

## Confronting Academic Misconduct<sup>1</sup>

Confronting a student you suspect to have engaged in academic dishonesty can be an uncomfortable experience. If you suspect a student is engaging in, or has engaged in academic dishonesty, you may find the following suggestions helpful.

### **Examinations:**

#### *A. During the Examination*

1. If a student appears to be using unauthorized materials or collaborating with another student, have another proctor observe the behavior when possible. If another proctor is not available, observe the behavior from different positions in the room to confirm the observation.
2. If you believe a violation is occurring during the exam, discreetly stop the behavior (e.g., confiscate the notes, separate collaborators) and identify the involved students(s) for yourself but **allow the student to complete the exam**. This is least disruptive to other students and, if it is later determined that a violation did not occur, provides a basis for assigning a grade. Clearly mark, in ink, on the students' answer sheets the point in their exams at which you intervened. When the exams are later compared, this can provide an indication of where the shared information ended and the students' answers diverge.
3. When a suspected violation concerns unauthorized material, retain the materials (e.g., "cheat sheets") as evidence. In the case of a programmable calculator that will be returned to the student, have a colleague/proctor observe the unauthorized programmed information and record that information before returning the calculator.
4. If you believe the person taking the exam is falsely presenting him/herself as the student enrolled in the course, quietly approach him/her and ask for identification. If the suspected substitute will not or cannot provide identification, you may refuse to grade the exam until identification is presented. Be sure to maintain possession of the exam in question, since it will contain identifying information that can be useful later.

#### *B. Meeting with the Student after the Examination*

When you confront students who are suspected of copying from one another or otherwise collaborating, it is best to speak with the students individually. Inform the student that his/her exam answer(s) correspond to another student's in ways that you do not believe could have occurred independently. Ask the student for his/her explanation of similar/identical language, unique incorrect answers, and other indicators of shared information between the exams. Be prepared to explain to the student that in your experience such things do not occur by coincidence and that having studied together before the exam does not adequately explain the similarities.

### **Out-of-Class Assignments:**

When a student's solution to the assignment appears copied from a solution manual, does not follow solution methods covered in class or assigned readings, or appears beyond the student's capabilities (as indicated by his/her previous work in the course), you should meet with the student and ask for an explanation of how the assignment was completed.

When students are suspected of copying from one another's assignments, it is best to speak with the students individually. Inform the student that the assignment corresponds to another student's and ask how the assignment was completed. You may also wish to ask the student why he/she believes the assignments correspond to one another. Be prepared to explain to the student that in your experience such things do not occur by coincidence.

### **Papers:**

When material in a student's paper appears plagiarized, attempt to locate the source text before meeting with the student. The CWP library may be of assistance in identifying the source (the student's identity should not be revealed to the librarians).

Students increasingly use electronic means to locate and retrieve source materials. Consequently, it can be worthwhile to perform a search of the World Wide Web using a search engine (e.g., Google, HotBot) particularly if a reasonably unique keyword or word string can be identified from a student's paper.

When material in a student's paper appears plagiarized but the source cannot be identified, ask the student questions about information contained in the paper. Ask for definitions of terms used and for further explanation of ideas expressed. Ask the student about his/her research for the paper, how reference materials were chosen and from which library they were obtained. Request that the student submit his/her rough draft and/or notes to you.

<sup>1</sup>This document was adopted from the UCLA "Confronting Academic Dishonesty"  
[www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/faculty.html](http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/faculty.html).