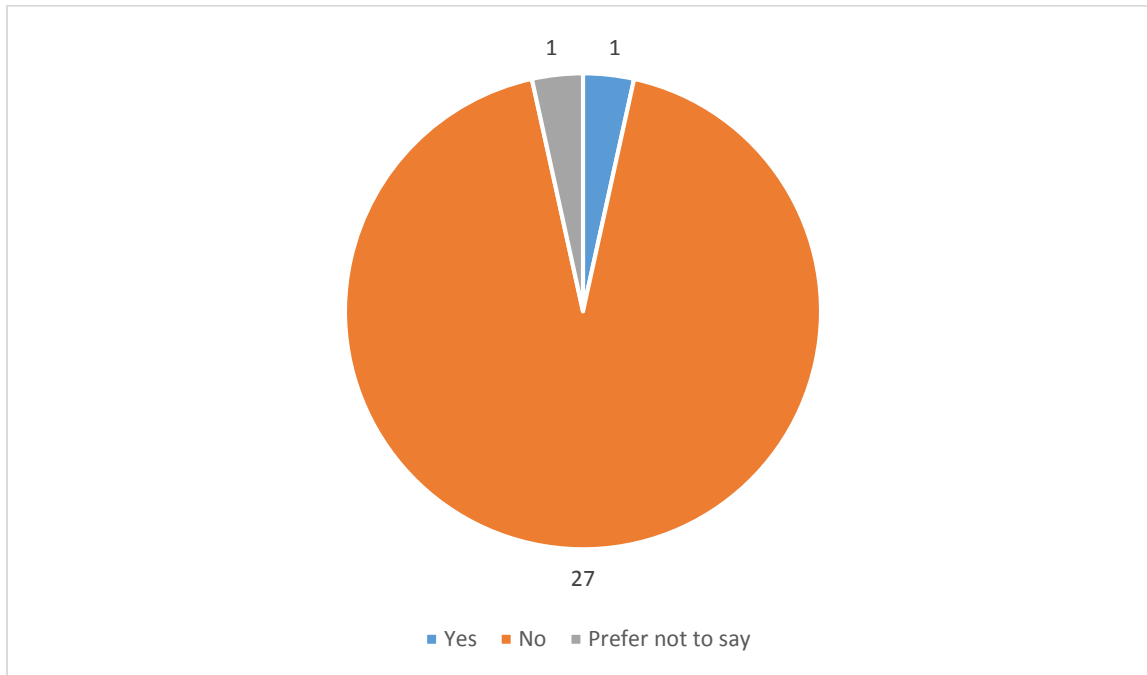
2. While enrolled at Western Technical College, how many quizzes or tests have you taken online without a teacher present?



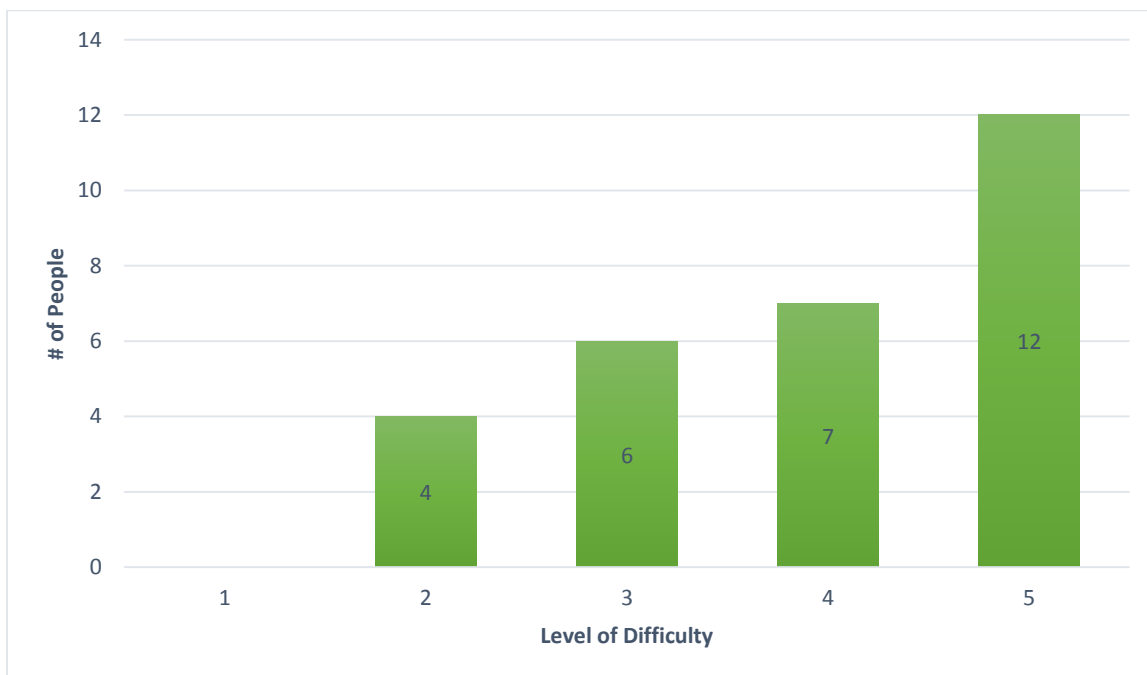
3. Have you ever cheated during an online test or quiz while enrolled at Western?



