

Final Report on UAA Plagiarism and Related Academic Honesty Issues

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This final report is the culmination of a study undertaken in the Fall semester of 2008, in which UAA's current system for addressing plagiarism and other issues related to academic honesty might be assessed. The overall study contemplated a three-part investigation. First, a review of the overall problem as revealed in the literature would assist the UAA community in determining both its present position and future course. Second, a survey of policies and practices across UAA, and the faculty's experiences with the system in place, would serve as a necessary foundation for potential change. Third, a review of the steps that other institutions have taken recently in response to these issues might also provide insight into the direction that the UAA community might wish to move. A preliminary report was completed in February of 2009, and is incorporated into this final report.

This report is based upon research in all three areas mentioned above. While the literature review proved to be more challenging than was originally contemplated, for reasons that will be outlined below, it also revealed much more than originally expected. UAA policies and practices, and faculty experience with the system have been surveyed. The third area of concern, actions taken by other institutions, has been completed.

This report is informed and greatly improved by the large number of faculty who generously and patiently provided the details of their experiences. The UAA community also includes a number of members with particular expertise and experience in these matters who have been unstinting in their guidance and support. Dr. Kerri Morris, Professor of English, Emily Adams, a Graduate Student in English studying plagiarism at UAA for her thesis, and especially, Librarian Sally Bremner have been too valuable to this study to go unremarked.

Review of Plagiarism and Related Academic Honesty Literature

The review of the literature in this area was not expected to be very time consuming. Nor was it expected to reveal many surprises. Attention to the problem of plagiarism, based on a more than passing interest over the past twenty years or so led me to certain assumptions that seemed to be widely shared among those writing on the subject. Information gathered from UAA faculty during the course of this study indicates that these same assumptions are very widely believed to be true across the faculty. These assumptions include the idea that plagiarism in particular is a rapidly growing problem in universities across the world. Also assumed is that the rise of the Internet, with ready access to so much general information, not to mention free and paid websites devoted to providing "ready made" papers, is the root cause of this proliferation. A further assumption, although perhaps less universally held, is that the generation of students who grew up with computers in the classroom simply assumes that everything that can be accessed on the web is free for any purpose.

These assumptions certainly dominate the vast bulk of the literature, from scholarly journal articles to popular television news reporting. The scenario presented is very alluring, and seems so commonsensical as to defy debate, except for debate as to what should be done about it. However, actual debate within the literature includes challenges to each of these assumptions,

and a far-reaching and broad discussion that is anything but simple and straightforward. As it turns out, plagiarism is a problem that is surprisingly complex.

For instance, the same commonsense “feeling” that supports the idea that the rise of the internet is the cause of the increase of plagiarism will support the reverse idea proposed by some researchers who find that there is not a verifiable rise in plagiarism at all. What the Internet does provide, they claim, is an increase in our ability to discover plagiarism when it does occur. This view seems to be supported by the growing number of cases that identify plagiarism from documents produced long ago and presented with what is often ill-concealed glee as the mighty, or supposedly mighty are brought down to the level of cheats. This may, of course, become much more routine as the rush to electronic text makes searches for such evidence more accessible to all who might wish to look for it. Google Book Search, for instance, presently claims to have more than 100 million pages of searchable text.

Whatever may be true about the rise of plagiarism, or the rise of our ability to discover it, the most hotly debated subject within the literature centers on the various electronic methods by which the internet might be used to ferret out plagiarism. While free methods abound, the debate centers on paid plagiarism detection services such as Turnitin and CheckForPlagiarism. These services claim to offer the only sensible solution to the assumptions listed above. Critics attack these services on a wide range of issues. Some claim that these services are major promoters of false ideas about the prevalence and growth of the problem, for self-serving reasons. Others object to what they see as the “outsourcing” of academic responsibility. Turnitin comes under particular criticism in that it lays claim to rights to papers submitted to it for future commercial use without remuneration to student authors. However, the most compelling argument against these services is the fact that when they are used as a blanket screening device, they create a system in which all students are treated as suspects.

