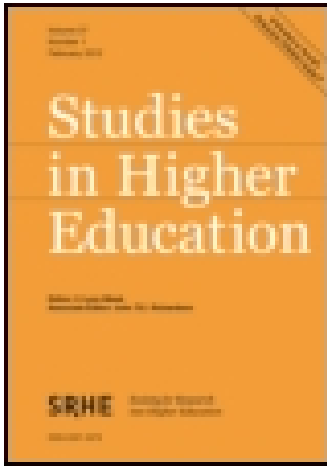


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## Degrees of integrity: the threat of corruption in higher education

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Corruption in higher education is the focus of growing international concern among governments, educators, students, and other stakeholders. Those working in higher education institutions now face a unique convergence of pressures that is creating a heightened threat to the integrity of the higher education enterprise worldwide. This paper draws on recent measures of the perceived magnitude of corruption, studies of respondents' direct experience with corruption, and case studies of specific instances of corruption to illustrate the nature and extent of corruption in higher education. The authors suggest that the impact of corrupt practices in higher education can have a wider negative influence to the extent that it breaks the link between personal effort and anticipation of reward. The risk is that employees and students come to believe that personal success comes, not through merit and hard work, but through cutting corners.

**Keywords:** academic misconduct; organizational culture; organizational behaviour; plagiarism; professional work

The prevalence of corruption in higher education is the focus of growing international concern and attention among governments, educators, students, and other stakeholders (Transparency International 2013a; Kaunas Conference 2013). While corruption in higher education is not a new phenomenon, this paper argues that those working in higher education institutions are now facing a unique convergence of pressures that is creating heightened threat to the integrity of the higher education enterprise worldwide.

### Risks posed by corruption

Considerable research supports the claim that widespread corruption deters investment, hinders growth, erodes fiscal stability, promotes inequality, reduces the impact of development assistance, reduces the effectiveness of public administration, distorts public expenditure decisions and erodes the rule of law (Transparency International 2013b; Chapman 2005; World Bank 2000, 2002; Goudie and Stasavagem 1997; Elliot 1997; Gupta, Davoodi, and Alonso-Terme 1998). The World Bank has identified corruption as the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development (World Bank 2002; Chapman 2005).

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While corruption, generally, is seen as pervasive, corruption specific to the education sector is difficult to disentangle, though several recent studies have made important contributions to doing just that. The *Global Corruption Barometer* (Transparency International 2013b), the largest survey tracking worldwide public opinion on corruption, surveyed more than 114,000 respondents in 107 countries for its 2013 report. Its findings indicate that corruption in education is a growing concern. Worldwide and across all levels of the formal education system, 41% of ordinary citizen respondents regarded the education system in their country to be corrupt or extremely corrupt (Table 1). Moreover, there has been a 6% increase between 2010/2011 and 2013 in this view.

One limitation is that these international data are not disaggregated by level of the education system; the extent higher education is viewed as corrupt cannot be separated out. It seems likely that if primary and secondary education are widely seen as corrupt, citizens will hold similar expectations of higher education. That logic, however, involves speculation. An important component in mobilizing action against corrupt practices at the level of higher education is further evidence of the nature and magnitude of the problem. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of such evidence.

One reason education, generally, and higher education, more specifically, are particularly susceptible to corruption is that decisions perceived to have significant consequences for people's lives are widely distributed across a number of "gatekeepers" within the education structure. Within the university context, individual instructors, student services personnel, and administrators each make decisions that can have important consequences for both students and colleagues. Another reason is that many of the key activities of higher education, such as teaching, research, and many aspects of administration, are conducted largely out of sight of other university personnel. For example, instructors' grading practices or out-of-class tutoring are largely invisible to their colleagues. Many daily administrative decisions by senior officials may be largely invisible to the instructional staff or students.

Among the biggest risks of corruption in higher education is the message it sends to the generation-in-training. While there are ample examples of large-scale corruption within universities, it is the pervasive, petty corruption that permeates the day-to-day transactions in the classroom and across the wider campus that may be most debilitating to the larger society in the long run. The real damage occurs when employees and students come to believe that personal success comes, not through merit and hard work, but through favoritism, bribery, and fraud. Widespread petty corruption breaks the link between personal effort and anticipation of reward (Chapman 2005) which, in turn, can limit the return on society's economic and social investment in higher education. This breakdown in the link between personal effort and reward, if widely shared, has the potential to undermine civil society well into the future.

### **Definitions of corruption**

A common theme across the corruption literature is the difficulty in clearly defining what behaviors constitute corruption. While there is widespread agreement about blatantly illegal acts of bribery or fraud, there are a range of other issues around which reasonable people may disagree (Chapman 2005). For example, some authors view universities taking a percentage of research grants to cover university administrative costs as a form of corruption (Scott 2013, 41); others regard it as prudent institutional management (University of Minnesota 2013). Some university researchers believe that allowing confidentiality around findings of industry-sponsored research to protect the

Table 1. Percent of respondents who believe that the education system of their country (all levels) is corrupt or extremely corrupt.

