Dear [Professor],

I know students certainly reacted to your email concerning cheating on our [subject] final with a generally high degrees of seriousness and I appreciate your sending it out and raising the issue of academic honesty violations with the class as a whole. If I might, I've been thinking fair amount about this issue and how it is connected to the larger question about carer choice ethics. I would like to share a few thoughts I have on the matter in case you'd like to participate in this conversation further with me or other students/faculty.

By way of background, my undergraduate experience deeply impacted my reaction to beginning my studies at Heinz. [Personal note] I attended Brigham Young University where I studied organizational behavior and anthropology. I was a practicing Mormon at the time (but have since revoked my membership—a fact I share only to illustrate that I'm not writing this as a "believing" Mormon, only somebody who is deeply familiar with that world). Interestingly, my experience at that value-driven institution was that cheating of any kind was a much rarer occurrence than it is here at Heinz.

My sense is that this was due to the fact that 1) many Mormons actually believe that a God is watching them from above will punish them if they cheat and 2) the institutional culture embeds in students and faculty a sense of personal mission which centers around building a vibrant nuclear family rooted in moral uprightness and obedience to God. Since many BYU students grew up Mormon and then formed their adult church member identities in the strong culture of BYU, the jobs that many of my peers sought seemed to function in their mind as primarily vehicles to support their current or future families, the LDS community, and broader segments of society. Their reason for being in school, taking tests, and writing papers seemed connected to a cohesive value structure that in many cases transcended any one class or any one corporate position.

Remarkably, this kind of culture building was created and maintained through both the leadership hierarchy ("top-down") and from everyday conversations between the members themselves. For example, since church participation is mandatory for all BYU students, and the church congregations are run entirely by students and for students, I heard peers my age whom I sat next to in my undergraduate statistics class talking about values such as honesty and integrity and leadership worthiness literally on a daily basis. (See footnote 1.)

Six years following my graduation from BYU, I'm at CMU for grad school and your email was, quite frankly, not very startling. I am aware that there are closed online groups in which students post and share solutions to Stats HW, econ HW, finance notes for exams, etc. I've seen (and reported) students taking photos of their tests before, during, and after the exam session. I don't have any specific information on our stats final, but with the allowance for books and papers, my guess is that there were likely several students who took advantage of the overall frantic shuffling of papers and such during the 80 minutes to send and receive tips regarding questions using their mobile computing devices. It seems like you were made aware of something like this; I have no other specifics to offer, only the following preliminary conclusion. I'm sorry.

Generalizing from this specific [course] final, I'd next like to discuss how my experience at BYU provided a foundation for my reactions to cheating here at Heinz. In sum, it would seem that the warnings about the importance of acting with academic integrity seem to be having little effect among students inclined to cheat because they systematically fail to connect academic integrity with larger guiding principles concerning what one *does* with a MISM degree and why one would do these things.

For example, when Heinz staff tout the value of their program in terms of the median (or mean) starting salary of graduates to the almost complete exclusion of any other reason for enrolling in the school at all (such as having an interest in a particular subject matter or research question or social policy objective), it is comes at absolutely no surprise to me, at least, that if money is the end goal of this experience for many students, one such student might reason that if there is a way to cut corners on an exam or HW assignment and still get a job at Intel, then one is, perhaps, clever for doing so--certainly not immoral or unethical.

A successful corporate career is, after all, fundamentally related to one's ability to help *maximize* company profits and very little else. As a result, most of the conversations I hear between my peers fall into one of two categories: 1) candid discussion of the logistics of this or that act of cheating with the goal of getting the most return for their time (or other such maximizing language) or 2) reluctant comments regarding "where the line is" with respect to

this or that act of peer-to-peer collaboration.

My concern is not with the fact that these two types of conversation occur. Rather it is the startling lack of a third discussion about *why* we are paying tuition to complete this or that assignment or test at Heinz in the first place that is particularly concerning. The lack of dialog on the connection between job choice and social impact seems to lie at the heart of the frustrations you expressed in your email because compelling reasons for following the rules of academic honesty are neither clearly articulated or collectively held.

An illustration: imagine that a Heinz student sees the United States National Security Agency, Microsoft, Amazon.com, Caterpillar, and many other such entities touted as worthy places of employment by professors, the career services office, the dean, and others. These students see that the company representatives are welcomed on campus, sometimes with corporate fanfare (fancy signs, free t-shirts, pizza, flash drives). The recruiters are, in fact, seen as critical access points to cultivating future financial and career success. I do admit that some scaled down version of this kind of programming is necessary since Heinz's value as a professional degree program is related directly to the ease with which its graduate secure desired professional posts.

With so much money involved in the recruiting process, however, relationships between our school, corporations, and student are more complicated than an information session might suggest because career choices are not politically neutral (for the employer itself and for prospective candidates). And yet, because of the routine nature of these transactions, the recruitment and hiring process appears to many people to be almost entirely disconnected from important matters of justice and equity in society. Clearly, to the average student at Heinz, securing a job at Amazon.com is a validation of one's training and such a position accrues generous financial remuneration and a healthy amount of prestige among family, friends, colleagues, and the tech world more widely.

The connection between this seemingly innocuous school-to-career path and cheating on a statistics exam lies in the fact that it is very possible that Amazon's new hire never once participated in a serious discussion (at Heinz or, perhaps, anywhere else) around how to think in a societally minded way about working for a company which, for example, was so reluctant to pay their warehouse workers for the time they are forced to stand in line upon the end of their shift in order to be searched for 'stolen' merchandise by security guards. Amazon was, as I'm sure you know, sued by their employees and the company was so intent on not paying for this time that they forced the case all the way to trial. (See footnote 2.) Clearly, if every business in society treated its workers with as much hostility as Amazon.com, we'd be in an even more intense socio-economic strain the one we're presently experiencing. My assumption in this line of reasoning is, of course, that Amazon's management would be inclined to respond to internal dissent from its "high-value" employees concerning its warehouse personnel practices.