While this is a cost that many faculty appear to be willing to pay in order to stem the tide of the assumed deluge of plagiarism, others argue that it will destroy the academy. The appeal of Turnitin and the other like services is that they offer a clear and definitive solution to a problem that frustrates faculty. Faculty can get on with their real perceived work of imparting knowledge. Critics argue that in the process the sense of trust and community with students must inevitably be lost. The solution they offer, the other major solution within the literature, is to move in the opposite direction, toward building trust and community through educating students about their responsibilities within academia.

This is accomplished through the establishment of an honor code, or through one of various other programs designed to bring the principles of academic integrity to all students in a way that encourages them to see how integral these principles are to the community, and invites them to join in their use. Much of this can be traced to nearly twenty years of research by Professor Donald McCabe of Rutgers, widely regarded as the foremost expert on cheating in higher education. He is the founder of the Center for Academic Integrity, which operates out of the Rutland Institute for Ethics at Clemson University. CAI is a consortium, designed to promote the spread of academic integrity programs. A great deal of information is freely available, and, apparently, institutional membership brings access to further information and consultation. It should be noted that these programs are designed to do much more than pay lip service to the principles. Students are held strictly to standards after having become fully informed about them.

The most interesting and potentially valuable information gathered from the literature review is much less central to the overall debate. Centered within exchanges between those faculty actually charged with the teaching of rhetoric and composition, the debate over plagiarism has recently taken a surprising turn. These researchers are challenging every single assumption about plagiarism that exists within the wider field. Some even go so far as to maintain that plagiarism is a term that cannot be defined in any meaningful way. Others argue that the very concept of plagiarism is antithetical to the way that knowledge is really assimilated in human society. They argue that “authorship,” an ancient concept, has only very recently been tied to “ownership,” through copyright law. Thus, plagiarism is a recent commercial concern that, in fact, interferes with the pre-existing “natural” spread of knowledge within the community. These researchers argue that “intertextuality,” which they define as the necessary interrelatedness between texts, means that it is pretty nearly impossible to write something that is truly original.

It must be stated here that when first encountering some of these arguments, while focused on searching out an answer to the problem of plagiarism, it is quite easy to dismiss them. The literature in this area is rather liberally sprinkled with allusions to what, (I have it on good authority), might be called the writing professor’s “chip on the shoulder,” which is the result of many encounters with faculty of other disciplines pointing fingers at them as the cause of students’ failings in many areas, including plagiarism. As a result, on first reading that plagiarism cannot be defined, for instance, one might well be tempted to reject it as mere self-serving protection, (Of course we haven’t accomplished the task set for us – it’s impossible.), rather than a serious statement that contributes to the solution we all seek.

Professor Rebecca Moore Howard of Syracuse University is perhaps the leading figure within this area of scholarship. She has made all of the claims listed above, but her most startling contribution to the discussion of plagiarism is the practice that she calls “patchwriting.” Howard maintains that “patchwriting” consists of copying the work of others, in whole or in part, as not just a way of writing, but as a way of understanding. Mimicry is how we learn, Howard states, and the less familiar we are with material the more mimicry is needed. It is, Howard maintains, the only way to learn to write. “Patchwriting” thus is a challenge to the very concept of the monitoring of plagiarism, especially among students, as it is this very type of plagiarism that is most commonly assumed to be the most prevalent result of easy electronic access to materials. Lifting a sentence or a paragraph from here or there is the essence of the problem according to many sources. And yet, as startling and challenging as these ideas appear to be, Howard does not claim that this practice should be viewed as acceptable in writers who have finished their training. Rather, it is a stage that student writers go through as they learn to write, and as they become familiar with material they have not yet mastered. Howard is no more sympathetic to “cheating” than any other faculty member. And the Academic Integrity Policy at Syracuse, which Howard helped to write, reflects that view.

The researchers in this field, along with Howard, bring a great deal of expertise to bear on the whole problem of plagiarism. This is their field, after all, and like many other things in the world that seem rather opaque at first, close attention reveals fascinating detail. They write about what it means to be a writer, and they write about just how dependent we all are on recalling what others have said when we attempt to articulate some concept. From Helen Keller’s autobiography, in which she reveals the pain she suffered when a story she wrote as a pre-teen

turned out to be essentially one that must have been read to her previously, to a contemporary poet's confessions about the horror he experienced when he discovered words and concepts from favorite poets of the past that had crept into his own carefully constructed works, these writers articulate a convincing argument that favors the view that words and ideas are indeed communal, and that originality is very hard to come by. Even with the best of intentions it is very difficult to keep track of sources, especially over time. None of this work, it should be noted, is intended to excuse the intentional lifting of the words or ideas of others.

