

# ·VICTVS·

## Episode 3 – The VICTVS Podcast Transcript

**When exams go wrong! Cheating your way to nuclear launch codes.**

**CC**

Did you hear the story about the one thousand Indian Army candidates who had to sit in an exam in their underwear? Or the Senegalese man who dressed up as his girlfriend to take her exams on her behalf?

Welcome to the occasionally amusing, sometimes inventive, and always thought-provoking world of exam cheating. In today's episode of The VICTVS Podcast, we discuss the lengths that students and exam setters go to outsmart each other, and the impact that this is having on academic integrity.

So as author of one of my favourite newsletters, [The Cheat Sheet](#) as well as writing on topics like academic integrity, and cheating in publications like Forbes, The Atlantic and Huff Post, Derrick Newton is well qualified to be today's guest and joins us today from New York. So hi, Derek, welcome to the podcast.

**DN**

Hello, thank you for carving out some time for me, appreciate it.

**CC**

And you and you! So let's kick off today with talking about The Cheat Sheet. So tell us a little bit more about it. And what really inspired you to get that started?

**DN**

Yeah, happy to! It's a newsletter that I put out twice a week. And that's sort of interesting, because when I first started it, I figured it would be something that would be maybe every other week. But there's just so much going on in this topic of academic integrity and cheating that every other week just didn't work. So I had to switch to twice a week, which is a lot more than I anticipated. But basically, the impetus for it was, like I said, a lot going on. And I felt like professors and deans and researchers were all sort of in their own bubble. They were having to learn independently, there wasn't a place that research was shared regularly, that incidents were shared regularly. You know, I would talk to deans, and they would say, "well, I feel like we have a problem and here's what's happening," and I would say no, that's actually very common, what you're going through, and they would be surprised. And so I was like there's just not good communication around this topic or people. And so I decided to put together a newsletter about it to connect people and share that information. And the other thing too, long answer sorry, is that I really wanted there to be a central repository for all this for like longevity sake. So people could go in and say, you know, what did happen three months ago? What happened about this university and that there was some sort of record because it didn't exist. And so hopefully, The Cheat Sheet will do some of that.

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CC

Sure, it's interesting that you say that. Is there no sort of central government repositories or registers in terms of, you know, cheating instances, especially at, say, universities in America?

DN

No, not at all. In fact, not only are the universities, colleges and universities in the United States on their own about that, some of them just don't do it at all themselves, so there is no collection point. And I wrote a piece yesterday about how so many colleges in the US don't even talk about misconduct and cheating.

CC

Right

DN

They just refuse to discuss it like it doesn't exist, like if they don't say the words, it will go away. That also hinders things because we have no concept of how prevalent it is, what types of things are trending, what students are figuring out, so addressing it, however you choose to address it, addressing it is very difficult, because like I said before, everybody thinks their problem is unique and they don't have any sort of support or new ideas to say, "Oh, well, this university had the same exact problem. They tried this; it didn't work. So I won't do that." Or "It worked really well. So I should do that." You know, there's just no communication around this. Again, because I think there's a cultural issue, but just a lack...There's no bridge. There's no conference, there's no place that a lot of people get together to talk about.

CC

Another future business opportunity for The Cheat Sheet then, an academic integrity conference?

DN

I'll get right on it. I mean, I should say there is an organization here that does focus on academic integrity there. But their focus is international, which is good and important. And they do have, they had a virtual conference, but it isn't nearly as well known and attended as I think it should be. I think it should be required attendance for everybody in education. But you know, I'm crazy.

CC

So given your experiences with publishing The Cheat Sheet, I believe it started in January of this year is that right?

DN

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Sounds right yeah, earlier this year.

**CC**

So you must be something of an expert repository of interesting and exam stories. So do you want to share a few with us? Some of the more outrageous ones you've heard?

**DN**

Boy, there are a ton. I mean, I was talking to somebody who runs testing centres, and they were talking about one of their favourite stories was a set of twins, who would switch off in the bathroom. They had stashed notes and books in the bathroom garbage can and would take the bathroom break and go out, look at the stuff. Their twin would come in and sit the rest of, sit a portion of the exam, go to the bathroom and they would just be able to pass off information. That's like, that sort of stuff, you tend to get caught at sometimes

**CC**

Yeah

**DN**

Or I think often. You know, the technology cheating is really more common than a lot of people think, and far harder to track down and crack because the technology is complicated and it's sophisticated. And because a lot of the perpetrators, frankly, aren't anywhere accessible to the colleges they're cheating, or the institutions they're cheating, they tend to be in places that are just beyond the reach of anybody who would care.