Country	2010/ 2011	2013	Country	2010/ 2011	2013	Country	2010/ 2011	2013
Afghanistan	35	33	Indonesia	36	49	Russia	58	72
Albania	–	70	Iraq	27	22	Rwanda	17	4
Algeria	–	62	Israel	25	23	Senegal	56	54
Argentina	19	23	Italy	28	29	Serbia	54	70
Armenia	76	58	Jamaica	–	19	Sierra Leone	64	64
Australia	14	19	Japan	52	55	Slovakia	–	39
Azerbaijan	–	37	Kazakhstan	–	55	Slovenia	30	26
Bangladesh	23	12	Kenya	34	37	Solomon Isl.	28	29
Belgium	–	17	Korea (South)	48	30	South Africa	32	32
Bolivia	20	36	Kosovo	24	47	South Sudan	39	48
Bosnia and Herzegovina	56	64	Kyrgyzstan	–	82	Spain	21	11
Brazil	19	33	Latvia	19	19	Sri Lanka	34	33
Bulgaria	39	47	Lebanon	38	67	Sudan	38	61
Burundi	87	46	Liberia	69	87	Switzerland	7	11
Cambodia	41	26	Libya	–	47	Taiwan	37	45
Cameroon	57	72	Lithuania	31	40	Tanzania	56	74
Canada	19	20	Luxembourg	18	21	Thailand	41	32
Chile	35	60	Madagascar	–	56	Tunisia	–	39
Colombia	22	37	Malawi	61	71	Turkey	46	42
Croatia	49	50	Malaysia	20	13	Uganda	49	46
Cyprus	–	27	Maldives	32	26	Ukraine	68	69
Czech Rep.	38	30	Mexico	34	43	UK	13	18
DR Congo	74	75	Moldova	61	58	USA	31	34
Denmark	5	6	Mongolia	57	63	Uruguay	–	24
Egypt	–	67	Morocco	– <sup>a</sup>	60	Vanuatu	16	41
El Salvador	16	40	Mozambique	67	79	Venezuela	26	49
Estonia	–	13	Nepal	38	45	Vietnam	45	49
Ethiopia	13	36	New Zealand	13	16	Yemen	62	62
FYR Macedonia	50	46	Nigeria	66	54	Zambia	55	77
Fiji	15	24	Norway	11	13	Zimbabwe	42	67
Finland	10	7	Pakistan	43	43	<b>Global</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>
France	13	16	Palestine	16	19			
Georgia	13	22	Papua N. G.	29	47			
Germany	12	19	Paraguay	–	32			
Ghana	66	66	Peru	36	48			
Greece	42	45	Philippines	28	32			
Hungary	17	19	Portugal	20	35			
India	51	61	Romania	37	33			

Source: Compiled by author from Transparency International, *Global Corruption Barometer* 2010/2011 and 2013.

Note: “–” denotes the lack of data for that year. These countries are retained in the table since data for years in which they were available are included in calculation of the global mean.

<sup>a</sup> – The original value of “0” for Morocco was dropped from the table by the authors as it was judged to need further explanation.

proprietary rights of the funder is necessary and appropriate; others think such practices violate organizational ethics of openness in research.

In other cases, the issue is not so much disagreement, but that individuals do not understand ethical lines or realize they are crossing them. For example, students may

not understand the point at which collaboration becomes cheating. In yet other cases, behaviors may have become so ingrained that participants may no longer think of them as corrupt. For example, an instructor at a public university who takes a part-time teaching position at a nearby private university may not think it is inappropriate to reallocate her time away from her main job in ways that would short-change her public university students.

In some cases, what appears to be corruption is merely the incompetence of key actors or the inadequacies of the infrastructure in which they work (Chapman 2005). For example, the inability of a university to account for all of its funds may signal financial impropriety, or it may only reflect shortcomings of poorly trained accountants. As Heyneman (2013, 104) points out, bad management, inefficiency, reluctance to share confidential information, and slowness in decision making, as frustrating as they may be, do not necessarily signify corruption.

In the remainder of this paper, the authors use the definition of corruption employed by Transparency International (2013a) – the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. This definition encompasses both public and private higher education settings. It is a broader definition than that used by the World Bank (1997, 8) – “the use of public office for private gains” – as it encompasses more than just those in public office. It also captures more than just financial malfeasance. As Cepić (2013) observed, corrupt practices may involve a wider set of benefits, ranging from “sexual favors, a new set of car tires ... a pig, a lamb ... a piece of ham”. While a number of authors offer typologies, hierarchies, and alternative definitions of corruption, for example Osipian (2009), Rumyantseva (2005), and Jain (2001), the Transparency International definition has wide acceptance and use. The definition matters, since how corruption is defined has consequences for efforts to combat it.

### **Sources of data on corruption in education**

Due to its secretive nature, corruption is notoriously hard to measure (Chapman 2005; Andersson and Heywood 2009; Urra 2007) and empirical work attempting to quantify the extent of corruption, particularly in monetary terms, has been limited (Mauro 1997; Galtung 2006). There are five main sources of data regarding corruption in education: surveys of perceptions, surveys that collect reports on behavior engaged in or observed by the respondent, media accounts, citizen reports, and studies of court records.

