

Copyright law and university policy

[Education](#), [University](#)



The pressures of academic success can be overwhelming to the conscientious student. Children are ingrained from the earliest ages that each test score will decide their future.

The idea of the “ permanent record” looms over them at every academic turn, and this pressure leads directly to the decision by some to cheat. According to a study by the Center for Academic Integrity, it was reported that more than 70 percent of high school students in the United States admitted to serious cheating in 2005 (Paulos, 2007, p. 11).

This staggering number is evidence that academic dishonesty is not a problem relegated to a few bad apples, but it is a widespread epidemic that deserves closer analysis. After all, three out of four U. S. high school students cannot be bad students without regard for academic success.

Quite to the contrary, many of these students who cheat do so because they do care about their academic success and often find themselves struggling to make the grades, rather than learn the material. Even more than the fact that students cheat, is the design of the educational system that puts measuring education above providing one. But, the problem is not an easy one to remedy, especially with all the new methods of cheating available to students.

However, regulations exist not only at the national level, but also at the university level, as copyright laws and academic integrity policies make copying the work of another a serious offense; the only difference between the two is that copyright law seeks to protect the work of its creator for

financial reasons, while academic integrity policies are most often designed simply to dissuade or punish students that copy the work of others.

Technology has taking cheating to a level previously unknown in education. The Internet offers students the ability to copy and paste information into a paper, whether a phrase, a paragraph, or a doctoral thesis.

While some students are aware that they are plagiarizing, there are equal amounts that simply do not understand the rules of plagiarism. According to author Sean Price, the rules of plagiarism are not always clear-cut: “ Many younger writers make this mistake because they don’t understand plagiarism’s ground rules.

And learning these rules can be confusing... It’s OK to borrow a well-known phrase, like ‘ To be or not to be’ and not cite its source. Someone could start a story with, ‘ To be or not to be on the swim team.’ That’s simply putting a twist on a famous line, not pretending it’s yours” (Price, 2005, p. 17). Some students also borrow too heavily from a source without meaning to, but ignorance is not an acceptable excuse for lack of academic integrity.

And, for every student who plagiarizes accidentally, there are many more who do so intentionally. For both the unintentional copiers and the deliberate plagiarists, academic policies such as those employed at UMUC attempt to illuminate what is acceptable and what is not.