In fact, intentionality is another important subject area within the plagiarism literature that must be considered. UAA policy (with some complications that are outlined below) presently has this definition of plagiarism: Plagiarism is "presenting as their own the ideas or works of another person without proper acknowledgment of sources." Adding a statement of intention to that definition radically alters the meaning: Plagiarism is intentionally "presenting as their own the ideas or works of another person without proper acknowledgment of sources." The debate about whether plagiarism should hinge on intention is widespread across the literature, and the exchanges are among the least polite within the field. Proponents argue that the charge of plagiarism is too serious, (some even equating it to the academic equivalent to a death penalty case), to neglect the mitigating consideration of intention. On this basis, university presidents have been excused for long past, but clear, indiscretions, and successful academic authors have been excused for recent indiscretions that are explained to be the result of graduate student assistants' inadvertent errors. Critics argue that adding intention to the definition of plagiarism serves only to weaken our ability to effectively deal with the problem. They maintain that plagiarism, like speeding, should be a matter of fact, not intention.

Another area within the literature that bears close consideration is the concern for cultural norms different from those generally accepted in our academic setting. These include practices in different parts of the world, particularly Asia, in which the concept of plagiarism in practical terms does not apparently exist. It also includes other norms within groups much closer to home. Arguments from this perspective have been forwarded, for instance, to explain the prevalence of "borrowing" among African-American preachers in discussions about the writings of Martin Luther King.

The last subject area within the literature that must certainly be considered is pedagogy. There is wide-spread agreement within the literature that faculty can make a major contribution to controlling plagiarism by crafting assignments that make plagiarism less likely. Such assignments might require drafts, or highly specific responses difficult to find already prepared, or assignments requiring comparison of two or more sources, etc. While this approach may not be attractive to faculty who already feel overburdened, the literature contains many relatively simple ways in which assignments might be made much less prone to plagiarized responses.

Although it falls into a rather special niche within the overall plagiarism and academic honesty area, it should be noted that the federal government, in passing the Higher Education Act of 2008, created a particular requirement for the delivery of distance education courses. Under this act, higher education accrediting agencies, (like our Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities) must require that member institutions that offer distance education have "processes through which the institution establishes that the student who registers... is the same student who participates in and completes the program." This is clearly motivated by the fear that distance students are somehow more prone to cheating than other students, and that surrogates are doing

their work. The “processes” that might be used to assure compliance are not specified, and are currently under the negotiated rulemaking process. A further provision of the bill also requires that in these “processes,” institutions must protect the privacy of students. One of the organizations that UAA is affiliated with, the Western Cooperative for Educational Television, has some preliminary explanations and recommendations on their website. Our accrediting agency, the NWCCU has nothing yet for publication. This law should concern all faculty, not just those that deliver distance courses. The law is a clear indicator that the whole of higher education is under close scrutiny in matters of academic honesty. No matter what we might conclude from careful study of the problem, we will face expectations from outside the academy, that are motivated by the less careful assumptions with which this review began.

Review of Plagiarism and Related Academic Honesty Issues at UAA

University of Alaska Standards – Regent’s Policies and University Regulations

UAA policies and procedures in these matters, like any other matter, are, and must be, subject to the University of Alaska Board of Regent’s Policies and the University Regulations that accompany them. Under the tiered system in place, Major Administrative Units, (UAF, UAA, and UAS), may add definitions or expand upon these policies and regulations so long as they do not reduce or negate their effects. The Board of Regents must approve all policies and regulations of the MAUs.

Primarily, the Board of Regent’s Policies and University Regulations that affect matters of plagiarism and related academic honesty issues are found in Chapter 09-02- Student Rights and Responsibilities, and Chapter 09-03- Student Dispute Resolution. The most salient points are found in Policy (P09.02.020 Student Code of Conduct) and Regulation (R09.02.020 Student Code of Conduct). Policy (P09.02.020B) states that any student “found responsible for committing, attempting to commit, or intentionally assisting in the commission of... cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty” will be subject to the imposition of “disciplinary sanctions.” Regulation (R09.02.020A) contains a list of ten examples of “Cheating, Plagiarism, or Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty.” The fourth item from that list comes the closest to a definition of plagiarism: “presenting as their own the ideas or works of another person without proper acknowledgement of sources.”