- (1) *Surveys that collect respondents’ perceptions of the nature and extent of corrupt practices.* International surveys of this type are well illustrated by the *Corruption Perceptions Index* and the *Global Corruption Barometer*, both published by Transparency International. The strength of such surveys is that they can provide comparable data across large numbers of respondents. A disadvantage is that surveys rely on the subjective judgment of respondents who may hold varying views about what constitutes inappropriate behavior. Nonetheless, advocates of this approach argue that people’s actions are based on their perceptions. Even if people differ in the specific behaviors they view as inappropriate, such surveys provide a useful common metric of subjective judgment.
- (2) *Survey-based reports of behavior.* There are a variety of national and sub-national surveys that collect individuals’ self-reporting of the extent they have engaged, or know first-hand of others who have engaged in inappropriate

practices. For example, the *Global Corruption Barometer* conducted by Transparency International surveys people's direct experiences with bribery. Another example of this approach is a 2007 Soros Foundation survey, discussed by Leu (2013) that studied corruption in on-campus accommodation in Romania. The survey of 1007 instructional staff and 1171 students inquired about respondents' own experience in paying bribes for better accommodation. The survey found that 11% of the students stated that dorm managers asked directly for gifts, money or services; 10% admitted to actually having made such payments. The study found that the amount of a typical bribe for campus accommodation was €200 (US\$258). A strength of this approach is that by probing respondents' knowledge of specific activities, such surveys go further than just collecting perceptions. A weakness is that a majority of these studies tend to be relatively small in scale and differ considerably in sophistication and rigor.

- (3) *Media reports*. Media reports often operate as case studies of specific instances of corruption. Perhaps the most common form is newspaper stories that are either exposing alleged misbehavior or are reporting the outcome of judicial proceedings around such behavior. For example, the German chapter of Transparency International operates a website ([www.hochschulwatch.de](http://www.hochschulwatch.de)) in which citizens can report incidents of corporate connections at German universities that they regard as inappropriate. The German daily newspaper *Tageszeitung* then gives each submission a legal review while also scouring media reports for interesting story leads. A strength of media accounts is that they typically provide more detail as to the context, motives, mechanisms, and consequences of the inappropriate practices. Moreover, the incidents they report are better researched than are those that surface in a survey about what a respondent has seen a friend or colleague do. A weakness is that they tend to focus on individual cases of inappropriate behavior and do not provide a basis for wider generalization.
- (4) *Citizen reports*. Transparency International's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALACs) encourage citizen complaints about specific instances of corruption, and support people in following up on these complaints (Zellmann 2013). The first ALACs began in 2003, and today they operate in more than 50 countries. To date, over 100,000 people have contacted these centers. The standard ALAC consists of toll-free complaints hotlines, drop-in offices and mobile services to provide free legal advice, support and assistance to whistleblowers, witnesses, and victims of corruption. The data generated through ALAC casework is used to identify systemic weaknesses and can be mined for advocacy purposes. ALACs play a useful role in helping citizens navigate public institutions, and prepare relevant and actionable complaints. While ALACs are not focused on corruption in any specific sector, they have addressed a number of cases concerning education institutions.
- (5) *Studies of court records*. The strength of studies of court records is the availability of detail and objective indication that rules were broken. The weakness is that relatively few such studies are reported in the literature. One effort that comes close to this approach was undertaken by the European Association for Law and Policy (ELA) (2013). In organizing its 2013 international conference "Coping with Legal Challenges in Education", participants from a number of European and Central Asian countries were asked to complete a pre-conference



questionnaire, which asked, among other things, about “cases of corruption in higher education sent to the courts” in their country. Results were then reported as part of the conference.

### **Corruption in higher education**

While corruption more specific to higher education is not new, four factors have converged to create conditions that have, in some cases, fostered and accelerated corrupt practices. First, in many countries public funding for higher education has lagged (ADB 2011). Even in countries in which it has increased, the rapid increase in the number of students has sometimes led to a lower per-student allocation (UNESCO 2013) (Table 2). The response, all too often, has been an erosion in salaries and conditions of service for instructional staff. This erosion is well illustrated in a study by Shaw et al. (2011) tracing how cuts in government support to higher education in Ukraine played out in the lives of university instructional staff. As salaries stagnated, class sizes increased, and workloads grew, some instructional staff became disillusioned. Some turned to inappropriate behavior to compensate for lost income, such as selling grades, ghost-writing papers, or they accepted supplemental employment opportunities off campus which draws them away from their university responsibilities.

Second, this decline in government support is often paired with an emphasis on universities finding more of their own funding. Often referred to as “academic capitalism” (Slaughter and Leslie 1997), this expectation that universities should secure more of their own budget reflects the growing financial pressures and competing public-spending priorities faced by governments. However, it is further fueled by a widely held view that post-secondary students, as the main beneficiaries of their education, should assume more responsibility for the costs of their education. The outcome, however, is that colleges and universities are under considerable financial pressure to introduce new tuition-bearing programs, introduce less expensive modes of instructional delivery such as online courses, secure more research funding, and commercialize the results of that research (ADB 2011, 2012). Some universities generate income through the operation of auxiliary businesses. For example, a university in Thailand operates seven hospitals (including a veterinary hospital); another owns significant land in and around Bangkok and operates as a major landlord (Chapman and Chien 2014).

