

For Faculty: Reducing and Detecting Plagiarism

Faculty play a crucial role in helping students to develop academic integrity. There are many contexts in which faculty can explicitly teach students what academic honesty is: at the beginning of the semester when they are setting the tone for learning; as the requirements for an assignment are described; when students must be confronted with the evidence of dishonesty; and as they model integrity in their own teaching and scholarship. In all instances, it is important that expectations for academic integrity are communicated explicitly, clearly, and regularly.

Why Students Plagiarize

- 4 *Have students sign a statement*, affirming that they have read and understand the College's policy and procedures regarding plagiarism and agree to abide by them. This underscores the importance of avoiding plagiarism, and the public commitment of signing the statement makes it more likely that students will not plagiarize intentionally.
- 4 *Reserve a session early in each course to educate or review with your students what plagiarism is, why it is unacceptable in a Christian, scholarly community, and how to avoid it in their work* (Academic Dishonesty; Oliphant).
- Present specific strategies they can use to avoid plagiarism, and inform students of the consequences if they plagiarize (Academic Dishonesty; Hinchliffe, 1999; Oliphant; Van Belle, nd).
 - Let students know that you check their work for plagiarized sources (Murray) and that you are aware of and familiar with the papers that are presented at paper mill web sites (Ehrlich, 1998; Leland, 2000; Van Belle).
 - Present reasons for citing sources properly (Harris; Leland; Murray; Oliphant; Williams):
 - Plagiarizing is immoral and illegal (Saupe, 1998; Standler, 2000; Student Judicial Affairs, UCD, 1999). It is a form of theft, fraud, and lying (Saupe; Standler; Student Judicial Affairs, UCD).
 - An argument is strengthened when citations of authoritative sources are used (Harris; Williams).
 - A student avoids learning how to research effectively and to write well when he or she plagiarizes (Saupe; Student Judicial Affairs, UCD).
 - Those who plagiarize tarnish the reputation of the academic institution and degrade the value of their education if that institution becomes known as a place where students can plagiarize with impunity (Saupe; Student Judicial Affairs, UCD).
 - Plagiarizing creates an atmosphere of suspicion among classmates and between professor and students that weakens the learning community (Student Judicial Affairs, UCD).
 - When one student plagiarizes, he or she gains unfair advantage over classmates (Student Judicial Affairs, UCD).
- 4 *Teach students the skills they need* in order to complete assignments successfully.

- Present properly and improperly paraphrased, quoted, and cited statements and have students evaluate

- and pages.
 - Search the relevant on-line data base of abstracts or full-text articles.
 - Check highlighted or underlined portions of the students' print sources to see if they have been incorporated into the assignment and cited properly.
- 4 *Check for clues that the paper was:*
- obtained from an unacknowledged source (Bates & Fain; Senechal).
 - Look for "references to graphs, charts, or accompanying material" that are missing.
 - Check for "references to professors, classes or class numbers that are not taught at" Westmont.
 - Check whether all or many sources are in another language or published in another country.
 - Look for inconsistencies in the relevance of information, writing style, or grammar (Bates & Fain; Harris; Oliphant; Senechal).
 - written at an earlier time (Bates & Fain; Hinchliffe; Oliphant; Senechal).
 - "Web sites listed in citations" are no longer available.
 - Most or all of the "citations. . . are older than five years."
 - "Historical persons or events" are described in the present tense.
- 4 *If the student seems unfamiliar with sources used or information in the paper* (Bates & Fain; Ryan), this may be an indication that the information is plagiarized.
- He or she "cannot identify citations or provide copies of the cited material."
 - He or she "cannot summarize the main points of the paper or answer questions about specific sections of the paper."
 - "When provided with a page from their paper that has words or passages removed, students cannot fill in the blanks with the missing words or with reasonable synonyms."
- 4 *Use plagiarism detection software* like Turnitin.com, Glatt's Plagiarism Services, WordCHECK, KeyWORD, or MOSS.

If plagiarism is detected, the professor should follow the procedures described in the Westmont plagiarism policy for providing evidence, and documenting and reporting incidents of plagiarism. Following these procedures will help to provide a safeguard against legal risk.

Sources

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