While these are not the only Regent’s Policies and University Regulations that pertain, they are specifically mentioned here as a clearly mandated foundation for whatever decisions the faculty might wish to make in the future relative to these matters.

There is one further matter of Regent’s Policy that must be of concern in contemplating a future course of action for UAA. Policy (P09.02.020D) states: “This policy and university regulation and MAU rules and procedures are not intended to define prohibited conduct in exhaustive terms, but rather to set forth examples to serve as guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behavior.” As a result, what was described above, (in the literature section on intentionality as UAA’s “definition” of plagiarism, and again in the paragraph two above this one) is not strictly true. We don’t, in fact, have a strict definition of plagiarism. This kind of policy language, in which definitions are kept in a permanently tentative and incomplete state, is often seen as valuable in protecting the university’s right to take action against newly invented or presently un contemplated forms of misconduct without having to rewrite policy. However, if it is

applied in its strictest sense (as a prohibition against an MAU set of rules and procedures that are “exhaustive”), this policy might hamper an attempt to precisely define plagiarism. This precision seems quite central to the kinds of programs that fall under the above mentioned honor code or academic integrity solutions to the problem.

University of Alaska Anchorage Policies and Procedures

UAA policies on these (and other) matters are found in two places, the Catalog, and the UAA Fact Finder/Student Handbook. The particularly applicable sections, (Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty, and Student Code of Conduct), appear in somewhat different iterations in these two places. In the Catalog, the section titled “Academic Integrity” immediately precedes the section titled “Student Code of Conduct” at page 5.37. In the UAA Fact Finder/Student Handbook, (often referred to as the “official” record of UAA student policy), a section titled “Academic Honesty” is found on page 68 that includes the same body text (except that the Catalog refers to the Handbook as the official record of policy, and the Handbook refers to itself) as is found in the catalog under the title “Academic Integrity.” The Student Code of Conduct is found in the Handbook beginning on page 79, and appears to be identical to the section that appears in the Catalog. These differences of title and proximity are troubling.

More troubling is the fact that the statement of Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty, is flawed in three important ways. First, it appears to offer a simple, direct definition for “cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty” when it states: “Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are defined as the submission of materials in assignments, exams, or other academic work that is based on sources prohibited by the faculty member.” This is a paraphrase of the first item on the list of ten examples of “Cheating, Plagiarism, or Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty.” Found in Regulation (R09.02.020A), and, in fact, found in identical form within the UAA Student Code of Conduct. The statement of Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty continues with the statement: “Substantial portions of academic work that a student has submitted for a course may not be resubmitted for credit in another course without the knowledge and advance permission of the instructor.” This sentence is not found in Regent’s Policy or University Regulation and must have been added as an addition to the list of prohibited practices for UAA at some point.

These two sentences, however, by their own terms, claim to define “cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty.” This is highly misleading however, as this is not - and cannot be – UAA’s definition of these terms. The tiered policy system, referred to above, and in particular Policy (P09.02.020D), will not allow UAA to have a definition that utilizes just one example from a much longer list mandated in University Regulation (R09.02.020A), and one new example. This may lead to more than mere temporary confusion. The confusion and error may be passed along. For instance, a web page found under the UAA Dean of Students’ office provides the above-mentioned paragraph under both titles, Academic Honesty and Academic Integrity. And, in the current English Department Policy on Academic Dishonesty, a document that is designed to aid faculty in preparing syllabi, this sentence appears: “Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty are defined as the submission of materials in assignments, exams, or other academic work based on sources prohibited by the faculty member.”

The second major flaw in the statement of Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty is that it not only purports to offer the most succinct and direct definition of “cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty,” but then proceeds to make the more correct and complete definitions found in the Student Code of Conduct subservient to it. The sentence following the two quoted, (two paragraphs above), states: “Academic dishonesty is further defined below in the Student Code of Conduct.” This error may also be repeated, as it is, in fact, in the English Department Policy on Academic Dishonesty.

