Program Statement on Ethical Scholarship and Plagiarism

Program Statement

Mike Rose, in his description of academic writing, touches on an important dynamic in the ongoing study of plagiarism:

Virtually all the writing academics do is built on the writing of others. Every argument proceeds from the texts of others. [Students are] only partially initiated to how this works: [They are] still unsure as to how to weave quotations in with [their] own prose, how to mark the difference, how to cite whom [they use], how to strike the proper balance between [their] writing and someone else’s—how, in short to position [themselves] in an academic discussion. (180)

Until very recently, scholars have labeled any failure to attribute the source of an idea properly as “plagiarism.” Yet in light of what Rose observes about the difficulty students may have while “position[ing] themselves in an academic discussion,” the ubiquitous term “plagiarism” is too vague to encompass the many different degrees to which a person might fail to acknowledge another’s ideas. It also fails to acknowledge a student’s intent, varying degrees of proficiency in incorporating source materials, or the way their proficiency evolves as they develop as an academic writer. In light of these observations the Council of Writing Program Administrators makes a distinction between the misuse of sources and plagiarism (2). The University of Connecticut First-Year Writing program believes that the misuse of sources rises to the level of plagiarism—an infraction warranting adjudication—only in extreme cases.

In an effort to eliminate much plagiarism in the First-Year Writing Classroom and deal more justly and directly with students’ use or misuse of sources, the First-Year Writing program directs instructors to discuss with students the academic implications and consequences of both concepts early and often in the term. Instructors should consult the First-Year Writing Program Guidelines for Addressing the Misuse of Sources and Responding to Plagiarism, available in the First-Year Writing Office, Austin 162. However, students, both with their instructor and outside the classrooms, have a responsibility to become familiar with department and University policies regarding plagiarism, and to behave ethically as writers. Students should ask questions and always be vigorous and diligent in using sources.

The First-Year Writing program also requires its instructors to arrange a conference with any student who fails to acknowledge the sources of his ideas properly. During this conference the instructor should try to determine the reason behind a student’s lack of proper citation. If a student has failed to acknowledge his sources because of a lack of proficiency in incorporating sources, then his instructor may choose to work with the student, to teach him the way academics share information and develop knowledge.

In most cases when a student fails to cite a source properly the instructor will assign a penalty based on his assessment of the infraction’s severity. In all cases the instructor will consult with the Assistant Directors or Directors of the First-Year Writing Program and supply the First-Year Writing office with electronic or photocopies of the paper in question and, if available, the source from which the ideas or language were taken.

If the instructor determines that a student has committed plagiarism, then they have the right to fail the student for the entire class, and report them to Director(s) of the First-Year Writing program. Instructors should consult Responding in Writing to Plagiarism, available in the First-Year Writing office. Instructors will notify students in writing of the penalty and of the student’s opportunity to request a hearing within five days of receipt of the written notice. The Directors of First-Year Writing will submit the student’s name to the Office of Community Standards, who will then add the student’s name to a database that catalogs instances of academic misconduct. The Dean of the School or College will carry out any
further adjudication, if deemed necessary. **Plagiarism completely undermines the academy's on-going efforts to share and develop ideas, and it cannot be tolerated under any circumstances.**

For the sake of clarity we have listed possible scenarios for plagiarism. A student is guilty of plagiarism if they do any of the following:

- “Cuts and pastes” printed or electronic text (from the Internet or elsewhere) into their paper, and presents it as their own.
- Consults an Internet or print source to “get ideas” that they then incorporate into a paper, without proper attribution.
- Retypes material from a printed or electronic source into their own paper, and presents it as their own.
- Submits a paper written by someone else, including a tutor, while claiming to be the author.
- Submits a paper they have written in another course.
- Puts another person’s ideas “in their own words,” without documenting the source.
- Takes another person’s expressions—a key word, a phrase, or a longer passage—without telling the reader precisely what has been done. This is considered plagiarism even when the student’s own ideas are being expressed.

**Other forms of infringement**

- Asking or paying another person to write the work for you, even if it is “the student’s ideas.”
- Relying heavily on support or guidance in which portions of the work are revised by the other person.

**Forms of Writing Support We Recommend and Encourage**

- Working with a [Writing Center](#) Tutor
- Asking peers for “audience feedback” (think of this form of work as “user experience testing on a prototype”—the user wouldn’t change the prototype of the device; instead, the user gives feedback about what is working and what is not, and tells the developer what they are looking for as a user).
- Soliciting minor editing advice from an experienced writer.
  - Acceptable: “can you show me where I get my verb tenses mixed up?”
  - Not acceptable: “can you fix my sentences so they ‘sound’ right”?

When in doubt about whether your work will raise questions, ask your instructor for advice.

