

# SMC ETHICS

## Continuing a Dialogue on What We Do and How We Do It

### Proctoring in a Pandemic

During the pandemic, we've learned a lot about technology, not only in a *technical* sense, but also in an *ethical* sense. For example, the increased use of remote proctoring software like Proctorio—which student leaders have cited as disadvantaging students who don't have access to stable internet connections or private spaces in which to take tests—has led to many ethical debates on campus.

The SMC Academic Senate spent this year analyzing how cameras and online proctoring software should (or shouldn't) be used by professors. In the end, the senate approved a resolution *against* requiring students to turn on their cameras in synchronous online classes. The senate also recently approved a resolution recommending the college develop alternative proctoring options for students who want to opt out of Proctorio.

Both resolutions center student equity and privacy and address issues raised by student leaders, who have voiced their concerns in a resolution and in comments at numerous senate and board of trustees meetings. Students may be helping their children or younger siblings with their own homework, they may be in another country using a VPN to access their classes, or they may be experiencing housing insecurity, to name a few real examples of what our students



## Online Realities

Last year's campus-wide transition to online education was a tremendous challenge, but faculty are to be commended for their efforts and achievements during a time of crisis. It has been quite the adventure educating ourselves about the best practices for online teaching, converting our classes to a digital format, and often inventing whole new pedagogical approaches, all while navigating the technical difficulties of Canvas and Zoom, computers and internet connections. Although it is tempting to finally feel that our course shells and video lectures have become functional and even polished, and there is a glimmer of returning to campus and to some kind of 'normality,' it is equally vital to keep evaluating what practices will best ensure student success in our current online reality and whatever shape education may take in the future.

Continuing to add new items to our teaching and technology toolbox is no doubt important, but just as important is using this state of exception to rethink some elements of our pedagogy from

are dealing with.

Of course, some departments and professors have good reasons to require cameras or proctoring—assessments that require physical movement or rote memorization, for example. If instructors choose to require cameras or Proctorio for assessments, however, Academic Affairs has requested professors notify them before the semester begins so that a note can be added to the course schedule.

Given that many students may not read the fine print, it's also probably a good idea to mention your camera policy in your syllabus, in a welcome email before the semester begins, and on the first day of class. This kind of transparency will help to establish trust and enable students to make informed decisions. Ultimately, however you decide to use technology in your classes, it's important to consider the circumstances of your students and focus on equity.

Links to the resolutions mentioned above:

[SMC Academic Senate Resolution on Requiring Use of Cameras](#)

[SMC Academic Senate Resolution on Alternative Proctoring Techniques](#)

[SMC Associated Students Resolution to Pursue Alternative Proctoring Techniques and Services](#)

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scratch. In past newsletters, we have repeatedly brought up reflecting on our most deep-seated ideas and assumptions about teaching and college in general, particularly to examine how they may act as barriers to equity and the success of our most marginalized and underprivileged students. Ironically, this last year of online teaching, which has so physically distanced us from our students, has also given us a much more intimate glimpse into their personal lives and the circumstances and challenges they valiantly confront while trying to continue and succeed in their education. Housing issues, technology limitations, family responsibilities, work duties, emotional wellbeing—so much that was often ignored and left outside the classroom door now is at the center of our relationships and communication with our students, and it therefore should be at the center of our development as faculty.

In particular, it might make a world of difference for our students if we consider the situations that they may find themselves in and how those situations might be affecting their ability to succeed on assessments. This may result in our rethinking of how/when we administer assessments. For example, we might ask ourselves if the testing windows that we are currently using provide all students with a sufficient amount of time to complete an assessment while taking into account the unpredictability of family obligations or a work schedule that might suddenly change midweek or mid-semester. We might also consider if our testing windows allow international students to complete quizzes and exams at reasonable times in their specific time zones. Addressing these issues could be as simple as extending a 12-hour testing window to 24 or 48 hours, or extending testing windows to include part of the weekend.

More broadly, perhaps strict late policies might look different when taking into consideration stories from students about the emotional struggles in their personal lives or the real inadequacies of their computer and internet access. Certain anti-cheating techniques, both long established or newly created, might appear as inequitable or hostile intrusions into students' privacy, and therefore call for providing alternative options or responding more pre-emptively. Difficulties getting lab supplies to students in their homes might reveal problematic assumptions about how easy it is for students to obtain the materials they need to succeed. Or perhaps it is finally time to rethink the syllabus since its role is not only transmitting policies but also modeling a form of communication and relationship between faculty and students.

College right now simply is not what it was for most of us when we were educated ourselves, and it may never be exactly the same again. This is all the more reason to become less rigid about our preconceptions of what college is and how it works and to continue this ongoing process of trying to best serve our students.