

Addressing Cheating & Plagiarism in the Classroom

Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center

"How To" Pedagogies # 6



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WHY DO STUDENTS CHEAT?

Considering the many forms in which cheating exists, there are nearly as many reasons that it occurs in the first place. Some of the most common reasons include:

Valuing Grades Over Learning – With an increased significance attached to GPAs, factors such as parent expectations, securing college scholarships, admission to graduate school, and competing in job recruitment, students are more likely than ever to rationalize cheating.

Poor Time Management and Planning – Time management is a major challenge for many incoming freshmen. Referring students to the Student Success Center and guiding students through assignments can address this issue.

Lack of Interest and Motivation – Many students fail to see the value of courses not directly related to their majors; others view college courses solely as “credentials” that will allow them to pursue a particular career and do not see the value. Promoting co-creation of value in the course and providing a value statement reflecting the relevance of the course will help address this issue.

Ignorance About Plagiarism - It is expected that students are aware of the various forms of cheating and plagiarism. However, it is always beneficial to remind students of what constitutes cheating, as well as the resulting consequences, prior to exams and assignments, and to be available for consultation, and have resources or suggestions available.

The “How To” pedagogy series are quick reference pages that define and describe active learning methods to increase student engagement. Each handout provides basic information and references to get you started

HOW TO IDENTIFY AND PREVENT CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

Because there are numerous ways and sources from which students may cheat and plagiarize information, it can be difficult to identify and confirm the guilt of a suspected offender. However, there are strategies and software programs to aid instructors in the detection of plagiarism and cheating:

- **Understand Why Students Cheat.** By knowing their motivations, instructors can take steps by addressing the causes.
- **Educate Students about Cheating.** Remind students that the degree will help them land a job, but they will be lacking the necessary skills they need; cheating through a career is not an option.
- **Make Assignments Clear & Original.** Be specific about expectations; for writing assignments, consider providing a list of narrow topics, and allowing students to choose from the list. Require particular components to papers, a draft submission, an oral presentation, annotated bibliography, or up-to-date references.
- **Look for Clues.** Mixed writing and citation styles, a lack of references, anachronistic references, or atypical language for the particular student may signal that an assignment is not the student’s original work.
- **Utilize Essay-Scanning Software.** SafeAssign, Turnitin, Viper, Glatt Screening, or Plagiarism Detect scans student papers for plagiarized material.
- **Stay One Step Ahead.** Make 2 or 3 versions of tests and evaluate students via short answer and essay (rather than multiple choice questions)
- **Create an Ideal Testing Environment.** Restrict baseball caps and beverage bottles, require a cleared desk, or have students using testing booklets swap theirs with a peer prior to the exam; separate students during exams, whenever possible.
- **Establish Clear Consequences.** Whether the student will fail the assignment, be removed from the course, or be subjected to an academic honor council, always apply realistic and consistent consequences.
- **Know the resources that students are using.** For a student how-to guide on nearly every type of test and method of cheating that will help eliminate cheating, see: the classroom, http://www.teachopolis.org/justice/cheating/cheating_how_to.htm
For a detailed list of the available “Paper Mills” that sell papers online to students, visit: <http://www.coastal.edu/library/presentations/mills2.html>

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ACADEMIC HONESTY AT UTK

It is important to remind students of the University's Academic Standard of Conduct, which states:

"An essential feature of the University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity."

However, cheating and plagiarism are still realities on the campus, and there are several options available to UT faculty. *Hilltops*, the student handbook, states that the instructor shall take immediate responsibility for student conduct and academic dishonesty in his or her classroom. Instructors have several options, including: to suspend the student from the course (which requires a hearing), assign a failing grade, or to refer the student to an Academic Review Board. For further guidance on student conduct, plagiarism, and cheating, the faculty member should speak with his or her department head or the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. Other helpful links, contact information, and resources to assist UT faculty and students may be found at:

- The Office of Student Judicial Affairs:
<http://judicialaffairs.utk.edu/faculty>
or call (865)-974-3171
- *Hilltops* – Student Handbook:
http://dos.utk.edu/files/hilltopics_10_11.pdf
- A Guide to Safe Assign at UT:
<http://online.utk.edu/howto/safeassign/>
- University of TN Faculty Teaching Guide:
<http://provost.utk.edu/teaching/>
- UT Student Success Center:
<http://studentsuccess.utk.edu/>
- UT Libraries – *Understanding Plagiarism*:
<http://www.lib.utk.edu/instruction/plagiarism/>
- UT Libraries' Guide: How to Avoid Plagiarism:
<http://www.lib.utk.edu/refs/teachinglib/plagiarism51.ppt>

POLICIES, PROCEDURES & PRACTICE

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty have long plagued college campuses. While nearly every college and university has a statement and policy in place, many faculty members are hesitant to make a formal report. The most frequently-cited reasons include: a fear that administration will not support the allegation, anxiety and aggravation with the lengthy and complicated process, and concerns of student retaliation or poor evaluations.

Several Ivy League schools, including Harvard and Columbia employ anti-plagiarism software on their campuses. Others, such as Stanford and Princeton, have shunned these services, noting, "This kind of software... sends a message to our students that is not one we want to send" (Craft, 2010).

Ultimately, whether such software is used or not, a majority of instructors choose to handle cheating and plagiarism behind the closed doors of his or her office. This is a decision for each faculty member to make individually, but there are many resources to guide instructors in crafting his or her own approach to academic honesty in the classroom.

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Contact the **Tenn TLC** for more information by calling 974-3807 or by email tenntlc@utk.edu. Visit our site <http://tenntlc.utk.edu> and follow our blog <http://tenntlc.blogspot.com> for publications and faculty development information! K. Brinkley 2011