Dartmouth in recent years, along with colleges such as Harvard and University of North Carolina, has been rocked by a cheating scandal earlier in 2015. According to reports, students in professor Randall Balmer’s “Sports, Ethics and Religion” class were held under scrutiny when Balmer found a discrepancy between the number of students digitally submitting the answers to a question in class and the number of students actually present. As a result, as many as forty-three students may be implicated in an academic dishonesty case.

This scandal raises many serious issues in collegiate ethics, one of which is varsity athletics. Just less than 70% of the class was comprised of varsity athletes, and the course was known within the Dartmouth community to be a “grade boosting” class with a relatively low work load. It highlights the rigors and difficulties of being a varsity athlete in college; as one student put it, it is like “balancing a 40-hour-a-week job with school work.” It is no doubt a challenge, and there are other schools, in particular UNC, who have used grade-boosting courses to help athletes stay in college. And as long as there are incentives for colleges to help their students stay in school and for athletes to pass their classes more easily, ethics will always be challenged by students and colleges alike.

A bigger, systemic issue raised is the outlook of ethics within the collegiate atmosphere. According to a student at Dartmouth, many students thought the incident was “stupid,” since the class was easy and many people cheated. We at UT are not immune to such a problem; there are many students who could talk about the ease of signing absent friends in for class with the i>clickers in many introductory level courses. It is not unreasonable to think that some professors may turn a blind eye to such a problem and even acknowledge the discrepancy as a problem too
big for them to tackle. The point is, it is a widespread issue, and we must look for a way to change students’ attitudes about ethics in order to fix the larger epidemic.

Pertaining to the Business Honors Program within The University of Texas, we do not normally encounter as much of an attendance issue. Our courses are taught in smaller classroom environments, and professors know most of the students by name. Consistently missing a course would not go unnoticed, and there is not a need for any type of sign-in for attendance. However, cases such as these can still be learned from in regards to keeping the BHP as ethical as possible. The major issue is not just cheating for attendance points, but the fact that most students’ reactions to the scandal were not serious. They did not feel like the dishonesty was a big deal and believed the potential punishments of suspension were too harsh. However, the mental attitude of not taking academic dishonesty seriously can have eventual detrimental effects on a program.

As a collective group and entity, it is important that each member take the responsibility of upholding the honor and integrity of the program. One type of ethical breach can seem “smaller” than another, but it is still an ethical breach that we would not want to tarnish the reputation and identity of the program as a whole. We can use the situations of Dartmouth and other prestigious universities to learn that if there is an act of academic dishonesty, reactions and the after-effects are just as important as prevention in the first place. How do we fix an apathy problem? We continue to constantly stress the importance of ethics and integrity in our classroom, school organizations, and future careers.