I should note, lest you accuse me of hypocritical anti-corporate rhetoric, that I buy plenty of stuff from Amazon. I have a Google-controlled email account. I hold bank accounts at a few major multi-national banks. I even own shares of index funds whose portfolios include most major global companies. In fact, my father raised me with money earned from a career at IBM—practically the paragon of anti-competitive market behavior. Thus, given my own involvement in these corporate systems I am not suggesting—and indeed I could never meaningfully suggest given my position in the system—that merely choosing *not* to work for Amazon is our morally upright path out of this mess. (See footnote 3.)

My argument is more limited than this sweeping anti-corporate refrain and therefore more actionable. I admit that corporations, including Amazon.com are here to stay and will form the backbone of the recruiting efforts at Heinz for the indefinite future . Given this reality, I believe that Heinz Student should be invited and—and hopefully mentored—to think about how one's career and financial choices in life impact other human beings in tangible, sometimes life-and-death ways. Without this more far-reaching discussion, arguments about the immorality of cheating on a test or copying homework are simply too disconnected from the moral frameworks in which one actually could, I think, make a very persuasive claim that one should not, in fact, cheat on a test even if one is planning on working for Amazon.

I'll share a more extreme example to contrast Amazon's anti-labor philosophy: I would certainly hope that as thinking people we can admit if only during conversation that designing and testing drone and laser-guided missile technology used to obliterate Muslim/non-white people or building hydraulic system controls for bulldozers used to flatten Palestinian settlements (see footnote 4) has far greater societal and ethical implications than does taking

a photograph of an exam question or sharing HW solutions. And yet it would seem that even for these extreme questions around corporate ethics, the average student at Heinz will not be asked to even consider the complexities involved in making a decisions about how to direct one's professional energies in a socially responsible way both during the job search process and after securing a position.

So, more generally, when we as a Heinz community encourage and praise career choices clearly made without any serious thought and conversation about how one's professional energies will likely impact society, our outrage and disgust concerning student academic misconduct feel limited in their actual weight.

It would seem that unless we as a Heinz community--students, faculty, administration, custodial workers, etc.--are willing to come together and actively devote substantive energy (i.e. time, money, course units) to building and sustaining a culture around ethical accountability for ourselves and one another in a holistic way (not one that is limited to questions of plagiarism and test answer sharing), the widespread violations of stated academic integrity policies will likely persist and grow ever more pernicious as technology for preserving anonymity while sharing digital content becomes ever easier to access from mobile computing device that are so popular these days.

I share these thoughts without much expectation. As a first-term Heinz student who will hopefully graduate in a few more terms, I realize that I'm certainly on the periphery of these discussions. And yet, strangely, it seems as though these discussions—if they're happening in a serious way at all—are not involving many students. I think that can change, but I can't change it myself—clearly.

If you would like to discuss how a broader approach to ethical discussion could address the issues mentioned in your email to, I'm more than willing to devote personal energy and resources to this process. I have ideas regarding both the seeds for a discussion concerning the broader ethical issues I shared above as well as thoughts about possible ways to structure Heinz courses to be both naturally less susceptible to the academic honesty violations you referenced in your email as well as more relevant to the individualized passions and interests of us students. There's a tremendous amount of potential here and I think realizing some of that could be both personally meaningful and societally beneficial.

Regards,

Eric Christopher Darsow

Footnotes:
(1) I should note that I found many, many disturbing problems with the system at BYU. I wouldn't recommend anybody attend BYU unless they want to avoid incurring student debt and are a conservative Christian comfortable with supporting a generally homophobic and racist self-referential system of thought. Indeed, the culture may dissuade folks from cheating but it also chops to bits and spews out anybody who has a beard, or drinks alcohol, or doesn't worship a straight white male god (among many social requirements). These are problems, but they weren't related to academic 'integrity' in the sense that your email was referencing.

(2) See this Bloomberg article on the unanimous vote against amazon.com warehouse workers by the US Supreme Court. The Court cited a precedent case in which the employer was not required to pay its employees for activities that are not "intrinsic elements" of their job. Since the security scans at Amazon.com took place after the workers' shifts and could have been eliminated without affecting the completion of essential work tasks, the warehouse workers were deemed to have no legal recourse for being denied wages to cover the time spent waiting for these required--but non-essential--searches:
http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2014-12-09/workers-at-amazon-warehouses-wont-get-paid-for-waiting-in-security-lines

(3) Thus, despite the fact that I do try when convenient to minimize my connections to these systems, I am still enmeshed in their value systems to an extreme degree. This does, I believe, actually serve as the driver behind this emphatic email. I'm deeply involved—most of us are heavily involved—and unless we're willing to radically and completely disconnect from the corporate system altogether, we should be actively trying to forge ways to be as humane and compassionate as possible as participants.

(4): Concerning corporate ethics abuses, consider also
* Anticompetitive and anti-expression practices by major telecom firms: AT&T, Verizon, etc.
*The anti-labor climate fostered and strengthened by most major US Corporations
* Amazon's miserable treatment of warehouse workers; its consistent refusal to pay sales taxes to states (much of which is used to fund public education)
* Google's systematic exclusion of competitor firms from any of its search results (just try googling "google search alternative")
* Environmental degradation persisting at extreme levels by Trans Canada, BP, et al.
* HP's sale and support of blockade checkpoint technology used by Israel to enforce the Palestinian siege on Gaza
* Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed, Ratheon, Northrop, etc.'s development of technologies of human destruction including bombs, drones, guns, tanks, etc.