**CC**

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, so as an organization that runs thousands of exams ourselves every month, we obviously come across the odd story here and there. And it's funny you mentioned the twins with the textbook in the bathroom because I had the exact same story told to me pretty much of a group of students in Iran, I believe, that had placed a textbook in a certain toilet cubicle. And mysteriously, they're all asking to go to the bathroom one after another and using the same cubicle and it's like, yeah, you're gonna get caught aren't you? It's not the most sophisticated method.

**DN**

That's another one. I remember about that. You mentioned Iran, I think it was related. But I heard a story of a young lady who showed up to take a test and had those temporary tattoos, henna tattoos put in Arabic, I think, on her arms and legs and they were the exam notes, but they were in Arabic, and so people in the testing facility or on the online test, were like, I can't read that but that seems awfully suspicious that you keep looking at your tattoo during the test. So they had to get somebody who could translate it. And sure enough, it was like chemistry notes in Arabic.

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CC

Oh, my gosh. That's a new one. I've never heard that one!

DN

The lengths that people will go to try to get an advantage in a test, I say, seldom surprise me, but frequently shock me.

CC

I get it. And obviously it kind of goes both ways as well, because then that means that people who are setting these exams also have to set kind of sometimes bizarre rules and regulations to try and combat these, again, ever inventive methods of cheating. So again, a great story that I always heard was an Indian Army entrance exam a few years back, and they forced the candidates A, to take it in a field and B for the a thousand plus candidates to strip down to their underwear to take the exam. And yeah, so like I said, the picture that accompanies the article about this is quite shocking. Just a load of these guys sat in a field in their pants, apparently just because they didn't want the hassle of having to frisk a thousand candidates on their way into the exam, but yeah, it's an interesting one.

DN

I told a friend of mine a couple of weeks ago that I could do six Cheat Sheets and two newspapers and a TV show just on cheating in India. It is such a, I don't want to say common, but the lengths to which they've identified it as a national priority to stop it. When they do national exams, the army comes in and quarantines test centres.

CC

Yeah

DN

For like 100 meters around with guns. They take it very seriously, and people do get, you've seen the clips I'm sure, people do get arrested for cheating or allowing cheating. They take it very, very seriously.

CC

Yeah absolutely. So you mentioned obviously earlier how there are these more binary methods of exam cheating, more old school methods, but then the move towards exams becoming more online and more technology-based means that the methods that candidates are using to circumvent are also becoming more technologically based. So how do you think the move towards online exams and remote proctoring or invigilation have changed the way that people cheat?

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**DN**

They're having to get more creative. And you know, unfortunately for academic integrity, creativity seems to be a bottomless well. You know, just because somebody is doing a test on their computer or on their laptop, even if there's a proctor, they're trying to get around it. I mean, I've seen, you have too, I'm sure. You know you were talking about crazy rules, right? Like a lot of proctors now insist on that you if you have a drink, it'd be in a perfectly clear bottle with no label. Well, that's because people were writing answers on the back of their water labels and reattaching it and so that they could look at their drink and see through the water and cheat. You know, this isn't, almost every rule that seems bizarre is there because somebody tried to do that exact thing. But again, the technology is what really is interesting to me is that there's sort of this black market, grey market, for people who design technology hacks for proctoring software, then they sell it and they're not cheap. But you could go on to, I won't mention the place, the organization, but you could go onto these things and find software that you can download that's designed specifically to get around online proctoring.

**CC**

Yeah

**DN**

So, the proctoring companies now are having to invest a tonne of time and money in trying to get around the get arounds and it just, it just never stops.

**CC**

Yeah, it's a constant sort of cat and mouse chase between people selling this technology and yeah people, such as VICTVS, who are trying to create remote invigilation and proctoring technology that is secure and you know, keeps everyone on a level playing field.

**DN**

Sure, yeah. It's a never-ending struggle because it's human nature, people are always willing to entertain shortcuts, and some people will take them for a hundred different reasons.

**CC**

So, a lot of these online proctoring systems employ things like artificial intelligence or eye tracking, or kind of like flagging of behaviours and stuff that use AI systems. And there's been a lot of discussion in the press around maybe some biases that these systems have or the way they're somewhat faulty. Do you have any kind of experience of that based on your work?