These pressures work their way into the lives of instructional staff as they come under intensified pressure to increase their teaching loads, teach in special weekend courses, secure funded research, and enter into consulting arrangements on behalf of their universities. While many observers regard these changes as positive, they can also open the door to temptation, to the extent that some faculty members respond to those pressures by taking inappropriate shortcuts in their work.

Third, as part of expecting universities to raise more of their own resources, universities are being granted greater administrative autonomy (ADB 2011; Chapman and Austin 2002). Decisions that were once made by those at a central or provincial ministry are now made by campus- and departmental-level administrators. While this is widely viewed as a way to improve the relevance of campus-level decisions, it also can, on occasion, translate into more variation in what is regarded as acceptable practice, less rigorous oversight of faculty and staff behavior, and greater opportunity to bend rules in an effort to burnish the organizational image. At the same time, budget cuts to universities have cut into university’s internal control systems (Kranacher

Table 2. Public expenditure on tertiary education per student in purchasing power parity (PPP) dollars, selected countries, 2000, 2005 and 2011.

Country	2000	2005	2011	Change: 2005 to 2011
Australia	8650	7990	7958	decrease
Austria	15,968	19,216	16,877	decrease
Azerbaijan	439	671	1931	
Belarus	m	2618	2148	decrease
Belgium	m	12,801	13,481	
Benin	2896	2332	1386	decrease
Brazil	4869	3298	3176	decrease
Bulgaria	m	2759	2212	decrease
Burkina Faso	m	2421	2449	
Burundi	4242	1283	2035	
Cameroon	m	1527	919	decrease
Cape Verde	m	2079	1699	decrease
Chad	m	4790	2931	decrease
Chile	2241	1569	2459	
China, Hong Kong SAR	m	19,615	12,081	decrease
China, Macao SAR	15,961	9084	14,910	
Colombia	2178	1571	2304	
Cyprus	16,992	17,844	11,788	decrease
Czech Republic	5474	5950	5826	decrease
Denmark	27,857	23,106	22,829	decrease
El Salvador	507	951	746	decrease
Estonia	m	3648	4819	
Finland	12,084	12,147	13,876	
France	9931	11,832	13,546	
Ghana	m	3968	2309	decrease
Guinea	m	2310	1448	decrease
Guyana	m	994	633	decrease
Hungary	5791	4952	5204	
Iceland	11,362	10,739	11,074	
India	1771	1319	2162	
Iran	m	2308	2213	decrease
Ireland	11,534	10,808	15,525	
Israel	7043	5495	5754	
Italy	8695	7409	8274	
Japan	5291	6124	8017	
Kazakhstan	m	539	1164	
Kyrgyzstan	263	417	424	
Lebanon	930	1945	1224	decrease
Lithuania	m	2979	3776	
Madagascar	m	1486	881	decrease
Mauritius	m	3189	1787	decrease
Mexico	m	5781	6263	
Morocco	3619	3212	3800	
Netherlands	17,251	16,798	17,781	
New Zealand	m	7569	9403	
Norway	21,002	28,216	25,448	decrease
Oman	m	3157	11,174	
Peru	m	627	867	
Poland	2395	3411	4193	
Portugal	6437	6587	7702	
Republic of Korea	m	2113	3559	

(Continued)



Table 2. (Continued.)

Country	2000	2005	2011	Change: 2005 to 2011
Romania	m	3057	3517	
Rwanda	8904	3026	1503	decrease
Senegal	m	3860	3598	decrease
Slovakia	4186	4467	4450	decrease
Slovenia	m	5540	6473	
Spain	6066	7290	9010	
Sweden	16,699	15,077	16,397	
Switzerland	23,190	24,632	21,348	decrease
Tajikistan	m	187	274	
Thailand	2223	1917	1885	decrease
Tunisia	4784	3988	4650	
UK	6811	10,831	7373	decrease
USA	m	10,569	9814	decrease

Note: m = data missing; -1 refers to year 2010; -2 refers to year 2009.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics database extracted on September 9, 2013.

2013, 116). For example, researchers found a high degree of hiring and dispensing of other benefits on the basis of family connections occurred in some regions following the 1998 decentralization process which gave Italian universities greater autonomy (Durante, Labartino, and Perotti 2011 as cited in Omotola 2013).

Fourth, as universities seek wider recognition and international standing through higher placement in international university rankings, faculty members have come under intense pressure to conduct research and publish in top-tier journals. Major research universities in Malaysia, as in other countries, provide generous financial bonuses to those who publish in top journals. While there is nothing inherently wrong with creating incentives to encourage desired faculty behavior, such pressure can fuel the temptation for faculty to plagiarize and “borrow” ideas from subordinates or colleagues. In some cases, faculty feel this has distorted personal and institutional priorities.

In short, faculty members are facing a challenging economic context even as they are coming under greater job pressure, sometimes within contexts characterized by weak oversight of their behavior. Together, the impact of these factors creates the motive and the opportunity for corrupt practices to enter into the equation.