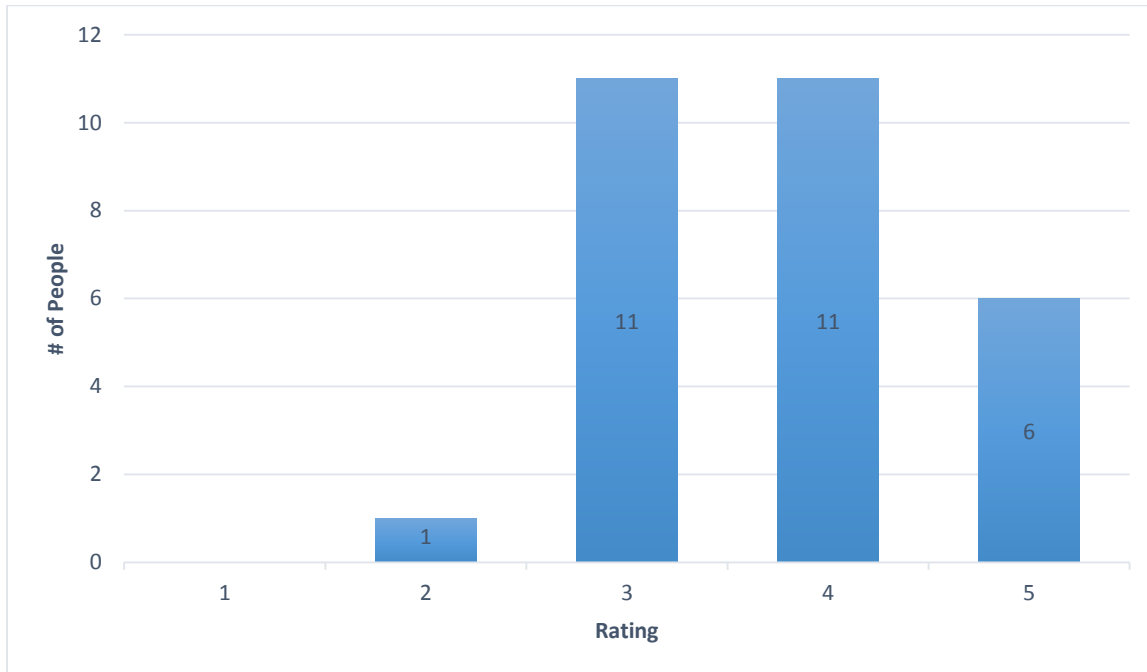
4. Have you ever submitted an assignment online that you did not fully write/create yourself?



5. How easy do you think it would be to cheat on online assignments through blackboard? Five being extremely easy.



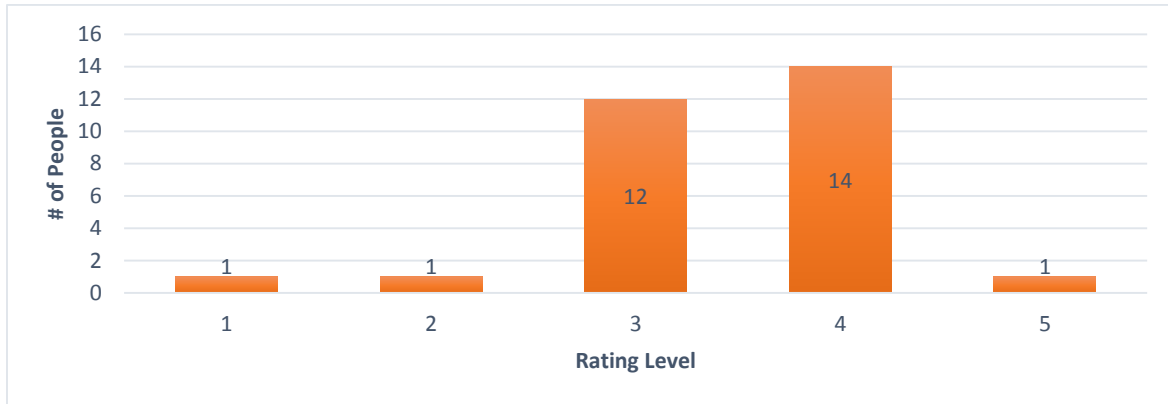
6. How well do you think the Global Reference Database tool reviews work for plagiarism? Five being very well.



7. Please write down any comments you have about using the Global Reference Database tool for plagiarism below.

Only two responses gave any input on the GRD, otherwise the students had either never heard of the GRD, or didn't have anything to say. The first of the comments remarked that sometimes the GRD will mark sections for plagiarism that the student knows they wrote themselves. The second comment didn't know how large the GRD's database for submissions is, so they didn't know how reliable the service was.

8. How effective do you think Western's current precautions against online academic dishonesty are? Five being extremely effective.



Conclusion

This research shows that even though it's common for students to take online and blended classes, Western has left several opportunities for its students to cheat. Over half of students surveyed reported that they had taken eight or more quizzes/tests without a teacher present, leaving time to share or Google answers. Six out of twenty-nine students took advantage of this opportunity, while the other twenty-three did not. These numbers were taken with a grain of salt, as over half of the students reported they believed that it would be easy to cheat through Blackboard.

Recommendation

After analyzing the survey results, it is clear that a majority of the students at Western are not prone to academic dishonesty. In order to continue this trend, I suggest that Western mandates a teacher to be present during all online and on-campus quizzes and tests to eliminate the possibility of cheating.

Students also should be informed on what the Global Reference Database tool is, and how it works- including how much the teacher uses the tool. Most students had either a basic understanding or no knowledge at all on what the GRD was.

If both of these subjects are addressed, Western will have a solid online education system with less opportunity for academic dishonesty.

April 14, 2016