**Guidelines for Avoiding Misusing Sources and Committing Plagiarism**

Because “virtually all the writing academics do is built on the writing of others” (Rose 180), and academics need to know an individual writer’s contribution to a subject, they have established certain con-
ventions for attributing the source of an idea. Academic conventions dictate that a writer must provide full and proper acknowledgment of all ideas and expressions that are not his own. To provide full and proper acknowledgment, a writer must do all of the following:

- Indicate clearly where direct quotations within a paper begin and end by using quotations and introductory phrases.
- When paraphrasing, make it clear to the reader that the ideas expressed are someone else’s, by using introductory phrases and/or transitions.
- Include internal documentation of the source quoted or paraphrased. (For documentation in English papers, use the most recent MLA guidelines, which can be found in any recent writing handbook.)
- When citing from the Internet or another electronic source, follow citation conventions, as they are articulated in any recent writing handbook.
- Include a works cited page at the end of the paper. (A works cited page alone is useful, but it is not full and proper acknowledgment, since it does not tell the reader precisely what parts of the paper present another person’s ideas.)

When in doubt about citing sources and documenting them, a student should consult his instructor, as the penalties for the misuse of sources and plagiarism are severe and strictly enforced. If a student has any doubts about the misuse of sources, plagiarism, or academic misconduct after reading this document and speaking with his instructor, he should consult The University of Connecticut’s Division of Student Affairs Policy on Academic Misconduct.

If a student wishes to discuss misuse of sources or plagiarism, he or she should consult with one of the Directors of First-Year Writing, Prof. Brenda Brueggemann (brenda.brueggemann@uconn.edu) or Prof. Lisa Blansett (lisa.blansett@uconn.edu), or Assistant Directors Ruth Book or Erick Piller (Austin 162, 486-2859). If, after discussing the situation with the Directors or Associate Directors, the instructor is advised to file a formal charge of plagiarism, the case then moves to the UConn Office of Community Standards.

Works Cited


Key Terms at a Glance

Academic Misconduct: The University of Connecticut Division of Student Affairs (Dean of Students Office) states the following in The Student Code:

Academic misconduct is dishonest or unethical academic behavior that includes, but is not limited, to misrepresenting mastery in an academic area (e.g., cheating), failing to properly credit information, research or ideas to their rightful originators or representing such information, research or ideas as your own (e.g., plagiarism).

(http://www.dos.uconn.edu/student_code_appendixa.html)

The Division of Student Affairs website further amplifies the definition of Academic Misconduct as:

- providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation (e.g. papers, projects, and examinations);
- any attempt to influence improperly (e.g. bribery, threats) any member of the faculty, staff, or administration of the University in any matter pertaining to academics or research;
- presenting, as one’s own, the ideas or words of another for academic evaluation;
- doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated;
- and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the instructors involved.

(http://www.dos.uconn.edu/standards_misconduct_faq.html)

A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation.

Sloppy Scholarship (sometimes labeled Misuse of Sources): When students’ scholarship is sloppy, the work may be missing proper attributions or have incomplete acknowledgement of the texts a student responds to in the work. All ethical scholarship must fully, properly acknowledge the source of an idea and/or specific language that is presented in any work submitted for evaluation. The willful misuse of sources may constitute a violation of academic codes of conduct and could result in serious penalty. The severity of the penalty depends on an individual instructor’s assessment in consultation with the Director and/or Associate Director of First-Year Writing. Instructors must be mindful that we are instructing students in the ethical practices and responsibilities of being a writer. As such, instructors should be closely following the development of students’ ideas through the drafts of an essay. The attention to the students’ work in drafts should make problems with sources and attribution visible early in the process, when the boundaries between students’ and other authors’ work can be redrawn.

Original Work: We encourage students to consult with the Writing Center and to discuss their work with classmates, colleagues, and even roommates (as all scholars share their work and ask for others' feedback). In the UConn FYW program, we ask students to contribute to a conversation and to move that conversation forward by adding something new to the ongoing discussions. Students are doing more than re-presenting the work of others; they are producing original work. Students may not, then, pay others to write their essays or even to “clean up the language.” Students may not claim ideas and their verbal-visual representations that another person (or app!) has written.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the theft of another’s ideas, specific language, or other media, and the presentation—for the purposes of evaluation—of that material as one’s own, at any stage of the writing process, including (but not limited to) journal entries, drafts of papers, and final submissions of papers. The First-Year Writing program takes plagiarism very seriously. There are consequences for representing the words, ideas, images, or any other representation of another author’s work as one’s own. Please consult with the First-Year Writing Program Office to discuss the options and consequences for any student you believe has intentionally represented work as their own when, in fact, it is not theirs. In the most egregious circumstances of willful academic misconduct, the First-Year Writing office and the Office of Community Standards review the situation and determine whether
the student’s name will be recorded. If a student has two or more letters in the Community Standards Office, the student may face very serious consequences that will impact their education at UConn. The Dean of the School or College may also refer the case to the Academic Misconduct Hearing Board to consider whether or not further penalties, including expulsion from the University, are warranted.

To avoid misusing sources or representing others’ work as their own, a student must include all of their sources with full and proper acknowledgment in a Works Cited page (or other visual documentation as determined by the instructor in the writing assignment prompt).

Full and Proper Acknowledgement: The unambiguous identification of the sources of all ideas, language, and other materials that are not one’s own. There are many different methods of identifying a source [MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.], depending on the discipline’s academic conventions. Students must consult with their instructors to determine which method is appropriate for the course. [For English courses, use MLA Style, 8th ed.]