**DN**

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Yes, unfortunately, I think most of the assumptions about the proctoring software that most of the companies, and I don't know all the companies and I don't know all their systems, but unfortunately, there's been some misinformation about how those systems work. And that has just been allowed to run rampant I think in media especially, and it doesn't do anyone any good. You know, that the systems that I know, for example, even the ones that use AI heavily, can't be biased in the way that they are accused of being.

**CC**

Right

**DN**

Because the technologies that are looking at your face are looking for how often you're looking off screen. The only place that even does a scan of your face is to match it to an ID and that's before the exam even starts. And there can be problems with that, I'm not saying it's a perfect system, but you know, people who have written without any sort of fact check, without any sort of oversight that, you know, these systems are biased against people of colour and they report them as cheating. From what I know of these proctoring systems that's just literally impossible.

**CC**

Yeah

**DN**

They just don't work that way. And I think, you know, there are issues and certainly some oversight questions about the AI, which I think everybody agrees on that principle. But they can also be exceptionally important at detecting misconduct, you know. Everything the AI flags isn't cheating, but some of it is and some of it would get missed without these high-tech interventions that are now possible.

**CC**

We mentioned earlier for every new technology that comes out, someone counters it almost immediately, I guess, with either another piece of software or something more low tech. And it really doesn't take that much research on the part of a candidate or a student to find both low tech and high-tech solutions to circumvent remote proctoring. I mean, I did a brief internet search earlier, came across some Reddit discussions, came across some YouTube channels exclusively dedicated to things like this. You know, everything from printing out all of your answers onto a transparent sheet and sticking it onto your laptop so it's not viewable through a proctor that's using your webcam, for example. Or a favourite I read was, so a lot of proctoring systems asked you to do a 360-scan of the room before you start your exam, which seems sensible. And I read a post by someone saying, oh, just do your exam in front of a window. And once you've done that, get your friend to tape the notes on the other side of the window out of the view of the proctor. And I was like, well, it's kind of genius. But also, that's a lot of work to go to, like a lot of people involved in this cheating, you could just do the revision and do the exam, I guess?

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**DN**

I've said to somebody, it was months and months ago, I said you know that we're gonna get to a point where professors give As for cheating. Thank you, you've been so creative. So industrious. You've done a great job. Now you fail the assignment, but you get an A for cheating, because good job. That's sad but I just think that's coming. Yeah, the efforts that people will go to, to avoid doing a little bit of effort. It's always shocking to me. You know and I think that's another thing that is just built into the problem of remote testing, you can't do those things in a classroom, or even in a test centre. So, if you're gonna have remote testing, you've got to have, in my opinion, enhanced security as much as you can get. And I know some students don't like it, but the alternative is much worse.

**CC**

So, you kind of think like something, even if it's imperfect, is better than nothing?

**DN**

Oh, sure. You know, there's lots of research that says that having systems in place deters cheating almost whether they work or not. If you can tell people you know, "this system is here, we're going to be looking, we know people are trying to cheat, and we're going to be doing our best to crack down on it", that in and of itself, keeps people from attempting it. And of course, if the system works, and you actually catch people, it's even more effective.

**CC**

We did another episode of the podcast recently with a doctor from King's College in London who studied nootropics and cognitive enhancers and their use in the student population. And the sort of conclusion that we came to in that episode was that the academic systems and the assessment systems need to be designed in a way that don't force students to feel so stressed and so much pressure to attempt to, in this case, take a nootropic pill to enhance their performance. And I think the same thing totally applies with these, you know, proctoring systems or any kind of exam cheating thing, you know, it's about changing the environment so students don't even feel the need to try and be inventive and circumvent the systems, does that make sense? I don't know if I'm making any sense at all.

**DN**

Sure, and I've long thought that's part of it. But I think that that honestly, with respect to your previous guest, is a little, a little naive, perhaps.

**CC**

Okay

**DN**

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There are a lot of statistics and studies that show that a certain percent of students, 8% let's say 6 - 8%, will cheat no matter what. If you put to them a hypothetical that says we are guaranteed to get you, and we are guaranteed to punish you, about 6% of students will try to cheat anyway. In a hypothetical where you say 100% guarantee. And then there's also a corresponding set that won't cheat no matter what. If you put the hypothetical that says you are, you're guaranteed to get away with it, you are guaranteed to get an A for cheating, and you will never get caught. And if you take the exam honestly, you'll get a C, they still won't cheat. So, there are people who just won't do it under any circumstances. And there are people who are going to try it, because they don't believe you, or they think they're smarter than you. Or they just want to test to see if you're actually watching.