Shaw (2013) posits that these shifting organizational conditions affecting higher education have converged to create five characteristics that are now shaping the work lives of individual students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

- (1) *Excessive competition.* As universities become more profit-oriented, competition among faculty has increased. Competition can stimulate excellence; but too much of it can undercut collaboration and drive faculty to cross the line in pursuit of personal gain.
- (2) *Misalignment of teaching and research.* Universities seeking wider international recognition and respect often assign high value to faculty publications in international top-tier journals (Chapman and Chien 2014). One result is that research has gained precedence over teaching in many academic working environments. To meet both their teaching and research obligations, some

faculty may abuse their authority to escape the dilemma of failing to meet some expectations in order to satisfy others.

- (3) *Disproportionate rewards.* To encourage faculty to publish, some institutions offer substantial financial incentives for publication in top journals. These disproportionate rewards of such publications can create incentives for dishonesty (Fang and Casadevall 2011).
- (4) *Injustice in working environments.* When people perceive the rules, processes, and procedures of their workplace as unfair, they are more likely to compensate by engaging in unethical behaviors (Tyler and Blader 2003). Perceptions of injustice are positively correlated with self-reported misbehavior in universities (Martinson et al. 2006).
- (5) *Concentration of power with insufficient checks and balances.* In many countries, governments' efforts to have higher education institutions cover more of their own costs comes with an agreement to give these institutions more administrative control over those funds (Chapman and Austin 2002). At the same time, in universities with a tradition of shared faculty governance, that sharing is being challenged by demands for increased efficiency and responsiveness to the market (Shaw 2013). In pursuit of efficiency, administrative decisions in some universities are increasingly being consolidated in the hands of a smaller group of decision makers.

The manner in which the shifting institutional goals translate into pressure on individual faculty members is well illustrated in a recent study of higher education in Malaysia and Thailand by Chapman and Chien 2014. A key goal of governments in both countries in funding higher education is to promote national economic development. Particularly in Malaysia, the government's premise is that an excellent higher education system will signal to the world that the country had strong human capacity and a well-qualified workforce, thereby making it a good place for international investment. However, for that investment to pay off, top universities needed to be widely recognized as excellent. The most widely used metric of excellence is international university rankings. Rankings, in turn, are driven, in large part, by a university's publication rate. Hence, the return on government investment in higher education, to the extent it is viewed in terms of national economic development, rests to a meaningful extent on individual faculty research productivity.

### Manifestations of corruption in higher education

Table 3 identifies a variety of corrupt practices that, at times, occur within higher education settings; Table 4 offers a selection of specific examples that document cases of corruption, intended to give more life to the discussion that follows. Neither list is intended to be comprehensive, but, rather, both illustrate the wide variety of activities that might be found in higher education settings. There are few surprises; the forms corruption takes within higher education are widely known and documented.

While there are numerous examples of inappropriate practices, estimating the magnitude of corruption in higher education is more elusive. The *Corruption Perceptions Index* and the *Global Corruption Barometer*, discussed earlier, are arguably the most comprehensive estimates of the pervasiveness of corruption. However, smaller, country- or region-specific studies have been conducted by both public and private

Table 3. Illustrative examples of corrupt practices in higher education.

Administrators (at all levels)	Faculty/Staff	Students
Embezzlement	Embezzlement	Giving payments, barter, or other incentives for admission
Misappropriation of funds	Misappropriation of funds	Giving payments, barter, or other incentives for advance copies of tests
Changing students' grades for money or favors	Changing students' grades for money or favors	Giving payments, barter, or other incentives for grades
Basing promotions on inappropriate criteria	Selling admissions	Giving payments, barter, or other incentives for graduation
Running sham journals	Selling examination scores or grades	Giving payments, barter, or other incentives for preferential and special treatment
Allowing donors to have undue influence in academic decision making	Falsifying data	Plagiarism
Nepotism/cronyism/favoritism in hiring, promotions, assignments, salaries	Plagiarism	Cheating
Awarding degrees in return for favors	Gift authoring	
Running or collaborating in the operation of degree mills	Ghost authoring	
Awarding sham degrees	Withholding research data needed for replication Paying for non-merit based publication	

Table 4. Manifestations of corruption, selected examples.

Illustration Example	Illustration	Citation
Special treatment in university accreditation review.	The National Accreditation Commission in Chile was accused of receiving bribes in exchange for accreditations, fraudulently vouching for the quality of higher education institutions.	Méritan 2012.
Financial corruption: asset misappropriation.	In March 2011 the former vice-president of finance for Iona College in New York pleaded guilty to embezzling more than US\$850,000, which included issuing college checks for her own use, making personal purchases on a college credit card and submitting false invoices to the college for reimbursement.	Reuters 2011.
Financial corruption: skimming.	The University of Montana lost more than US\$300,000 over seven years when a former residence life employee stole student rent payments made in cash.	Missoulian, 2011.
Financial corruption: shell companies.	In April 2011 a former project manager at Vassar College in New York was arrested for creating a fictitious construction company and charging the college for services that had not been performed. The scheme netted US\$1.9 million over five years.	Mid-Hudson News Network 2011.
Selling admissions.	With a shortage of college spaces, prospective students complain that wealth and connections trump entrance examination scores.	Murdock 2012.
Selling admissions.	Three staff members of the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics extorted at least CNY550,000 (US\$66,505) from seven students in South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, threatening to deprive them of their admission to the university – even though they had earlier enrolled unless the students paid them.	China Daily 2004.
Falsifying admissions applications.	Some prospective students in Russia are reported to illegally obtain proof of belonging to a disadvantaged category (such as victims of Chernobyl catastrophe) to entitle them to bypass competitive admission examinations.	Popov 2013.

