

PLAGIARISM:

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

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In an era of shareware, freeware, video rental, and music downloads, what is the big deal about taking information from the Internet for a paper? Today, students live in a world where information is accessed with little effort on their part. The days of finding a journal article in the library and then packing the journal down to the copier are over. Instead, students enter their topic in a search engine, cut and paste, and in less time than it took to lookup the journal in yesteryear, they have a paper done. Students are allowed in grade school to copy from encyclopedias and from the Internet. Therefore, the educational environment and culture have conditioned students to copy from the Internet. Additionally, with the stakes high for academic achievement, perceptions of not having enough time, and competing peers plagiarizing, students often see no other alternative.

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PLAGIARISM: WHAT IT IS

Plagiarism is easily defined in general terms, but can be very difficult to define in application. It is easy to see that buying a paper off the Internet is wrong, but when a student tries to write a paragraph from the integration of several papers (with no direct quotes), what is cited and what is not? As illustrated in the following diagram, plagiarism is defined on a continuum from that which is easily identified as deliberate plagiarism to that which may be accidental. As the line continues off the diagram to the right, we find a place where it is not clear whether citing the information is even required.

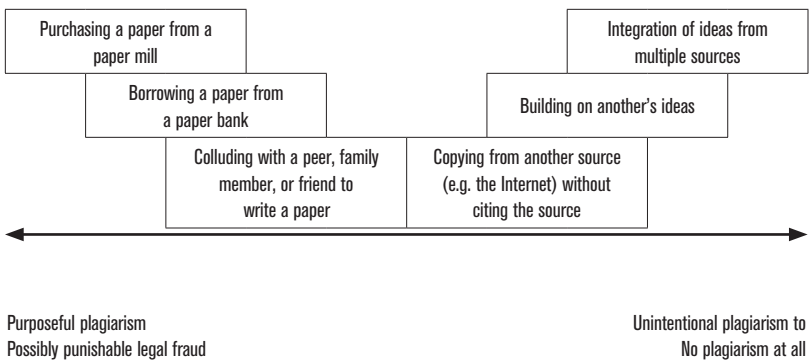


Figure 1. Plagiarism or not (adapted from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html)

Many cases come to faculty and/or to the Dean of Students office, where students honestly did not know they were plagiarizing or where the extent of the plagiarism was unclear. Research by Don McCabe shows a discrepancy between the differences in perception between students and faculty (see Table 1). Don McCabe of Rutgers University has been a leading researcher in academic integrity and business ethics for more than a decade. He has published numerous articles, textbook chapters, and support/educational pamphlets on academic integrity.

Table 1. The percent of students and faculty who consider an act dishonest (adapted from presentation made by Don McCabe at Center for Academic Integrity).

The Percent Of Students And Faculty Who Consider An Act Dishonest		
	students	faculty
Copy on exam/crib notes	90%	98%
Plagiarism	91%	98%
Collaboration	29%	82%
Written “cut & paste”	55%	79%
Internet “cut & paste”	56%	81%
Paper from mill	91%	98%

Plagiarism comes in many forms, some less common and more difficult to detect than others. Often students will cite the source, but then go on to paraphrase large portions of the source without giving credit to the author. Students seek to give the impression that they are giving credit and yet, seek to pass off someone else’s work as their own by paraphrasing. Sometimes, students do not include the correct citation or change the citation slightly, and then use some or all of the text, figures, or tables. Lastly, some students will correctly cite some of the quotes, but then modify other quotes and include them as if they were theirs. There are differences between what some consider “plagiarism” and what others consider “integration of knowledge.” Therefore, caution should be used as the behavior moves along the continuum to the right.

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Sometimes a simple interview with the student can illuminate the circumstances under which the paper was written. Often more insight is gained from one question over another. For example, asking questions about their understanding of what they wrote clarifies whether the writing is their own or simply a regurgitation of material from another source. Faculty may ask the students if they used material from an outside source in their paper, if they cited it, and if they didn’t, why they didn’t. This will help the student and faculty member understand the basis for the behavior and decisions that were made.

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Plagiarism is prevalent on campuses worldwide. The incidence does not differ greatly across nations or settings. In the public college sector, cheating runs as high as 75 percent of students admitting to have cheated on an exam at least once, and 60 percent admitting to have plagiarized a paper (McCabe, 2004; Brandes, 1986; Schab, 1991). Table 2 outlines prevalence rates collected by McCabe (2004). Students have access to over 250 Internet sites where they can purchase or trade a paper already written (Center for Academic Integrity, 2004). Many don't understand the consequences of doing so. Each stakeholder in the university is hurt in some way, including the plagiarizer, classroom peers, the faculty member, the university degree and name, future employers, the professional community, the board of trustees, the original author, and the local community.

Table 2. Cheating rates per year per type (adapted from presentation made by Don McCabe at Center for Academic Integrity).