So, assessment design helps, but it isn't going to stop cheating. There's nothing you can do that's going to stop cheating. And as you make assessments, as you tweak them, and make them more sort of about problem solving, and putting information together, rather than just ABCD, you just get into a different form of cheating. You know, there are cheating providers who will get you the answers to a physics test. For every one of those there are 50, who will write an essay for you, you know, synthesising information from your course. So, you're just asking, which type of cheating do you want your students to try to do? So again, I'm not anti that, I just think that isn't the solution. There isn't a single solution here.

And I want to back up one second to what you said a second ago about how it's pretty easy to find cheating hacks if you go look for them. In my experience, the problem is actually worse than that. Because a lot of these companies market directly to students.

**CC**

Right

**DN**

You don't have to go look for cheating enhancements or hacks or work arounds, they'll come to you. They will come right to your inbox, right to your social media feed. Tell you it's fine, tell you that you won't get caught. Tell you everybody's doing it, tell you you're at a disadvantage if you don't do it, tell you it's cheap, and you're good. And these companies make millions, some of them billions of dollars, helping students cheat, and their marketing budgets are extensive. And so even if you're the type of student who cheating never occurred to you, you're going to get solicited to cheat daily. I think that's one of the big problems that we have, that I don't know that anybody has a solution to it, but it's certainly a growing problem.

**CC**

So, is this what's known as contract cheating, then?

**DN**

Sure. And that's generally, I think that definition should be expanded a little bit, but generally, anybody who pays somebody else to do their work or give them answers, if there's an exchange of valuables involved, usually that's money obviously, yes, that could, that should be considered contract cheating. And there are some very well-known very big companies who that is their business model. They make money by helping students cheat.



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**CC**

What do they actually advertise themselves as doing? I'm assuming they're not saying, "we will help you to cheat" they're sort of phrasing it in a bit more of a creative way?

**DN**

Homework help, tutors. "Don't get stuck, we can help you with your homework." By help with the homework, they mean "pay us \$20 and we'll give you the answer." One of the biggest ones, obviously, is Chegg, they consider themselves a tutoring site. And this goes back to one of the reasons I put time into The Cheat Sheet. Chegg shut down their tutoring operation. They had a live tutoring, where you could pay by the hour to actually get help from a tutor. And they shut it down because no one was using it, because all they wanted was the answers. So, you know, it was pretty clear to me that this company and others exists just to sell answers to academic work. That's textbook cheating.

**CC**

How do these sorts of sites help students cheat then in exams? What are the mechanisms, how does it work?

**DN**

Well, Chegg, for example, has a feature where you can use your smartphone and snap a photo of a test question on your laptop and they will text you the answer within 15 minutes. So, if you have an exam and you have an hour and a half to do it or, you know, especially during the pandemic, we saw a lot of universities not only switched to online exams but give people 24, 48 hours to do them. Which seems very nice and very generous, but you give somebody that much time and they're stuck, they're just going to reach it - when there's no proctor watching - they're just going to reach over and grab their smartphone, snap a photo, pay the \$9, get the answer from somebody, plop it into the thing and get their grade and move on. And people are very happy to sell that service. They make an incredible amount of money doing it and they market all the time.

**CC**

Obviously on The Cheat Sheet you do predominantly cover US colleges and universities and stories, but are these sites being used internationally, like for example in the UK, where we're based?

**DN**

Sure, sure. You know, I do try to get UK, Australia universities in there, but you're right it is primarily US and Canada based but yes, you know, Chegg, Course Hero, Quizlet are probably the three biggest known cheating enabling companies and they have international footprints. You know, Chegg is so big that they have shareholders and then their shareholder call - they're a publicly traded company, they're on the New York Stock Exchange - in their shareholder call they talk about how their future growth is really international, that they're going to put a lot of

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money into growing their international student base. So yeah, I mean if they're not where you are, yet they're coming.

**CC**

Is this a new phenomenon? Or is it just something that's like seen massive growth over the last few years?