The third flaw is the fact that the statement of Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty is a stand-alone section at all. As will be demonstrated below, nearly all of the rest of the information included in the Catalog and in the Handbook relative to student conduct is a verbatim reiteration of either Regent’s Policy or University Regulation. A diligent attempt to uncover some source for a statement on Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty within those policies and regulations has failed to discover anything remotely similar. This leads to the conclusion that this statement on Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty was written for UAA as an introduction to the Student Code of Conduct. This it clearly is. That it serves this function, and this function alone, despite its own perhaps misleading terms is not so difficult to ascertain from encountering it in the catalog, where it immediately precedes the Student Code of Conduct, but it is far more problematic when separated by ten pages of other policy matters in the “official” UAA Fact Finder/Student Handbook.

This is a matter that should certainly be attended to. There is no objection to an introduction, but it should appear in its proper place within the Student Code of Conduct. There is no objection to including, “Substantial portions of academic work that a student has submitted for a course may not be resubmitted for credit in another course without the knowledge and advance permission of the instructor,” within the list of examples of “cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty,” that appears in the Student Code of Conduct, for that is the only logical meaning for the words as they now appear. But those words should be moved to that list.

Like virtually all of the rest of the student procedures from the Catalog and the Handbook, the existing Student Code of Conduct is cobbled together from verbatim citations from Regent’s Policy or University Regulation. While more than one faculty member has pointed out that this appears to be a clear case of plagiarism as there are no citations, it reflects a practice that is, in fact, encouraged within the tiered system described above. Whole cloth adoption of those policies and regulations that do not require alteration is viewed as both expedient and practical. It saves a great deal of time and effort at the time of adoption of MAU policies, and, of course, more time in the course of administration, as, it must be remembered, every difference between UA and UAA policies must finally be settled in favor of the Regent’s Policies and University Regulations. Uniformity is a goal well served by verbatim citation.

The Student Code of Conduct is drawn verbatim, or nearly so, from several sources. The first paragraph is Regent’s Policy P09.02.020A. The second and third paragraphs are Regent’s Policy P09.02.030A, broken into two paragraphs. The fourth paragraph is Regent’s Policy P09.02.030B. The entire rest of the Student Code of Conduct appears to be identical to University Regulation R09.02.020 except for a different system of delineation (numbering).

Within the system that is the result of these, (and other), UAA policies, faculty are the most likely individuals to encounter student plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in the course of their daily work. Faculty are generally, (although perhaps not always), free to set policies for how they will deal with plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in terms of the effect it will have on grades in their courses. Based on faculty responses to a call for their experiences, it is clear that this authority results in variations over an extremely broad range, from consciously ignoring the problem to a more common zero tolerance approach. Some faculty report that they see plagiarism as an opportunity to teach a finer understanding of the requirements, while others report that they give a student a second chance to make up an assignment. Others give a permanent “0” or “F” on any plagiarized assignment. Still others have a policy by which a single plagiarized assignment will result in a failing grade for the course. Generally, faculty assume that they may make these decisions on their own, and except in a relatively few cases in which faculty reported pressure from either chairs or other administrators, (and this largely from adjunct, term, or junior faculty), faculty have made these decisions independently.

Students may appeal final grades through an established process that is quite narrowly defined. A grade may be changed by an Academic Decision Review Committee only on the basis of grading error, (a mathematical or clerical mistake), or by a finding of arbitrary or capricious grading (“the assignment of a grade on a basis other than performance” or “use of standards different from those applied to other students” or “substantial, unreasonable and/or unannounced departure from...previously articulated standards”). Despite the fact that a student’s chances of reversing a final grade decision, especially in the case of a low grade based on academic dishonesty, are very slim, every student may appeal such a grade. Faculty participation is compulsory. Reports from faculty who have experienced the process indicate that despite confidence in the evidence that backed their decision to assign a particular grade, and despite the fact that the Committee found ultimately in their favor, they suffered great stress in the interim, and at times felt themselves to be on trial.

Whether or not faculty deal with plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty through grading, they may choose to “initiate a disciplinary action against a student for violation of the Code.” While any “student, faculty, or staff member” can “initiate a disciplinary action,” according to the UAA policy (Handbook, 85), and in a few cases plagiarism charges have been brought by persons other than the teacher of record, the vast majority of such cases are initiated by faculty based on coursework turned in by their students.