Type Of Cheating	1999	2002/3	2003/4
Written "cut & paste"	40%	39%	38%
Written plagiarism	16%	7%	7%
Internet "cut & paste"	10%	36%	36%
Internet plagiarism (paper mill)	5%	3%	4%

THE IMPACT ON STAKEHOLDERS

Plagiarism denies the student of learning experiences he or she paid to receive. Sadly, the student who plagiarizes does not see the behavior as self-defeating, but instead, sees it as a way to get ahead. Additionally, plagiarism cheats fellow students in several ways. First, plagiarism diminishes the relative standing of each student in the class. Second, most college classes are benefited by dialogue and discussion that is dependant on the students having learned the foundational material and if the plagiaristic student is not prepared to so participate, the other students are cheated out of a learning experience. Third, the dishonest student creates a competition with the honest students, where the honest students must also plagiarize in order to compete.

The deceptive behavior of the plagiarist thwarts the efforts of the faculty member to teach and honestly grade the learning of the students. The grade the professor awards, representing the learning of the student is now in question and the plan to teach that student is undone. The act reduces the value of the class for all participants.

The university confers degrees representing to future employers and to the world that their graduates have met the institutional standard of performance. Since the degree was fraudulently earned, presenting it to the world only serves to diminish the name of the university and the worth of all other degrees awarded. When the student presents the degree to others, fully knowing it was not earned, the student is dishonest again and the employer, graduate school, and professional community receive something less than promised.

The Board of Trustees of BYU-Idaho requires each student to sign the Honor Code, which is then co-signed by the student's bishop and stake president. This contract governs the student's relationship with the university and plagiarizing is a breach of contract and reveals lack of integrity. At a deeper level, it is a violation of trust. Each student entering this institution is granted admission over other students who have applied. Given the plagiarizing student entered that contest and was granted admission over another student, the act of plagiarism has unfairly denied the other student a place that rightfully should have been his or hers.

Recognition is the original author's payment for writing a professional article. When the plagiarist takes that recognition on himself, he has stolen from the original author the only payment he receives. This action is not only unethical, but in some cases may be illegal and punishable by law.

When the plagiarizing student represents to his or her family and local community that all the requirements of a degree have been completed, he or she deceives them. The deceit continues long after the student has left the university and, in many cases, includes other deceits.

A single act of plagiarism is significant and can have long lasting effects on the student who does it and those who are stakeholders in the university. Consequently, every member of the campus community has a responsibility to prevent occurrences and to adjudicate incidents as they occur.

PREVENTION

Prevention is the first line of defense. It is better to build a fence at the top of the cliff, than to park an ambulance at the bottom. We know some of our students are going to fall off the edge, but many of those tragedies can be prevented. Prevention has to occur as a result of quality teaching and not scare tactics. Elder Boyd K. Packer teaches: "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior. The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior." While discipline and accountability are

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important in safeguarding the institutional values, teaching and other prevention strategies are essential to change.

This section of the paper outlines several intervention strategies to reduce the incidence of plagiarism and cheating. The implementation of these strategies falls primarily on the faculty, though all campus members are benefited when they endorse and apply them, especially peer-to-peer. Yet, many faculty are not using the tools at their disposal to fight plagiarism. This is supported by research done by Donald McCabe and summarized in Table 3.

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Table 3. Rates Interventions Used by Faculty (adapted from presentation made by Don McCabe at Center for Academic Integrity).

An opportunity lost - Rates faculty use the following interventions	
Change exams regularly	74%
Monitor students closely on tests	72%
Discuss views on integrity	61%
Information in syllabus about cheating	66%
Use Internet to confirm plagiarism	22%

Much like gospel principles taught from the pulpit, values will be understood and adopted when faculty teach them repeatedly. Further, each class (i.e., freshman, sophomores, etc.) and discipline (i.e., psychology, business, etc.) require a different level of teaching. Faculty teaching should tie back to core gospel values and to the Honor Code. Research done by McCabe and Pavela (2004, 2000) demonstrates that students in schools with an honor code that is taught and enforced cheat less. Further, they suggest specific values to teach for student success:

1. Recognize and affirm academic integrity as a core institutional value.
2. Foster a lifelong commitment to learning.
3. Affirm the role of teacher as a guide and mentor.
4. Help students understand the potential of the Internet—and how the potential for good can be lost if online resources are used for fraud, theft, and deception.
5. Encourage student responsibility for academic integrity.
6. Clarify expectations for students.
7. Develop fair and creative forms of assessment.
8. Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty.

