ACADEMIC INTEGRITY PRIMER

“Honesty is the basic value on which this community rests.” (Andover Blue Book, p. 37.) An honest scholar claims as her own, only work and ideas that are truly hers. He acknowledges fully and accurately those sources of help and information that contribute to his work. Academic integrity is central to the functioning of a community of learners.

Academic integrity requires a commitment to honesty and to other important values as well. The Center of Academic Integrity -- a collaborative effort involving over 360 institutions -- defines academic integrity as “a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.” You may wish to explore this broad definition more fully by reading the full text here.

When you submit work to your instructor, he or she generally assumes that the work is yours unless you have explicitly acknowledged help from other people or from other sources in writing. If you have received help on an assignment, you must acknowledge that help in writing. There are several reasons for this requirement:

1. We need to be able to assess your work so that we know how your learning is progressing and so that we are able to better guide your learning. When help is not acknowledged, it can undermine our ability to make those assessments, and thereby put in jeopardy the fundamental relationship between a teacher and student.
2. We need to know that all students are “playing by the same rules.” If some students are receiving unacknowledged help, it is unfair to the students who are doing their own work or who are acknowledging the help that they receive.
3. The person who actually did the work (spoke or wrote the words, had the idea, etc.) merits our respect and acknowledgment. Using someone else’s words or ideas, etc. without clear attribution is plagiarism.

Depending on the assignment, you may be required to use a particular format of citation to acknowledge help or references. Our library (OWHL) has resources to help you format your citations. (See http://wiki.noblenet.org/owhl/panwiki/index.php/Citing_Sources.)

Your instructor and the OWHL librarians can help you determine the best way to format your citations in order to avoid any problems. Even if you are uncertain of the format and unable to gain clarity prior to your assignment due date, you must note the specific source of help on your submitted work. For example, you may write a note on your paper stating “my roommate helped me rewrite this paragraph.” Your note will prevent any misunderstandings of your intentions, even if the help you received is not permitted.

Collaborative work is expected in many courses at Andover. In some cases, working together on homework assignments is not only permitted but encouraged. It is your responsibility as a student to know what types of collaboration are appropriate in each of your courses. Read your syllabi carefully and check with your instructors to verify your understanding. Report in writing any help that you receive on an assignment.
Our mutual commitment to academic integrity allows teaching, learning and scholarship to thrive. Conversely, a lack of commitment to academic integrity undermines these enterprises. The following examples illustrate ways in which a student might fail to demonstrate a commitment to academic integrity:

- Obtaining unauthorized help on an assignment.
- Providing unauthorized help on an assignment – including, but not limited to, knowingly allowing someone to copy from one’s test, quiz, etc.
- Using unauthorized sources of information on an assignment.
- Failure to cite, accurately and fully, all sources of help and information used in an assignment.
- Submitting work done for one course in order to secure credit in another course without prior permission of all instructors involved.
- Obtaining tests, other materials or information that provide an unfair advantage in completing an assignment. (For instance, asking a student in a first period section of a multi-section course what was on a test that you are taking in a sixth period section.)
- Fabricating data (for a lab, for example), citing phony references, or attributing false information to references.

A few additional points are in order:

1. Academic dishonesty often results from careless scholarship. If you take credit for someone else’s work, intentionally or not, that may be considered to be academic dishonesty. The responsibility is yours as a scholar to keep track specifically of all references you use and of all help that you receive from other people. There are some tools that can help you stay organized with this task. (See http://www.noodletools.com/login.php. The OWHL staff can help you learn to use this tool.)

2. Academic dishonesty often results from poor planning or over-commitment. If you find yourself up late at night, unable to complete an assignment, it is far better to send an email to your teacher than to resort to plagiarism to finish an assignment. You may receive an extension and/or you may receive a lowered grade, but your integrity will be intact and you will not be facing disciplinary charges as a result of academic dishonesty.

3. Please do not allow parents (older siblings, tutors, etc.) to help you with assignments, unless you have explicit permission from your instructor to do so. The expectation that parents do not help on assignments may be new for some families as parental help is common practice in some schools. Sharing your work with your parents is often a nice idea, and the best time to do so is after you have submitted it to your instructor. (If you do end up getting help from a parent for whatever reason, it is essential that you note that help in writing on the assignment. Again, this help may not be acceptable, but acknowledging the help will avoid charges of plagiarism.)

4. You must understand the distinction between a quotation and a paraphrase. Using someone’s exact words requires using quotation marks (“exact wording goes in here”) and citation (a footnote or endnote, for example). Putting someone else’s idea or story in your
own words (paraphrasing) requires citation without the use of quotation marks. The following link has examples of proper and improper paraphrasing in conjunction with quoting: http://www.indiana.edu/%7Ewts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml. (You need to scroll down a bit to find the example.)

5. Do not assume that because an event or fact is “common knowledge” you may use it without citation. If you found the information in a source, you should cite that source. The idea of “common knowledge” is contextual and complex. What is common knowledge to a scholar in a particular field is often not common knowledge in other contexts. It is always best simply to cite the source of the information even if you believe that something may pass as common knowledge. (This topic is further complicated by resources like Wikipedia which rely heavily on contributions from individuals using common knowledge. To avoid any problems, when in doubt, cite.)

Plagiarism often results from unacknowledged use of internet sources. It is easy to take material directly from the internet or even to buy whole papers on particular topics from the internet. It is also fairly easy for teachers and others to track plagiarism using the internet.

Plagiarism can occur in any discipline. For instance, unacknowledged use of someone else’s ideas in music, theatre or the visual arts constitutes plagiarism. For a more detailed discussion of the nature of plagiarism, see http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_plagiarism.html.

Please ask your advisor to discuss these expectations and rules with you. Prior to submitting written work in your courses, you must certify that you have read and understand this primer.

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