At UAA, the Dean of Students supervises the much more complicated process of judicial review that is the result of a charge of violating the Code. Faculty are not generally involved beyond making written charges, although they are notified of results. This is a part of the system that seems to be working quietly, but very well. The Dean of Students and the Assistant Director of Student Conduct, who serves as the Student Judicial Officer, have been extremely cooperative and generous with their time. Both are aware and concerned about the problems, and spend considerable time in explaining student responsibilities in these areas to groups of students, including those who attend new student orientation. The records of the Dean of Students’ office do not indicate a crisis of rapid growth in the area of plagiarism violations, however, they do indicate the need for prudent concern. Faculty responses indicate that they are almost universally satisfied in their dealings with the office. Several faculty members commented in very favorable

terms on the professional manner in which their concerns were addressed. Only one faculty member reported dissatisfaction stemming from a case that involved academic dishonesty other than plagiarism. Most faculty who commented on their experience with the office of the Dean of Students seemed relieved that there is somewhere to turn for assistance. A number of faculty reported that the office offers reliable and knowledgeable advice on the whole matter of plagiarism as well as adjudication of cases.

University of Alaska Faculty Experience on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

While the reports that faculty sent in response to a request for their experiences hardly qualify as a scientific sampling, they were valuable in outlining the breadth of experience that faculty have encountered.

Having assumed that my request for experience from faculty would largely draw interest from faculty with rather more lurid tales to tell, it was surprising to find a rather large group of faculty responding that they had experienced no problems at all. These faculty reported a large spread in teaching experience, from one to thirteen years. Several of these faculty attributed their success in avoiding plagiarism to actions which they had taken. These actions included planning assignments in such a way as to make plagiarism more difficult, to threats of failing course grades for any infraction. One faculty member attributed success to an in class demonstration of software that would detect any plagiarized work.

An equally large group of faculty, with a range of experience from one to twenty-five years, reported only one case of plagiarism serious enough to merit action beyond some remediation through further education. Many faculty described differences that they ascertained between students who were not well prepared and students who were, in fact, intentionally choosing to plagiarize.

A somewhat smaller group of faculty, with a range of experience from one to thirteen years, described their experiences with the less precise terms, such as “few” or “very few” cases over that period.

It should be noted that a considerable number of faculty indicated a general concern for the problem of plagiarism that was in line with the assumptions described above in the review of the literature section. This was not, apparently, tied to their own experience however, as a number of them reported few personal experiences.

A rather small number of faculty did report that their own experience indicated that the problem was growing very quickly, but these faculty tended to report generalized figures, rather than actual numbers. Terms like “many” and “numerous” were used. One faculty member reported that plagiarism is “rampant in all my classes.” Another faculty member reported that students indicate that plagiarism is more widespread than faculty know.

Faculty response to whatever level of plagiarism they had experienced indicated a wide range of reported responses. One faculty member reported virtually ignoring the problem, as students were required to take standardized tests later that would catch them unprepared. Several faculty members indicated that they had given up trying to monitor plagiarism in their classes. A number of faculty reported using each experience as an opportunity to teach better practices. This was more common among faculty who reported few instances of plagiarism, however this

was not always the case. One faculty member who reported a very high number of experiences maintained that each one offered this opportunity. Several faculty reported that they followed this practice until they ran into a student so unrepentant or so flagrant as to cause a reevaluation. The majority of faculty who reported having experience with plagiarism relayed employing a mix of responses to it based on the severity of the plagiarism identified. Few reported sending most or all of their cases to the Dean of Students' office.

Several innovative pedagogical responses were reported. A number of faculty reported moving to assignments that were more difficult to plagiarize. Several faculty members have used plagiarism itself as a topic for assignments. One faculty member gives an assignment on the Student Code of Conduct itself. Another faculty member has a quite entertaining and thought provoking web page to which all students are directed. Another has devised a detailed program that entails well-defined guidelines and an honor code statement that students must complete in class.

Some faculty members have plagiarism detection software at their disposal. At least one program on the main campus, as I understand it, has access to Turnitin, however, no faculty reported about its use. Faculty on the Kenai Peninsula also have access to the software and reviews from KPC faculty are mixed. One faculty member attributed a low incidence of plagiarism to the availability of the software. Several other faculty members reported not using it as it was "clunky," or didn't otherwise fit their needs. Several main campus faculty reported a desire to have access to detection software, at least for its threat value.

