YOU ARE **NOT JUST CHEATING YOURSELF!** (If you were we wouldn’t care so much...)

It is often said that academic dishonesty is a self correcting problem, that: ‘cheaters are just cheating themselves.’ The belief is that eventually the cheater’s lack of knowledge will catch up with them, and they will be ‘punished’ somehow. While it is true that cheating will eventually lead to bad consequences for the cheater (even if it does yield some short term gains), it is simply **NOT** true that the cheater does not hurt anybody but themselves. To refute this point I’ve listed a few examples of how cheaters directly hurt others. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, just illustrative. It probably also reflects my background / bias as a professor. People in other job functions would probably come up with different examples. In fact, it is probably a worth while exercise to see if you can come up with some examples that are not on the list. So, in no particular order, here are some examples:

1) **Time spent by professors ‘looking for cheaters’ or ‘preventing cheating’ is time spent NOT TEACHING.** It is a waste of a valuable resource (faculty time) which is expensive (just look at your tuition bills!” By forcing faculty to waste time acting as the ‘police’ cheaters are stealing this expensive resource (real money) from others.

2) **Cheating Devalues the Degree you are earning.** For example, a future employer of someone who got their degree by cheating, not by learning the material, might think: ‘If that is what a Union College ME actually knows then I guess we won’t be hiring any more of them!’ Clearly this makes the degree less valuable and marketable for everyone, not only the cheater.

3) **Cheating Hurts the reputation of the profession of engineering.** Engineering is one of the few remaining trusted professions. Opinions of engineers held by lay people are generally very positive. This trust is important to our ability to practice engineering effectively in society, and this trust must be constantly earned’ Put in a different way:’ I am an engineer.’ I am proud of this (engineers are good people who do good things).’ I will not let dishonest people ruin this reputation for me or others.

4) **Cheating steals from others by artificially increasing the cheater’s GPA and class rank unfairly.** Good grades are worth real money in the job market. Every position a cheater fraudulently gains in class rank hurts (steals from) all those below him or her.

5) **Cheating forces faculty to use less than optimal teaching techniques.** For example, we can’t give take home tests (because we know cheating could occur) but these are often the best (most realistic) way to gauge student understanding of material. Likewise we must ‘devalue’ homework (compared to the level of effort / work it represents) in our grading to reduce the motivation for copying.

6) **Cheaters (engineers with degrees that they don’t honestly deserve based on their knowledge / performance) increase Liability Costs for all practicing engineers, and for the public in general.** The cost to insure against lawsuits caused by engineering errors is higher when there are incompetent engineers in the pool of the insured. These costs are borne by all practicing engineers (not just the cheaters) and by extension by society in general (through the cost of engineered products and services).

7) **The stakes for cheating / dishonesty are MUCH HIGHER for engineers than for other students.** As an engineer you will be in positions where your cheating (e.g. falsifying data) could KILL someone (perhaps many someones)!’ The ‘cheater’ would probably end up ‘paying a price’ for such a large mistake, but the price would be much lower than that paid by the ones injured!

8) **Cheating destroys the trust that all teaching / learning / scientific research is based on.** If the environment becomes one where faculty view students as ‘the enemy’ and students view faculty the same way then real teaching / learning / exploring will be greatly impeded ... and not just for the few ‘bad apples’ who are responsible.