**DN**

I think cheating is as old as testing. But this sort of component, this level of sophistication really is only possible online. It's only possible when you have, you can't grab your smartphone and take a picture of a test in front of your professor, you're just going to get caught. I want to say 100%, but 97% of the time, you're going to get caught. But when instruction and assessments went digital and remote, people could step into that space with you sort of, and all kinds of bad things come out.

**CC**

I guess another argument for effective proctoring and invigilation, whether that's in person or remote.

**DN**

Sure. I just don't think, I mean, you know, I welcome a conversation or debate about it. You've read The Cheat Sheet, I've written multiple times, I think it's just flat academic malpractice to give an online exam that isn't proctored and that doesn't use sophisticated detection techniques. Cheating is so common and so prevalent and so sophisticated, I don't understand why you're giving a test if you're not proctoring it, I just don't understand what you're hoping to achieve. Because I can guarantee you the level of cheating is going to be astronomical. The only people who are going to get hurt in that, are the ones that don't cheat. If you're a professor, that should trouble you deeply I would think, that you're setting up a system where your honest students are getting punished.

**CC**

What is the reaction from academic institutions to like contract cheating or these sorts of services? Like what are they doing, what do they want to do that they're not able to do? Or are they just not even acknowledging them?

**DN**

Unfortunately, a too large percentage just pretend it doesn't exist.

**CC**

Right

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**DN**

They say, “oh, well, our students are honest, we have an honour code and cheating is somebody else's problem.” That's crazy talk, in my view, but the ones that do talk about it and are aware of it are overwhelmed, they're outmatched. These are 100-million-dollar, billion-dollar companies with marketing budgets, you know, teams of software engineers, and they have an IT department of like, five people, it's just, it's not a fair fight. And they have willing customers on campus. And so they just, they...I don't want to say they give up, they throw up their hands and allow cheating, but they know that they're outgunned, which again, going back to your first question, is why I thought what I was doing was important. To try to connect these people so they could share information, at least to get a little better prepared and not feel so isolated about the challenges they face.

**CC**

So, I guess some people who maybe haven't done an exam since they left secondary school or high school, I guess, in America, might think, why do we even care about cheating, you know? It's just the difference between an A grade and a B grade or a fail and a pass, something like that. But obviously, we're not just talking about school exams here, even college or university exams, it's pervasive through to professional examinations and qualifications as well. And you might think differently if it's the doctor who's treating you that cheated on their entrance exam to medical school, or something like that. I know, for example, there's a pretty scary example from a few years back within the US Air Force nuclear division, which I'm sure you might have heard of, where several of the officers who are responsible for nuclear launch codes, cheated on their monthly exam, and you know, doesn't really bear thinking about the potential consequences of somebody who's responsible for something like that not being properly qualified. And I'm sure you've got plenty of other examples.

**DN**

The point that I share when this comes up about why is cheating a big deal, at least in the US, I say, well, the subjects, the three subjects that are cheated in the most, where there's the most rampant, highest level of cheating, are business which you can say, okay, you know, fine.

**CC**

Practising for the future!

**DN**

Exactly, you can say maybe that makes them good businesspeople. We should all be concerned that our businesses are operating ethically, and those sorts of things, but alright fine. The other two are engineering and nursing, and those ought to keep you up at night. Because if the people building our bridges and tunnels and technologies, laptops, cars are cheating, and not learning the material, then we have a big problem. And I have to tell you, I hope I don't have to, I hope none of my loved ones are ever in a medical emergency again. But the next time that happens, I'm going to be terrified because I now know the level of cheating that happens in nursing. It is just beyond prevalent, and in a lot of places sort of accepted. And these are people who are making life and death decisions, you know, not prescribing medicine but they are caregivers, and I think we ought to just really, really care that they know what they're doing. I think that seems to be a minimum standard of care that you didn't buy your answers to your

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certification exams. There was a cheating scandal six or eight months ago at a school that teaches airline pilots. If that doesn't scare you the next time you get out a plane to be like, "please, I hope you're one of the people that didn't cheat on your certification exam?! Please, tell me you actually know how to fly a plane?!" You know, that sort of stuff frightens me because I just am in it and I see how prevalent it is and I see how dangerous it is. And it's... we ought to care, if you don't care just on the basis of morality and ethics, like what's right and what's wrong, this stuff does matter because these people are making important decisions.