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued.)

Illustration Example	Illustration	Citation
Running “sham” journals.	Instructors, under pressure to publish as a condition of salary and contract renewal, were offered the option of publishing their work in a journal published by their own university with virtually no international audience. The institution could appear to hold high standards of research productivity while, in practice, condoning publication in low quality, low visibility journals.	Shaw et al. 2011.
Allowing donors to have undue influence in academic decision making.	A foundation bankrolled by businessman Charles Koch pledged US\$1.5 million for positions in Florida State University’s economics department. In return, his representatives get to screen and sign off on any hires for a new program promoting “political economy and free enterprise.” The contract specifies that an advisory committee appointed by Koch decides which candidates should be considered.	Hundley 2013; Pareene 2011.
Misleading students about employment prospects.	Colleges misrepresent the probability of graduates finding employment, students take loans to attend, are unable to find employment after graduation, and default on their loans or are strapped by heavy debt.	De Simone 2013; Lauerman 2010.
Cronyism/ nepotism.	In Italy, the 1998 decentralization process that granted universities greater autonomy appears to have increased incidence of local professors engaging in favoritism in hiring.	Durante, Labartino, and Perotti 2011.
Nepotism and/or cronyism in hiring, promotions, assignments, salaries	A 2008 survey conducted by the University of Zagreb found that 9% of the teaching staff were offered bribery, one-third of them knew of a case of plagiarism among their colleagues and 26% of the student respondents admitted to plagiarizing in their written assignments.	Dražen 2013.
Operating or supporting a degree mill.	Diploma mills are usually, but not always, online entities that offer substandard or bogus degrees in exchange for payment and little else. These entities will grant a degree ostensibly based on a review of life experience with little or no coursework.	Cohen and Winch 2011

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued.)

Illustration Example	Illustration	Citation
Awarding degrees in return for favors.	Estimates suggest that about 600 out of the approximately 25,000 people a year who receive a doctoral degree in Germany have used undue means.	Wolf 2013.
Using positional power to extort personal benefits.	A dormitory manager in Romania accepted money in return for providing campus accommodation to ineligible students.	Leu 2013.
Falsification of data in research.	A study at the University of Latvia found that 66% of the faculty members surveyed though their colleagues had “very often” used fictitious data or falsified research results.	Danovskis 2013.
Plagiarism.	To improve his publication record in advance of a promotion review, a faculty member in Greece engaged in plagiarism.	Pastra 2013.
Gift authoring/ Ghost authoring.	A survey of articles published in six medical journals in 2008 found that one-fifth (21%) included an undeserving honorary author, and 8% of articles may have omitted important contributors.	Wislar et al. 2011.
Altering research data or findings.	A common form of falsification in research has been the inappropriate alteration of images to eliminate certain data points or to improve the appearance of data trends.	Anderson and Kamata 2013; Anderson et al. 2007.
Bias in conducting or interpreting research.	Research conducted into the efficacy of a specific class of drugs – calcium channel antagonists – for treating cardiovascular disorders found that university-based researchers were much more likely to report positive findings for the drugs under investigation if they had a financial relationship with the manufacturers of these drugs or received support from others in the pharmaceutical industry.	Stelfox et al. 1998.
Paying for non-merit based publication.	In Nigeria, a faculty member paid a journal to publish her article without scientific review.	Omotola 2013.
Using positional power to extort personal benefits.	A Bosnia-Herzegovina professor allowed only those students who bought the book authored by the professor to take the examination.	Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina 2013.
Using positional power to extort personal benefits.	Conditioning grades on students’ participation in private tutoring, offered by the same instructor for a fee.	Gabedava 2013.

(Continued)



Table 4. (Continued.)

Illustration Example	Illustration	Citation
Private tutoring as quid pro quo for grades.	In the Republic of Georgia, faculty members conspire with each other to ensure passing grades for students who hire them as tutors.	MacWilliams 2002; Rostiashvili 2004.
Selling admissions.	In 2007 an admissions clerk at a Californian university was alleged to have taken US\$4,000 in bribes from three Kuwaiti students in return for granting them admission to the university.	Osipian 2013.
Cheating.	A 2005 study found that 72% of Australian students admitted to cheating.	Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke 2005.
Cheating.	A 2010 study of undergraduate students pursuing economic/business degrees in Portugal found that 62% of students admitted to having copied at least once.	Teixeira and Rocha 2010.
Cheating.	In a 2007 study in Taiwan, over 60% of undergraduate students reported some form of academic dishonesty.	Chun-Hua, Lin, and Ling-Yu 2007.
Exam bribery.	In 2012, police arrested 12 suspects from Zagreb Medical School for examination bribery; in April 2013, police arrested 39 students and members of the teaching staff on corruption charges and examination bribery.	Cepić 2013.
Purchase of term papers.	In a study in Latvia, 46% of respondents admitted that most of their reports and term papers are bought.	Danovskis 2013.
Payments, barter, or other incentives for preferential and special treatment.	Hierarchical power relations within universities appear to have naturalized a sexual contract in which some male academics consider it their right to demand sex for grades.	Morley 2010.

organizations in which authors offer estimates of *magnitude* of corruption, as illustrated in Table 5.