Besides teaching the values, faculty must make links from plagiarism to the concepts of integrity and honesty. Many faculty assume students “should already know” or “they have already been taught” and, consequently,

they do not teach thoroughly the underlying precepts and principles related to academic integrity, avoiding plagiarism, and how and when to cite a source. Many students come to college having written papers by looking up the topic in an encyclopedia or on the Internet, often copying verbatim from the source and not giving credit to the source where it was found. Their grade school teachers have endorsed and even praised their work, entitling it a “research paper.” Though most high schools teach plagiarism, many incoming freshman have no idea that copying and pasting from the Internet falls under the umbrella of “plagiarism.” Instead, they assume plagiarism is defined as the act of using a peer’s work as their own (using the whole paper) or they assume that what they are doing falls under the heading of plagiarism, but is “not really that wrong” (McCabe as quoted in Eisner, 2001). Consequently, each faculty member needs to teach the definitions of plagiarism (i.e., quoting, paraphrasing, padding, what is common knowledge, and using facts or ideas) and how to appropriately cite a source.

Clearly defining expectations for each assignment (in every class) and, when possible, giving examples, help students stay within the guidelines. Reviewing the processes involved and demonstrating what the final product should look like provide a structure for the students to use. Further, as faculty and student both publicly endorse the Honor Code and the values that underlie it, commitment levels rise and resolutions change.

Students need to be taught and reminded of the consequences that will be imposed by each faculty member and by the university, if caught (adjudication is outlined below). Further, faculty need to do what they said they would do (i.e., fail plagiarizing students on the assignment or course) and report incidents of cheating to the Dean of Students office. According to McCabe (2004), 52 percent of faculty have never reported an incident of cheating to anyone. Furthermore, 44 percent of faculty admit they have ignored cheating on occasion, because they lacked proof (38 percent) or lacked support (6 percent).

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Most students mistakenly believe that they are the only ones affected by their cheating. On the contrary (as outlined above), cheating affects many people and in various ways. Therefore, faculty must teach them about stakeholders and the impact of their dishonesty.

When students know that cheating by their peers harms them and impacts the university and community negatively, they are more likely to intervene and report plagiarism. Remind students that they would not stand by and allow a thief to steal things from them, but instead would intervene or report such behavior to police. Students should be challenged to confront dishonesty in like manner, either directly confronting peers or reporting plagiarism to the instructor or the Dean of Students. When

students take ownership of the Honor Code and enforcement of those principles, academic integrity will reign on campus (McCabe, 2002).

Last, specific measures could be taken to reduce the opportunities to cheat. Require students to turn in an outline of their subject, a source list, a rough draft, and then the final draft. This is probably the surest way to: 1) deter plagiarism, 2) teach research skills, and 3) encourage real learning.

ADJUDICATION

Adjudication requires consistency across campus and reporting to a central office that can track incidents. Currently, at Brigham Young University–Idaho, faculty members adjudicate the first offense. They should individually confront the student and investigate the incident, documenting all evidence found. Then, faculty members are wise to consult with their program or college leadership and should notify the Dean of Students office. Last, the faculty disciplines the student.

Disciplinary sanctions may include a written reprimand, awarding a failing grade on the assignments/exam or in the class, and/or recommending greater intervention, up to and including separation from the university via the Dean of Students office. The Dean of Students office typically has limited involvement on first offenses, except to note the occurrence and review the sanction, unless requested to do otherwise. With repeat offenses or when the faculty member recommends separation from the university, the Dean of Students office becomes the adjudicating body and may suspend the student and/or make notations on the transcript.

Occasionally, a faculty member, with the intent of demonstrating compassion, decides not to impose consequences and chooses not to call the Dean of Students office. In such cases, the faculty member would serve the student and university more effectively by at least calling the Dean of Students office to document the occurrence. Occasionally, a student has had several small incidents of cheating that have gone undocumented with the Dean of Students office and thus no intervention has occurred to help the student change his or her behavior. One such incident on our campus demonstrated the need for such documentation. In that case, a new faculty member brought up the cheating incident in staff meeting and asked what the protocol was for dealing with the dishonesty. When the student's name was mentioned, four other faculty members reported similar cheating incidents in their own classes in the past, of which none had been reported to the Dean of Students office. Since no report was made, no one else in the department knew about the other incidents. In this case, the student would have been helped by discipline that was less severe, but because of the multiple incidents, the student was suspended for one year. It would have been more merciful to hold the student

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accountable on the first incident and to have documented the incidences as they occurred. Doing so may have halted further offenses.

Another important reason for central reporting is that it provides a legally required review of the incident. Recent court rulings have found in favor of the student when appropriate due process has not been followed. Following policy protects the faculty member and the university.

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University policy defines plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. The policy also defines the approach to investigation and adjudication. Currently, the policy places all responsibility for investigation and adjudication in the hands of the faculty with appeals going up the academic chain. It is legally important to inform the students that they may have the decision reviewed by the department head, college dean, or academic vice president (in that order), if they so desire.