**CC**

Yeah, absolutely. And I think, of course, what we're really talking about amongst all of this is trust, and trust between people sitting exams and setting exams at whichever level that might be. And of course, trust is the central part of academic integrity. So, when we're talking about academic integrity, what does that mean to you, in your opinion?

**DN**

Yes, I mean, that's the fundamental issue. And I have spoken with many, dozens, probably of professors, who are uncomfortable in this new era of digital and online examination. Because they feel that the tools that are necessary, in my view, when you teach and do assessments online, are in somehow violation of the student-teacher trust dynamic. And I get that, but you know, my answer is to show them the data that says that, you know, 80% of undergrads will cheat at some point in their college career. 80%. And, you know, you talk to other professors who said that six months ago, and then they look on Chegg and they see that 300 of their students have cheated their final exam. And so I say the trust dynamic goes both ways. There is such a thing as trust, but verify, right? You know, I want to put a procedure in place but I want to have no flags, I want to have a clean exam. I trust you to do it right. But at some point, I'm not doing my job if I'm not checking.

**CC**

Sure

**DN**

So it goes both ways. I think one of the things that's sort of emerging, and I'm glad we got to this point. There's a consensus I think forming in the academic integrity community and among professors, that the trust dynamic between teacher and student is directly related to proximity, closeness, right? And I don't mean physical necessarily, I mean small classes. If you're teaching a student one on one, that's a very personal teacher-student dynamic, there's a lot of trust. You have four students in your class, same sort of deal. You get 400, the distance is much greater between person to person, and cheating goes up, right? And I think what we're also seeing is that dynamic online, when you have 400 students and you will never see your instructor in person, you will never actually physically look them in the eye, that social distance is greater. And so that trust dynamic with a big class that's online, with an adjunct professor, you know, in a required course that really nobody is excited about taking, the distance there is immense. And so, the sort of motivation, the opportunity for misconduct, goes way, way up. So I think the trust thing - long answer, sorry - I think the trust thing is very important and very real. But it isn't the same in every situation. It just isn't. And so I think, I hope, that educators, instructors, professors are starting to internalise that. And it matters, right? That you may not insist on a proctored exam for the one student you are

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teaching. Because you know them well enough, you know that they don't know that answer so if they answered it in a certain way, they probably got help, you know. You can have this sort of level of understanding and awareness and trust with your students in that space. But again, you know, when you have 700 undergrads taking a required, you know, literature class online, no disrespect and good luck with that!

**CC**

No I think that's a really interesting point. Coming back to something we actually touched upon earlier, do you think there are differences and attitudes towards academic integrity internationally or in different parts of the world in your experience?

**DN**

Yes, that was actually the piece I published yesterday in Forbes was looking at that. I haven't found anybody who disagrees with that. The UK and Australia are so far ahead of the US and Canada on this that it's, it is embarrassing, frankly. The cultural awareness, engagement, the activity that happens to try to deal with academic misconduct in the UK and Australia, just is absent in the US. We started the conversation by me saying that so many schools just don't talk about it, they just go completely quiet or outright deny it. You know, we could have a conversation as to why they may think that's the right course, I completely disagree. And, you know, I think I put in the piece, there's research that says that not talking about cheating, encourages cheating.

**CC**

Right

**DN**

So, you're actually, by clamming up and saying it doesn't exist, waving a green flag to some of your students who might be so inclined, that nobody's paying attention, nobody's looking, nobody cares, that the professors and administrators at a school, are either out of touch, or in denial. And if that's the case, why not? I mean, if you're considering engaging in misconduct at you know, at the local grocery store, or you know, at the bodega or at the corner whatever shop, and you happen to see that the camera is off, like it's literally pointed at the floor, some people will say "uh, well, you're practically encouraging me to swipe that candy bar, right? You literally turn the camera off." So that sort of process does go on in some student's heads unfortunately.

**CC**

Have you seen any good examples of policies or practices that are actively working to deter cheating? Because obviously you sort of talked about transparency as being one of them, which I think is really, really interesting. But are there any others?