Since they are specific to individual contexts, no generalizations can be drawn from these examples. Still these examples provide a general sense of the extensiveness of such practices within the specific settings identified. The cumulative message from Tables 3 to 5 is that corrupt practices take a variety of forms, cut across and involve virtually all key stakeholder groups, and participation in such practices is often substantial. Motives are complicated. While these data suggest that many participants engage in corrupt practices (or overlook corrupt practices of others) for direct personal gain – for example the money they receive for the favors they dispense – it is important to recognize that others may be less willing participants. They may think themselves as foolish to resist practices that are widespread or they may fear retribution for resisting, complaining about, or exposing such practices.

Table 5. Magnitude of corruption in higher education, selected estimates.

Illustrative Examples	Illustration	Citation
Cheating.	A 2005 study found that 72% of Australian students admitted to cheating.	Brimble and Stevenson-Clarke 2005.
Cheating.	A 2010 study of undergraduate students pursuing economic/business degrees in Portugal found that 62% of students admitted to having copied at least once.	Teixeira and Rocha 2010.
Cheating	In a 2007 study in Taiwan, over 60% of undergraduate students reported some form of academic dishonesty.	Chun-Hua, Lin, andLing-Yu 2007.
Cheating.	In a 2006 survey of students in Canada, 53% of undergraduate respondents and 35% of graduated students reported that they had cheated on written work in the previous year.	Hughes and McCabe 2006 as cited in Bretag 2013.
Using positional power to extort personal benefits.	A 2007 Soros Foundation study of 1007 teaching staff and 1171 students at a Romanian university found that about 11% of the students stated that dormitory managers asked directly for gifts, money or services, whereas 10% admitted to actually having paid such “incentives”.	Leu 2013.
Faculty plagiarism.	A 2008 survey conducted by the University of Zagreb found that one-third of the teaching staff knew of a case of plagiarism among their colleagues.	Cepić 2013.
Awarding degrees in return for favors.	Estimates suggest that about 600 out of the approximately 25,000 people a year who receive a doctoral degree in Germany have used undue means.	Wolf 2013; Spiegel Online 2011.
Ghost writing.	A 2009 study found that just under 8% of medical articles involved at least one ghost writer.	Maclean’s Magazine, 6 May 2011, as cited in Robinson 2013.
Ghost authoring.	A 1998 study found that 11% of all articles written in a sample of leading medical journals in 1997 had been ghost written.	Flanagin et al. 1998.
Gift authoring/ Ghost authoring.	A survey of articles published in six medical journals in 2008 found that 21% included an undeserving honorary author, and 8% of articles may have omitted important contributors.	Wislar et al. 2011.

(Continued)

Table 5. (Continued.)

Illustrative Examples	Illustration	Citation
Inappropriate behavior in the conduct of research.	A 2002 survey of US scientists found that 1.7% had, by their own admission, engaged in fabrication, falsification and/or plagiarism within the previous three years. Extrapolated, this would suggest an estimate of 6 out of 1000 researchers engaging in federally prosecutable misconduct per year.	Martinson, Anderson, and De Vries 2005.
Inappropriate behavior in the conduct of research.	A survey of researchers funded by the US National Institutes of Health suggest that, annually, as many as 24% of researchers engage in questionable research practices, by their own admission.	Anderson et al. 2007.
Altering research data or findings	A 2005 survey of academic researchers found that over 15% of respondents had changed the design, methodology, or results of a study in response to pressures from a funding source.	Martinson, Anderson, and De Vries 2005.

As Tables 3–5 also illustrates, students may also engage in corrupt practices. In an increasingly competitive context, students may cut corners through such actions as cheating, plagiarism, or bribing for grades or admission, seeking academic or personal advantage on grounds other than intellectual merit. When student misconduct goes unpunished, it risks undermining the reputation of the university in ways that can taint all graduates and research products.

### Responses to corruption in higher education

While identifying corrupt practices in higher education is important, the real challenge is in finding effective and sensible strategies for addressing the problem. There is no single way to fight corruption. Rather, anti-corruption efforts, regardless of the sector, typically involve some combination of technical and political responses.

*Technical responses* include such actions as formulating new rules and regulations governing the behavior of education officials, introducing more transparent reporting systems, and creating independent agencies to administer student tests or determine college admissions. *Political responses* are aimed at mobilizing government and university leaders, the larger university community, and the wider citizenry to be less tolerant of corruption. As collective action theory explains, corruption is the expected behavior in a setting where acting honestly would mean losing out. Therefore there must be awareness of what corrupt practices entail and incentives for acting with integrity. Political responses may include information campaigns aimed at clarifying the boundaries of appropriate behavior and encouragement of a free press capable of exposing inappropriate behaviors when they occur. Both types of responses are necessary. Political solutions

without effective technical strategies breed disillusionment, as words are not followed by actions. Technical solutions in the absence of political will results only in meaningless bureaucracy, as improper actions do not lead to real consequences (Chapman 2005).

