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Academic Integrity as Formation

Academic integrity has become one of the most pressured phrases in contemporary higher education. It is invoked in discussions of plagiarism, contract cheating, generative artificial intelligence, citation, collaboration, authorship, and institutional trust. Yet the term is often operationalized narrowly, as if integrity were mainly a matter of rule compliance, detection, and punishment.

Crafting Ethical Scholarship: A Practical Guide to Academic Integrity and the Mission of Higher Education offers a more ambitious and useful

alternative. Karyn Elizabeth Kessler, Paul Jarod Michiels, and Paul Michael Rogers argue that academic integrity should be understood as a developmental, communal, and intellectual practice. The book's strongest contribution is its insistence that integrity is not simply what students avoid doing wrong. It is what students learn to do as they become participants in scholarly communities.

This reframing is timely. Faculty concern about generative AI has accelerated questions that have long existed around student writing, citation, authorship, and the meaning of independent work. A College Board faculty survey reported widespread concern that student AI use undermines original writing, critical thinking, and academic integrity, while also showing that many faculty remain uncertain about how to guide AI use in classrooms (College Board, 2026). Public commentary on AI and cheating has increasingly reached a similar conclusion: surveillance alone cannot produce authentic learning. Manturuk (2026), for example, argues that the best defense against AI misuse is not a detector or harsher syllabus language, but a class worth taking. Byrd and Morris (2024)



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likewise argue that academic integrity should be framed as a positive educational aim rather than a list of prohibitions. *Crafting Ethical Scholarship* enters this conversation with a deeper claim: higher education must teach students how scholarly thinking works before it can reasonably expect them to inhabit scholarly ethics.

The book is organized into three major parts. Part I, "Looking over the Shoulders of Scholars at Work," examines expert writers' technologies, tools, tactics, and commitments. The chapter titles alone signal an important shift away from the simplified view of writing as a final product. "How Real Intelligence Generates Writing" and "To Write Is to Think" place composition, inquiry, and cognition together. In this frame, academic writing is not merely a container for ideas already formed; it is one of the ways ideas are tested, revised, clarified, and made accountable to a community. That matters because many academic integrity systems still treat writing mainly as an artifact to be authenticated after submission. Kessler, Michiels, and Rogers instead ask readers to look upstream, toward the intellectual practices through which credible scholarly work is made.

Part II, "Understanding the Development of Expert Scholars," turns from expert practice to student development. Here the book is most valuable for educators, writing program leaders, and student-success professionals. Students are not born knowing how to engage a "universe of sources," cross disciplinary thresholds, or participate responsibly in communities of knowledge. These are learned practices. This point is easy to affirm abstractly but difficult to enact institutionally. Colleges often expect students to understand source use, citation, collaboration, and intellectual ownership while teaching those expectations unevenly. A first-year student may receive one explanation from a composition instructor, a different signal from a laboratory course, another from an online module, and still another from peers or AI tools. The book's developmental model helps explain why punitive responses often arrive too late. They intervene after confusion, weak instruction, or unsupported habits have already produced a violation.

Part III, "Safeguarding the Future of Ethical Scholarship," is the book's institutional argument. The provocative chapter title "Calling on the 'Office of Academic Dishonesty'" suggests a critique of systems that organize integrity work around misconduct management rather than scholarly formation. This is not to say that misconduct should be ignored. Fairness, trust, and accountability remain necessary. Rather, the book implies that institutions lose the larger mission when integrity work becomes primarily administrative, legalistic, or adversarial. The final chapters connect academic integrity to the mission of higher education itself and offer an applied ethics framework. The movement across the book is therefore coherent: first show how scholars work, then show how students develop toward that work, then reconsider institutional systems in light of that developmental path.

One of the book's major strengths is its refusal to separate writing from ethics. This is especially important in the age of AI. When a student uses a chatbot to produce a polished paragraph, the ethical issue is not only whether the student violated a rule. The deeper issue is whether the student bypassed the

thinking, struggle, judgment, and revision through which learning occurs. Cotton et al. (2024) describe how ChatGPT creates both opportunities and challenges for higher education, particularly around academic honesty and plagiarism. Kessler, Michiels, and Rogers offer a complementary response: focus not only on whether the text is permissible, but on whether the process cultivates scholarly agency. That distinction is powerful. A student can produce text that looks academic without yet understanding how academic knowledge is made. Conversely, an imperfect draft with transparent source work, revision, and reflection may show more genuine scholarly development than a flawless but outsourced final product.

A second strength is the book's attention to community. Academic integrity is often framed as an individual student's private moral choice. This is partly true, but incomplete. Students make choices within environments that either clarify or obscure expectations. Faculty model scholarly habits, departments define disciplinary norms, writing centers teach revision and source use, advisors interpret institutional rules, and academic integrity offices shape the meaning of consequence. By presenting integrity as something formed through relationships within disciplinary communities, the book gives institutions a broader theory of responsibility. It asks not only "Did the student cheat?" but also "What kind of scholarly community did we invite the student into?" and "What practices did we make visible before judging the student's failure to perform them?"

