

Final Exam Heist

Around 1 a.m. on Wednesday, May 3, 2017, University of Kentucky student Henry Lynch II entered the office of instructor John Cain. To enter the office, Lynch crawled through the air ducts of the building where Cain's third-floor office was located. He lowered himself from the ceiling to the floor by stepping on filing cabinets and office furniture. Once inside, Lynch opened the door to let in his friend, Troy Kiphuth. Lynch was in Cain's statistics class that semester and broke into the office to steal a copy of the final exam.

To the students' surprise, Cain was working late that night. He had stepped out around midnight to get something to eat but, at around 1:30 a.m., returned to his office. Cain tried to unlock his door but found that it was blocked by something from inside. Cain yelled to whoever was inside his office that he was going to call the police. The door swung open and the two students sprinted down the hallway and left the building.

Cain called the police. Soon after their arrival, Lynch returned. Worried that Cain would recognize him from class, Lynch confessed to what he and Kiphuth had done. Although Kiphuth assisted Lynch with the break-in, he was not in Cain's class. Lynch admitted that he had attempted to steal the exam earlier that evening, around 6 p.m. on Tuesday, but could not find the exam. He also confessed to stealing an exam from Cain's office earlier in the semester, but reported to the officers that he did not share the answers with any other students. In all these instances, Lynch had accessed Cain's office through the air ducts.

Police charged Lynch and Kiphuth with third-degree burglary and they were both investigated by the university's Office of Student Conduct. University spokesperson Jay Blanton reported that circumstances like this were rare. Blanton stated, "Cheating and theft of this kind is very serious in an academic institution." He added, "It's an unusual set of circumstances," and, "It also underscores how late our faculty work."

Concept: Integrity

Ethical Insight:

Integrity is often defined as doing the right thing when no one is looking. When a University of Kentucky student thought that no one was looking, he climbed into an air duct in an attempt to steal an exam from his professor's office. His plan was foiled when the professor returned unexpectedly. After a quick escape, the student returned to the scene of the crime and confessed what he had done. It appears that grades—not integrity—were on the student's mind.



Discussion Questions:

1. Acting dishonestly, as these students did, certainly lacks integrity. Besides honesty, what other characteristics of integrity can you think of?
2. How was integrity demonstrated and not demonstrated in this case study? Explain.
3. While Henry Lynch was clearly wrong to break in and steal the exam, do you think he upheld integrity by confessing to the crime and his previous crimes? Why or why not?
4. It is unlikely that these students did not know that cheating was wrong. Yet, they were likely similar in personality profile to their peers. Why might a student go to such great lengths to steal an exam? What rationalizations might Lynch have given himself for cheating? What other pressures or biases might have affected Lynch's decision to cheat?
5. Troy Kiphuth, Lynch's friend, was not enrolled in the statistics class. Why do you think he assisted with the break-in to steal an exam he would not be taking? What pressures might have influenced his decision to participate? Explain.
6. If you became aware of students cheating on an exam, what would you do and why? What factors would encourage you to tell a professor about the cheating? What factors might discourage you from telling a professor?
7. How might colleges and universities guard against cheating? What do you think are some best practices to uphold academic integrity? Explain.
8. Two major approaches to improving behavior in both universities and companies are (1) a compliance-based approach that focuses on creating rules and enforcing compliance with them, and (2) an integrity-based approach that focuses on building character in students and employees. Which do you think might be more effective? Why?
9. Can you describe a time when you acted with integrity? Or someone you know did? How did it feel? What was the result?
10. Can you describe a time when a public figure acted with integrity? What was the result? How did you feel, or what did you think, about her/him?

Bibliography:

Student Arrested After Crawling Into a Duct to Steal an Exam

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