Strategies for combating corruption in higher education institutions are not necessarily different from the strategies employed in other social and governmental organizations. However, a number of individuals and groups have offered strategies for combatting corruption that have particular relevance and application for higher education settings (Hallak and Poisson 2007; Chapman 2005; Poisson and Hallak 2002; Heyneman 2002). The approaches being advocated, for the most part, call for rather similar actions. Poisson and Hallak (2002) suggest that an effective response to corruption needs to involve (a) limiting authority, (b) improving accountability, (c) realigning incentives, and (d) changing attitudes and mobilizing political will. Likewise, Heyneman (2002) organizes preventive measures into four types: (a) structural reforms necessary to reduce the opportunity for corruption, (b) improvements in adjudication in management to help anticipate questions of definition and interpretation, (c) measures necessary to actually prevent corrupt practices, and (d) sanctions required to demote or punish when infractions occur.

While conceptual frameworks are useful in planning anti-corruption strategies, the success of any anti-corruption effort ultimately depends on the motivations and actions of individual actors. One of the central elements in combating corruption is the quality of top leadership. Leaders who respect the rule of law, emphasize transparency in the operation of the offices they oversee, take action against subordinates found violating rules, and exhibit integrity in their own transactions can make a difference. Honest leaders can be a powerful force in reducing corruption. Conversely, when top leadership is corrupt, they lack the moral platform to demand honesty in others.

To be effective, these leaders need tools. One of the most important is a clear code of conduct. Across all roles – professors, administrators, staff, and students – individuals need to know what behaviors represent corrupt practices, especially when proper professional conduct might run counter to social norms widely accepted outside of the education workplace. For example, a code of conduct would clarify the propriety of (and sets limits on) accepting gifts in return for professional actions, even though gift giving may be considered appropriate in other social settings (Chapman 2005). Some universities have their own institutional codes of conduct. However, universities may also draw on codes of conduct developed by professional organizations. For example, in the United States, the American Psychological Association's code of conduct (widely used across American higher education) offers very specific guidance about such matters as which contributors to a research activity qualify as authors on a subsequent publication and the order of authorship. Students or other faculty members who feel their role was not given appropriate credit have an objective basis for filing a complaint.

Efforts to combat corruption may also require the *creation or modification of organizational structures* and administrative procedures aimed at breaking the grip of entrenched practices. This is particularly true in universities that operate as steep hierarchies, with decision-making power tightly held by those at the top (Chapman et al. 2013). Steep hierarchies tend to work against transparency. As organizational structures are flattened, information tends to become more transparent and accessible, allowing more oversight of institutional practices.

Another strategy suggested for combating corruption is to *decentralize more authority* to immediate colleagues, with the expectation that they will, themselves, monitor

the behavior of each other (Galal 2002; Chapman and Miric 2009). The argument, as applied to higher education, is that university administrators are too far removed from the context in which many forms of corruption actually occur (e.g. classrooms, dormitories, research laboratories) to be aware of what may be happening. Other faculty members at the departmental or program level are more likely (than administrators) to be aware of the nature and extent of inappropriate behavior on the part of their colleagues and students. Hence, only as instructional and research staff at these levels take more responsibility for policing the behavior of their colleagues will corruption be stemmed. However, critics of this perspective suggest that decentralizing responsibility for such oversight is akin to inviting the fox into the hen house. Immediate colleagues may be complicit in the inappropriate practices and, even if not, they may be reluctant to take actions that could create a hostile work environment.

A key element in an effective organizational structure is a workable accountability system that clearly states the rules and procedures associated with different roles within the university, provide a mechanism for monitoring compliance, and specify the consequences for non-compliance. Even then, for such an accountability system to be effective, it needs to be consistently enforced. Finally, universities need to operate with sufficient transparency for stakeholders to be able to see that responsibilities and benefits are fairly and appropriately distributed. Wider transparency is also necessary as efforts to reduce corruption in higher education require actions that go well beyond the university itself. An important tool is a free press that can question actions and publicize inappropriate behavior at a level of visibility that can mobilize a critical mass of public concern (Chapman 2005).

Caution is needed as creating rules to reduce corruption can sometimes backfire. This occurs when a university's response to corruption is to add rules aimed at eliminating particular undesirable practices or behaviors in a piecemeal manner. As the number of rules grow and multiply, the rules can interact in unanticipated ways, operate at cross-purposes, and ultimately stifle legitimate reform (Chapman 2005).

### **In conclusion**

Colleges and universities remain among the most respected institutions in society, and most administrators, faculty, staff, and students operate with integrity. But not all do so. Changing fiscal environments, shifting professional expectations, and increasing organizational complexity have created new pressures to cut corners. Understanding the risks and mechanisms of corrupt practices and taking action to address them represent important steps in ensuring the continued integrity of the higher education enterprise.

### **Note**

1. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Transparency International.

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