

Committee on Teaching  
Report on Plagiarism  
February 28, 2004

Context:

Plagiarism was a topic of discussion at the Policy Council meeting in 2003 (see minutes, items 3.23 and 3.25). After discussion, the Policy Council moved that this item be sent to the Committee on Teaching for further consideration and subsequent reporting back to the Council.

Recommendation:

After due consideration, the Committee on Teaching recommends that the Council establish as a first measure the policy that all students in the School of Education are required, during their first year of admittance, to take the tutorial How to Recognize Plagiarism (Frick, 2002) available on the web at <http://www.indiana.edu/~frick/plagiarism> or more directly at <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd>. Undergraduate students will complete this tutorial as part of their W200 course work. Graduate students will complete this tutorial on their own and submit the certificate of completion to the Graduate Student Office in the School of Education for filing in their cumulative folder.

The Committee further recommends that as a School of Education policy all faculty members should address plagiarism in their classes. With this policy in place the School of Education's approach to plagiarism will be primarily educational, rather than punitive.

Background & Rationale:

As noted in the minutes of last year's meetings of the Council more and more instructors are concerned with the issue of plagiarism both at the undergraduate and graduate level. Several administrators and professors reported that while most students understood that it was wrong to steal someone else's work, they did not understand the importance of citing it correctly. Laura Plummer, the Director of the Campus Writing Program, and Pam Freeman, Associate Dean of Students in the Office of Student Ethics and Anti-Harassment Programs, pointed out that plagiarism was a campus wide issue and not only a School of Education issue. Both talked about their efforts to work with students and instructors around issues of plagiarism as well as the importance of making suspected cases of plagiarism known to their offices. Diana Lambdin pointed out that according to IU policy faculty members who report incidents

of plagiarism can recommend what course of action be taken. The purpose of reporting, she said, was to have documentation so that if there are multiple incidents of plagiarism appropriate sanctions could be made.

As part of its deliberations, the Committee on Teaching reviewed IU's Policy on Plagiarism, took the tutorial developed by IST which is being recommended as a requirement in the School, and explored what was being done about plagiarism across campus. For purposes of reference IU's policy on plagiarism as stated on IST's website follows, and because this policy is in place, the Committee on Teaching did not feel there was a need for a separate policy on this issue within the School of Education.

The Indiana University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (1998) indicates that students may be disciplined for several different kinds of academic misconduct. These include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, interference, and violation of course rules.

In particular the code states:

"3. Plagiarism.

A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statements of another person without appropriate acknowledgment. A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever he or she does any of the following:

- a. Quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written;
- b. Paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written;
- c. Uses another person's idea, opinion, or theory; or
- d. Borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material, unless the information is common knowledge."

(quoted from Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct, Part III, Student Misconduct, Academic Misconduct, By action of the University Faculty Council (April 24, 1990) and the Trustees of Indiana University (May 4, 1990). Amended by the University Faculty Council (April 13, 1993; May 12, 1993, and October 8, 1996) and the Trustees of Indiana University (December 4, 1992; June 5, 1993, and December 13, 1996).)

At the campus level, a computer-based program called "Turn-it-in.com" (Turn It In Dot Com) is being tested. This program is not without its problems as operating this program is much like working on OnCourse in that documents need to be downloaded as a file and then submitted for analysis. Turn-it-in.com has two types of searches, a "quick search" which reports results almost immediately, and a "24 hour search" which does a more thorough job. At present only about 25 percent of all potential documents from which plagiarism might occur are included in the data base although more are being added monthly.

The Committee feels that whatever efforts the School takes relative to plagiarism should be seen as positive rather than punitive. A campus level finding regarding plagiarism is that most students who plagiarize are doing so unintentionally because they do not understand what constitutes plagiarism, thus we recommend that to combat this lack of knowledge we instruct them about what is plagiarism. Faculty should talk with students about plagiarism as a problem they will face and that just as proper grammar and correct spelling is expected so is honesty and ethics in citing other people's work and ideas.

The Policy Council should note that, if this resolution is passed, Professor Frick has said that he would modify the introduction to make it applicable to a wider audience at IU. To date approximately ½ million persons have visited this site and Professor Frick says that he gets dozens of requests for permission to use this tutorial each week.

While the Committee on Teaching is willing to continue to study and monitor the issue of plagiarism and what the School might do about it, the recommendation it is making today is seen as a positive first step which the School should make. For example, the Policy Council should know that 1998 Indiana University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct is currently being revised at the campus level and that once this revision process is complete and passed through the University Faculty Council revisions of the Frick site will need to reflect these changes.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee on Teaching  
2004 Co-Chairs, Valarie Akerson and Jerome Harste

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