A variety of methods are used to adjudicate academic dishonesty at other universities. Some universities, rather than having an over-arching honor code, have an academic integrity policy instead. Others, rather than having faculty adjudicate the incident, have student or faculty hearing boards that investigate and hear each case. Some hearing boards meet out discipline, while others refer the case back to the faculty for final disciplinary sanctions.

BYU-Idaho's religious underpinnings and having an Honor Code reduce the incidence of academic dishonesty on our campus. Yet, the Honor Code is only effective if it is clearly taught and enforced. The efficacy of the Honor Code increases as enforcement is consistent and as accountability is maintained with a central body. McCabe (2002) found that universities that consistently implemented an honor code system had one-third to one-half less cheating than schools that do not.

It is in our best interest to consistently prevent plagiarism by holding accountable those students who violate our academic standards policy. Our policy can be found on the web at <http://www.byui.edu/DeanOfStudents/academichonesty.htm> and is attached here as an appendix. ☺

APPENDIX: ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Brigham Young University-Idaho students should seek to be totally honest in all their dealings. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct.

Plagiarism

Intentional Plagiarism is the deliberate act of representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one's own without providing proper attribution to the author through quotation, reference, or footnote.

Inadvertent Plagiarism involves the inappropriate, but non-deliberate, use of another's words, ideas, or data without proper attribution. Although not a violation of the Honor Code, it is a form of academic misconduct for which an instructor can impose appropriate academic sanctions. Students who are in doubt as to whether they are providing proper attribution have the responsibility to consult with their instructor and obtain guidance.

Plagiarism may occur with respect to unpublished as well as published material. Examples include:

- Direct Plagiarism. The verbatim copying of an original source without acknowledging the source.
- Paraphrased Plagiarism. The paraphrasing, without acknowledgment, of ideas from another that the reader might mistake for his/her own.
- Plagiarism Mosaic. The borrowing of words, ideas, or data from an original source and blending this original material with one's own without acknowledging the source.
- Insufficient Acknowledgment. The partial or incomplete attribution of words, ideas, or data from an original source.

Fabrication or Falsification A form of dishonesty where a student invents or distorts the origin or content of information used as authority. Examples include:

- Citing a source that does not exist.
- Citing information from a source which is not included in the source for which credit is given.
- Citing a source for a secondary proposition which it does not support.
- Citing a bibliography source when it was neither consulted nor cited in the body of the paper.
- Intentionally distorting the meaning or applicability of data.
- Inventing data or statistical results to support conclusions.

Cheating A form of dishonesty where a student attempts to give the appearance of a level of knowledge or skill that has not been obtained. Examples include:

- Copying from another person's work during an examination or while completing an assignment.
- Allowing someone to copy from you during an examination or while completing an assignment.
- Using unauthorized materials during an examination or while completing an assignment.
- Collaborating on an examination or assignment without authorization.
- Taking an examination or completing an assignment for another, or permitting another to take an examination or to complete an assignment for you.

Other Academic Misconduct Includes other academically dishonest, deceitful, or inappropriate acts which are intentionally committed. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Inappropriately providing or receiving information or academic work so as to gain unfair advantage over others.
- Planning with another to commit any act of academic dishonesty.
- Attempting to gain an unfair academic advantage for oneself or another by bribery or by any act of offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting anything of value to another for such purpose.
- Changing or altering grades or other official educational records.
- Obtaining or providing to another a test or answers to a test which has not been administered.
- Breaking and entering into a building or office for the purpose of obtaining an unauthorized test.
- Continuing work on an examination or assignment after the allocated time has elapsed.
- Submitting the same work for more than one class without disclosure and approval.
- Getting equal credit on group assignments when equal work was not done.

Procedures for Handling Incidents of Academic Dishonesty

Faculty are responsible to establish and communicate to students their expectations of behavior with respect to academic honesty and the student's conduct in the course. The instructor will be responsible to investigate any incident of academic dishonesty or misconduct, determine the circumstances, and take appropriate action. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- Reprimanding the student orally or in writing.
- Requiring work affected by the academic dishonesty to be redone.
- Administering a lower or failing grade on the affected assignment, test, or course.
- Work with the Dean of Students to remove the student from the course.
- Recommending to the Dean of Students that the student be put on probation or dismissed.

If the incident involves the violation of a public law, e.g., breaking and entering into an office or stealing an examination, the act should be reported to Campus Police.

For the purpose of tracking, suspected or proven violations of the Academic Honesty Policy should be reported to the Dean of Students office—name, incident, action taken. If the occurrence is sufficiently egregious or if a pattern of dishonesty or misconduct is discovered additional action may be taken on behalf of the university based upon the nature of the infraction (see Student Handbook in Section VII).

If an affected student disagrees with the determination or action and is unable to resolve the matter to the mutual satisfaction of the student and the instructor, he/she may have it reviewed through the university's grievance process (see Student Academic Grievance Policy).

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