A large number of faculty describe their experiences in confronting students found to have committed plagiarism to be difficult. While some students readily admit what they have done, it is apparent from many reports that they often fail to see the error in it. Many faculty express the opinion that students see such things as so "small a sin that it is almost legal." A very large number of responses indicate a student culture that lacks both the academic skill and the moral motivation that is necessary to meet the requirements of academic honesty. Many others find that UAA is at fault in being so lax that students defend themselves by claiming that they have been doing the same things for years and nobody has objected.

To compound these difficulties, a rather small, but troubling number of faculty report that they were dissuaded in clear cases of plagiarism from taking action such as assigning a failing grade by department chairs or other administrators. One faculty member reported being cautioned by a friendly colleague that the administration would not look on such action favorably when it was time for tenure review. Another faculty member reported, in a more serious case that eventually led to suspension of the student, a belief that the "university" was not really in favor of the case.

Still other faculty report that charges may lead to unexpected and difficult situations. One faculty member reported having to deal with hostile parents that countercharged the professor with wrongdoing. Another faculty member faced a countercharge of racial bias. Another faculty member reported that, with thirty years of experience, and sound evidence to support a plagiarism based failing grade, the student's appeal, and the hearing that resulted was extremely difficult and stressful. One faculty member reported the near delivery of a threatened punch in the nose.

Even beyond these extremes, a large number of faculty reported ongoing frustration with the overall problem of plagiarism. This frustration was reported to exist even among faculty with low numbers of experience to report. Many faculty mention the drain on their time and energy. Several faculty complained that they were not here to be a “plagiarism cop,” or to serve with the “honesty police.” Others report surprise at how angry and upset they feel about the problem.

Despite these difficulties a number of faculty expressed the opinion that we have a responsibility to persevere. Some point out that our main duty is to teach, and our duty in the face of student shortcomings is to teach more. Some faculty fear that UAA may abandon this view in favor of some radical “zero tolerance” approach. They fear that this will most adversely affect students who are culturally different, and students that are traditionally less well prepared. A few faculty mentioned our responsibility to teach moral obligations, for which plagiarism might be just one example, as an intrinsic part of every student’s education.

Several faculty voiced concern over the possibility that in the present system a student might plagiarize in one class after another, and claim each time to be unaware of the rules. These faculty suggest that some method for tracking this behavior be implemented. Some departments keep records of this kind. One faculty member reports notifying the Dean of Students in even minor cases for the purpose of establishing some record, although this is not an established practice within the Dean of Students’ office. At KPC a program was recently implemented for tracking these cases.

Review of Plagiarism and Related Academic Honesty Issues at Other Institutions

Other institutions are dealing with these issues in a wide variety of different ways. The main responses are divided between the plagiarism detection software approach, and the more traditional, but rapidly evolving systems based on the honor code or academic integrity programs. Within the latter group there is a very wide range of programs designed to educate students as to the complexities involved in meeting the generally accepted tenets of academic responsibility within the area of plagiarism.

It is difficult to determine the numbers of universities that have taken on the software detection approach to the problem of plagiarism. Although it is in the interest of the big software detection services to promote both the assumptions about plagiarism as a growing tide, and the growth of their client base, the fact is that real information is difficult to ascertain. This problem is not a critical one, however, as any decision that we might make here at UAA should be based on factors other than whether we are missing the bandwagon.

Universities that are taking the honor code model seriously are easier to identify. The steady growth of the Center for Academic Integrity is a clear indicator of the path that many institutions have chosen. A review of these programs indicates a wide-ranging variety in terms of sophistication, and accessibility. Online centers provide materials that are intended to inform students about their responsibilities. The best programs offer straightforward definitions, examples, and tutorials. In some cases students are required to pass examinations that clearly demonstrate their grasp of the rules and their responsibilities under those rules.

What appears to be unfortunately (though perhaps not surprisingly) true, is that the best sites are those that are quite obviously the most expensive to produce. They are not only simple

and direct, but are carefully crafted and presented smoothly and professionally. This is in stark contrast to any number of sites that are less professionally presented, and many of these sites may, unfortunately, lead to more confusion in the minds of even well intentioned students.

