

**Remarks: Academic Integrity Forum
Friday, April 16, 2004 – 1:00 p.m.
DuBourg Hall, Room 157
Lawrence Biondi, S.J., President**

Good afternoon and welcome! As a university president and professor, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of conversations on the topic of academic integrity at a university. The various issues and theories relating to academic honesty, here at SLU and even across the nation, represent a significant challenge for both educators and students alike.

On the one hand, college students face certain undeniable pressures. 1.) There's social anxiety: trying to fit in, meeting new people, facing peer pressure. 2.) There are the anxieties related to being away from home: being away from that which is familiar, such as family and friends, and the anxiety of students being "on their own" for the very first time.

And yet they are still expected to "make the grade." They are expected to post high academic marks. They are expected to graduate from college. They are expected to find a successful career. Together, the stress created by these challenges can be simply overwhelming, causing some students to resort to seemingly "insignificant" behaviors, such as cheating on a test or plagiarizing a paper.

But in so much as students bear the responsibility for the difficult decisions they must make, so too do we, as educators, bear the responsibility of creating and maintaining a supportive and safe learning environment.

This doesn't equate to condoning negative behavior or looking the other way. And yet, in so much as honesty is an inherent trait, no idea or program can ultimately eliminate every instance of academic dishonesty.

As Philosopher Eugene L'Hote once said, "Honesty isn't a policy at all; it's a state of mind or it isn't honesty." In other words, no matter what we do, honesty is the result of an individual's conscious choice to conduct himself or herself along moral and ethical lines.

After all, isn't that what we expect from our students? Do we not dedicate ourselves to ensure that our students not only lead successful lives, but also live lives guided by the principles, ethics and values of a Judeo-Christian education? Indeed, it's the Jesuit philosophy of educating the "whole person" – mind, body and soul – which should guide all of us in our everyday lives.

What sets Saint Louis University apart from its peer institutions is its commitment to a value-based education. In other words, we believe that the very core purpose of higher education cannot be solely taught through books, exams or instruction in our classrooms and laboratories. Ethical behavior should be "taught," but more importantly, ethical behavior should be "caught" in this University's environment.

We believe that our students' greatest potential is best realized in how they seek to utilize their knowledge in developing and nurturing themselves and the lives of those around them.

Our University's Mission statement directly calls upon all of us to be leaders "in the continuing quest for understanding of God's creation, and for the discovery, dissemination and integration of the values, knowledge and skills required to transform society in the spirit of the Gospels." We can all agree that this type of leadership inherently favors honesty and integrity.

Fora like this acknowledge that while we ultimately hope and dream that our students will find success and happiness in their personal and professional lives, so too, we are today responsible for promoting and maintaining a system of academic integrity which rewards them for knowing right from wrong, not only when taking an exam, but in their daily lives as well.

For 186 years, Saint Louis University has stood as a leader in higher education because of its belief in its students and their ability to transform themselves and their society for the better.

I'd like to end my remarks by offering my sincerest thanks to the planners and sponsors of today's forum. To them and indeed to all of you: thank you for assuring that this dialogue surrounding the critical issues of academic integrity at SLU continues. Thank you.