This community-centered approach is especially useful for first-year experience programs, writing across the curriculum initiatives, graduate student development, and faculty development. Orientation programs often explain policies, but policy explanation is not the same as scholarly apprenticeship. A more developmental approach would help students examine sample uses of sources, compare acceptable and unacceptable AI support, practice revision with feedback, and discuss what counts as contribution in different disciplines. Faculty development programs could use the book to help instructors redesign assignments so that process, attribution, feedback, and reflection are visible rather than hidden. Academic integrity offices could use it to shift some institutional energy from adjudication after misconduct to prevention through intellectual formation.

The book's likely limitation is not conceptual weakness but implementation difficulty. A developmental model of integrity requires time, coordination, and institutional will. Large courses, adjunct-heavy departments, compressed semesters, high advising caseloads, and limited writing support can all make scholarly apprenticeship difficult. Instructors may agree that students need more explicit teaching around source use and authorship while lacking the time to redesign assignments or provide iterative feedback. The book's argument is therefore strongest when read not only as a faculty guide but as an institutional challenge. If integrity is formed through community, then institutions cannot simply assign the problem to individual instructors or misconduct offices. They must build structures that make ethical practice teachable.

Another caution is that the book's positive framing should not be misread as softness on misconduct. A developmental account of integrity still requires

standards. Indeed, standards may become clearer when they are tied to the purposes of scholarship rather than presented as isolated prohibitions. The danger in some academic integrity conversations is that compassion and consequence are treated as opposites. *Crafting Ethical Scholarship* points toward a better synthesis. Students should be supported because scholarly norms are learned, but they should also be held accountable because scholarship depends on trust. The practical question is not whether to care or to enforce, but how to design systems where care helps students meet meaningful expectations.

The book also has significance beyond the AI moment. Generative AI has made the issue urgent, but the underlying problem is older. Students have long varied in their understanding of collaboration, paraphrasing, citation, disciplinary evidence, and the difference between completing an assignment and entering an intellectual conversation. AI intensifies those uncertainties by making imitation easier and more fluent. The enduring value of *Crafting Ethical Scholarship* is that it does not mistake the tool for the whole problem. Its central concern is the formation of scholars, not the containment of one technology. That makes the book more durable than many immediate AI-response texts.

Crafting Ethical Scholarship is recommended for faculty, writing program administrators, academic integrity officers, teaching and learning centers, first-year seminar designers, graduate mentors, and student-success leaders. It would be especially useful in professional development settings where institutions are revising academic integrity policies or AI guidance. Its argument could also serve as a shared reading for committees seeking to move beyond detection-centered or punishment-centered models of integrity. The book's most important message is that ethical scholarship is not an add-on to higher education's mission. It is one expression of that mission.

In the end, Kessler, Michiels, and Rogers offer a necessary correction to the dominant language of academic dishonesty. They do not deny the seriousness of cheating, plagiarism, or irresponsible AI use. Instead, they show that higher education cannot punish its way into scholarly integrity. Students must be shown what expert practice looks like, invited into communities where knowledge-making has value, and taught to understand writing as thinking rather than performance. That is the promise of the book. It moves academic integrity from the margins of compliance to the center of teaching, learning, and institutional purpose.

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About the Reviewer

Christopher Morales is a high school science educator and a college instructor whose work explores the intersection of learning, cognition, and educational practice. He teaches secondary science in Southwest Florida and serves as an adjunct instructor in higher education, providing him with a unique perspective on the transition between K–12 and postsecondary learning environments. Morales's scholarly interests center on cognitive science, student learning, educational leadership, and the conditions that support academic success. His current research examines how environmental factors, technology use, and school organizational structures influence attention, engagement, and achievement. Morales holds graduate degrees in science and education and is currently pursuing an Ed.D. in educational leadership at the American College of Education. His writing reflects a commitment to evidence-informed practice, intellectual curiosity, and the continuous improvement of educational systems.



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Paul Jarrod Michiels is a lecturer in the Writing and Communication Program in the Department of English at Carnegie Mellon University, where he teaches first-year writing and professional communication courses. His work centers on helping students develop strong rhetorical, analytical, and compositional skills for academic and professional settings. At CMU, he contributes to a program that prepares students to communicate with clarity, precision, and purpose across disciplines. Through his teaching and writing, he engages questions of communication, authorship, and the responsibilities of scholars in higher education. At Carnegie Mellon, he is part of a faculty community that supports innovative instruction and interdisciplinary learning.

Paul Michael Rogers is an associate professor of writing studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara where he also earned his PhD in education (2008). Paul served as a member of the Stanford Study of Writing Research Team, as Senior Scholar for the George Mason University, Center for the Advancement of Well-Being, and as the Director of the Northern Virginia Writing Project. He is also the co-founder and immediate past chair of the International Society for the Advancement of Writing Research. Paul's primary focus now is on transforming educational systems by through rigorous educational research and advancing data-informed policy and practice related to writing and literacy at all levels of education. Paul is a recipient of AAC&U's K. Patricia Cross Award for leadership in higher education and NCTE's Janet Emig Award for research in English education.



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