Recommendations

It appears clear that faculty should address the issue of plagiarism and academic honesty. It is not necessary to reach a determination on the central assumptions (that plagiarism is a rapidly expanding, internet driven problem) with which this report began. The review of UAA faculty experiences indicates that the problem is serious and frustrating to a substantial number of faculty. There is also compelling evidence that students are not as well informed as they ought to be about their responsibilities.

The first step should be to engage the faculty. They should be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the literature. In this, particular attention should be paid to the writing of those experts in the field of rhetoric and writing.

The second step would be to engage the expert services provided by the Center for Academic Integrity. The Center for Academic Integrity offers a survey that will help us to understand the problem as perceived by both faculty and students at UAA. They call this an Assessment Guide, and the results will include comparative information from many other schools. This is not expensive, and appears to be the most efficient way in which we might establish real facts about these issues at UAA as a foundation for future decisions.

The next step would be to arrive at a decision about whether UAA should establish a center for academic integrity. This seems to be the most prudent choice, given what is now known, however, this is a program that requires substantial support from faculty if it is to succeed.

If a decision is made to establish a center for academic integrity, UAA should join the Center for Academic Integrity as an active member. Many services are accorded to members.

UAA should consider the fact that student involvement in the process of establishing a UAA policy on plagiarism and academic honesty is an important, perhaps critical, step that has been taken by many of the largest and most successful Center for Academic Integrity universities across the country.

UAA's rules for plagiarism should be sensitive to the concerns expressed in the literature about the need for "patchwriting" as a stage in the development of writing skills. These rules should make clear that "patchwriting" is a transitional practice, and only appropriate in clearly defined projects.

UAA's approach to educating students about plagiarism should be based on a positive approach to the whole matter of citation and the need for citation. Scholarship should be presented as a communal enterprise in which credit is accorded not merely to benefit the original source, but to demonstrate the sound foundation on which the writer is basing judgments.

UAA's rules for plagiarism should be sensitive to the concerns expressed in the literature about the need for special attention to be paid to those students who may arrive with different

cultural norms in this area. This should not be viewed as providing an excuse for plagiarism on the part of these students, but rather as an additional UAA responsibility to assure that such students receive whatever additional educational support may be necessary.

UAA's rules for plagiarism should be couched in such a way that "intention" does not become an issue in assessing whether plagiarism has occurred.

UAA should consider a policy under which all students are required to demonstrate their understanding of their responsibilities in the area of plagiarism and academic honesty through passing a certification test.

UAA should encourage faculty to seek solutions to the problem of plagiarism and academic dishonesty through pedagogy. To this end, some ongoing program should be established to collect and disseminate information about this approach.

The differences identified above between the two different iterations of the statements of Academic Integrity or Academic Honesty found in the UAA catalog, and in the UAA Fact Finder/Student Handbook should be addressed:

1. The currently independent statements, (one titled Academic Integrity, and the other titled Academic Honesty), should be removed from both the UAA catalog and the UAA Fact Finder/Student Handbook. As they function largely as an introduction to the Student Code of Conduct, they are both unnecessary and misleading.
2. The statement from these writings, "Substantial portions of academic work that a student has submitted for a course may not be resubmitted for credit in another course without the knowledge and advance permission of the instructor." should be moved to the list of prohibited practices under the Student Code of Conduct.

These changes will require taking the prescribed steps to alter UAA policies, including approval from the Board of Regents.

UAA should consider expanding the responsibilities of the Office of the Dean of Students to include a new person with expertise in investigating plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. The main advantage of this approach is that it frees the Student Judicial Officer from these tasks, and keeps him from being forced to act as both prosecutor and adjudicator. The secondary advantage of this approach is that this investigator would be much more freely available to aid faculty than is the current Student Judicial Officer, who, correctly, must consider the possibility that in future he might be called on to adjudicate any matter under consideration. This available expertise would be a real boon to faculty who might be uncertain about a particular situation.

UAA should consider some method to address the possibility identified above about serial plagiarism among students. A central record of plagiarism and suspected plagiarism might be established, perhaps within the Dean of Students office.

UAA should consider establishing an office, (or expand the duties of an existing office), that would provide support and information for faculty with problems in the area of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. This office might also have responsibility for creating and maintaining

student educational outreach on policies, or these responsibilities might be divided. In any event, faculty should have support, and know where to find it.

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