CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM ...
AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Overview

- Understand the Scope of the Problem
- Understand Types of Cheating & Plagiarism
- Understand Why Students Cheat & Plagiarize
- Develop Appropriate Response Strategies
Understand the problem

- Roughly 82% of students report cheating in the past (McCabe et al., 2001)
- The amount of reported cheating in college has declined by about 8 percent over the past decade (McCabe et al., 2012)
- Between .002% and 35% of students cheat in a given class (Kerkvliet & Sigmund, 1999)

Understand the problem

- Academic misconduct is correlated with instructor attention to the issue (McCabe & Treviño, 1993)
- Students at institutions with honor codes report lower levels of academic misconduct (McCabe & Treviño, 1993; McCabe, Butterfield, & Trevino, 2012)
Reported cheating: 1992 & 2009

Understanding plagiarism

**Unintentional**: using someone else’s work without properly acknowledging where the ideas or information came from.

- The most common form of plagiarism
- A pedagogical issue
Understand plagiarism

**Intentional:** copying someone else's work and passing it off as your own.
- The most serious form of plagiarism
- An academic integrity issue

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**Basic Concepts: Plagiarism**

Quotation, Paraphrase, & Documentation Problems

Deliberately Passing Off Passages as Original Work

Copying an Entire Essay

Patchwork Writing

Creating Fake Citations

Unintentional

Pedagogical Issues

Intentional

Academic Integrity
Reported plagiarism: 1992 & 2009

Reasons for unintentional plagiarism

- Lack of knowledge of proper note-taking and citation practices
  - Quotation
  - Paraphrase
  - Citation
- Lack of understanding of the issue
  - Can't restate or integrate new information into the overall argument
Top seven reasons for cheating

- "It's easy to cheat."
- "I ran out of time."
- "I couldn't care less about this assignment."
- "I'm no good at ...." 
- "I didn't think I'd get caught."
- "Everybody cheats."
- "This course is a waste of my time."

Reasonable responses to cheating

- "It's easy to cheat."
  
  **Response:** Remind students why they're taking a course: to learn, to understand, to develop skills.

- "I ran out of time."
  
  Students procrastinate, or genuinely fail to recognize how much time is needed to complete an assignment. **Response:** Stage assignments. Assign knowledge inventories.
Reasonable responses to cheating

- "I couldn't care less about this assignment."

  Students put off assignments that don’t interest them. **Response:** Allow students to customize assignments.

- "I'm no good at...."

  **Response:** Help students locate assistance.

Reasonable responses to cheating

- "I didn't think I'd get caught."

  **Response:** Explain that you care about and understand how to detect “problems” with assignments.

- "Everybody cheats."

  Students fear they'll be left behind by others who cheat. **Response:** Use the “vicious circle” argument.
Reasonable responses to cheating

- "This course is a waste of my time."

  Lack of commitment by instructors, assignments that require little or no original thought.

  "When the course is just an obstacle to a career goal, it will be dispatched by the most expeditious means possible."

  - Rebecca Moore Howard (2004)

Responding as a teacher

- Include academic integrity statements in your syllabus and discuss key concepts in class:

- Explain how the institution addresses academic misconduct

- Discuss consequences (for the assignment, course, degree program)

- Develop assignments and exams that are "misconduct proof" (or close to it).

- Remind students about the importance of academic integrity (on assignments and exams)
Some advice

1. Downplay the adversarial nature of detecting cheating and plagiarism.
2. Instead, address cheating and plagiarism as a teaching and learning issue. Treat your discussions of cheating and plagiarism as an opportunity for students to learn.

If you suspect cheating …

1. Ask yourself if this is a case of academic misconduct or evidence of a pedagogical problem.
2. For plagiarism, do some detective work
   - Check sources
   - Do phrase searches on the Web
   - Consider using plagiarism tools, such as SafeAssign or Turnitin.com
If you suspect cheating ...

3. Discuss the situation with a trusted colleague:
   - Don't disclose the student's identity.
   - Explain the situation in general terms.
   - See what sort of options you have, what others have done, etc.

4. Discuss the situation with the institution's academic integrity director (at CSU, Elaine Green is the director of TILT's Academic Integrity Program).

If you suspect cheating ...

5. Meet with the student
   - In cases of plagiarism, ask the student to bring sources, drafts, notes, etc.
   - Begin by discussing your questions about the exam or assignment. Treat this as a teaching moment. Don't accuse.
   - If this isn't effective:
     - Ask questions about the student's study or research process
     - Ask questions about their sources
     - Ask questions about the exam or assignment
If you suspect cheating ...

6. If you’re convinced cheating or plagiarism exists—and only then—express your concerns.
7. If the student agrees with you, consider your options (institutional requirements vs. teaching opportunities).
8. If the student denies cheating or plagiarizing, but you still think it happened—and have enough evidence to back up your suspicions—explain your plans to address the situation with the student and then take it to the next level.

If you suspect cheating ...

9. Report the incident to the relevant office (at CSU: the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services).
Conclusions

- When students cheat, and are caught at it, they should be held accountable.
- When students plagiarize unintentionally, it's a sign that they have not gained sufficient skill as writers and researchers, or have not gained sufficient understanding of an issue. In these cases, use the situation as a teaching opportunity.

Sources