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**DN**

Yes, if I was, if I were ever – I never will be – but if I was ever in a position at a school to be in charge of sort of their academic integrity office or policy, you know, I would say talk about cheating and academic integrity all the time. Not just the seven minutes of freshman orientation and make them sign a pledge to be honest, which is what a lot of schools do and they say “hey, we told them”, but all the time, I would definitely have detection and prevention measures in place. And one of the things that I think schools don't do, which they should do, is sort of publicise, when people get caught. Not by name, you don't have to say, you know, Dan Smith, sophomore cheated on this algebra exam. You don't, you shouldn't do that, I'm not talking about shaming. But I'm saying, you know, six people were suspended from this class last semester for using Chegg to get answers. If you're in that class, you hear that and you say, okay, people actually do get caught and I don't want that. So that goes into my calculus of how I behave. So I would publicise the people who would get caught, I would, of course, encourage professors to move towards assessments that gauge knowledge in different ways.

And the other thing I would say, and this is difficult, I get it. But professors who don't change their exams, literally every session, are going to get cheated at a very high rate. Because those exams literally it's the exams themselves and answers wind up on the internet within minutes. I don't mean days, I mean minutes.

**CC**

Right

**DN**

The first time you put an exam online, it's gone. And if you give that same exam next semester, you, I don't know what you're testing, except do they know how to use Course Hero? If they do, they're gonna pay the eight bucks and get the exam and look up all the answers.

**CC**

So Derek, before I ask my final question to you, is there anything else that you'd like to cover? If you'd like me to ask you a question to lead into a topic that we haven't covered today? Any big conclusions you want to end with? Maybe before I ask people where they can find you?

**DN**

No, just something interesting that happened literally yesterday which some of your listeners may be interested in. I considered it urban legend that contract cheating providers, essay writing services, blackmail and extort students. That they threatened to turn them in once they've paid to get their essay and turn it in and they get their fee, that they come back to them and say, “I know you cheated. And if you don't pay me more money, I'm going to turn you into your school.” I always thought that was sort of bogeyman stuff, urban legend. But I'm proud of myself, I tracked down a student to whom it happened. So you know, that'll be in The Cheat Sheet next time I get to it. But so for me, this urban legend is no longer legend. It's happened at least once. And that's another thing we don't talk about, right? It's not just cheating yourself out of learning and cheating your classmates by making them look worse,

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because they actually did the work. You're exposing yourself to real serious harm by some people who by definition, aren't honest. And so when you get into business with people who aren't honest, bad things can happen.

**CC**

So Derek, if people want to find you or The Cheat Sheet online, where can they find your work?

**DN**

Thank you. The newsletter is posted on Substack, but I think you can just Google The Cheat Sheet and then my name, Derek or Derek Newton, and find it. But I think you have to use the 'The' - I got some bad results if I just put Cheat Sheet and my name in. I actually don't remember what it turned up, but I do think use the 'the.' And if that's too difficult, there's a link in my Twitter bio, Twitter @DerekTNG. If you just go there it's in the Twitter bio.

**CC**

Brilliant. And just while we've got you here, are there any other podcasts, news feeds, Twitter accounts that you recommend we follow if you're interested in topics like we've talked about today.

**DN**

Yeah, probably a tonne, but I wasn't prepared for that.

**CC**

That's my problem, I've just, I've just snuck this question on you so don't worry.

**DN**

No, that's, it's a totally reasonable question. Yeah, there are a couple probably organizations and, and leading researchers in academic integrity that I follow which are good sources, but I usually in fairness, not to steal any spotlight from them, I usually round up their good stuff in The Cheat Sheet.

**CC**

Okay, great. So people just follow you on The Cheat Sheet they should get all the -

**DN**

It's one-stop shopping.

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CC

Perfect, perfect. Well, like I said, it's definitely one of the highlights of my week when it comes into my inbox. Just to break up a day, get some gossip from the academic community, I very much enjoy it.

DN

We need to get you more exciting things to do during the week.

CC

Yeah, don't tell my boss!

So a huge thank you once again to our fantastic guests today, Derrick Newton of [The Cheat Sheet](#). And if you're not already, please go and find it online and subscribe.

Academic integrity or lack of it continues to be a hot topic within the world of exams and assessments. And as our conversation has shown today, academic institutions and other test providers are working tirelessly to try and maintain standards and keep things fair for the majority of test takers who do follow the rules. However, a small percentage of candidates are managing to keep one step ahead and keep cheating in increasingly inventive ways if some of the stories today are to go by.

The only real answer is the development of trust between test takers and test makers. Exam takers need to be trusted to do the right thing and the environments and tools need to be developed and used by these exam professionals in order to encourage trust between all parties involved.

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