Avoiding Plagiarism

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Today’s Workshop

- Discuss issues and complications associated with plagiarism
- Suggest ways to talk to students about plagiarism
- Suggest strategies for writing assignments that encourage originality and engagement
- Suggest strategies for dealing with possible cases of plagiarism
- Share Turnitin best practices
- Q&A
What Is Plagiarism... 
and how can we talk with students about it?

Beth Davila
What Is Plagiarism?

- Definitions range from theft to ignorance
- Determining students’ intentions may be difficult
- Social learning blurs the lines about ownership of ideas
- Non-Western cultures have very different norms
- Citation practices vary by discipline and context

Whatever *it* is, the consequences are high.
Group Activity*

- Define plagiarism
- What should the protocol be for responding to:
  - Excessive repetition (poor paraphrasing of another’s words)
  - Improper citation (failure to cite properly)
  - Fraud (creation of false sources)
  - Forgery (turning in another person’s work as your own)

*Activity from Purdue Owl
Goals for Talking to Students about Plagiarism

- Make connections between academic, professional, and social citation practices
- Identify the rationale behind practices
- Acknowledge shifting expectations
- Articulate a fair policy for your class
- Visit Purdue Owl for specific lesson plans, suggestions
- Pull articles, videos from current news stories
What strategies can I use ... for encouraging originality, and deeper engagement with disciplinary content? for dealing with a suspected case of plagiarism?
Handout/Group Activity: Variations in Assignment Design

Discussion questions

1. What differences in thinking processes are apt to be encouraged by each option?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each option?
3. Which assignment or sequence of assignments would you choose were you the nursing professor?
“Writing to Learn” and “Learning to Write in a Discipline”

- Writing in the Disciplines (WID)
  - When your goal is teaching students to master the genres of a discipline (reports, proposals, case studies, etc.)
  - Good for upper-division students who know your field’s conventions for inquiry and argumentation

- Writing to Learn (WTL)
  - When your goal is deeper engagement with ideas, mastering concepts
Some WTL Principles

0 Writing is used to help students learn and work with the subject matter, not to “test” their ability to write.

0 Writing is simply another medium for learning.

0 Writing is a strategy for creating an active classroom with engaged students.

0 Students improve their writing by writing a lot, but the main goal is to improve their learning.

0 Writing to learn counts on your expertise as a teacher, not a grammarian or editor.
Four Effective Ways to Create Problem-Based Task

- Give students a problem-laden question.
- Give students a problematic thesis to defend or attack.
- Give students raw data (lists, graphs, tables, etc.) and ask them to write an argument or analysis based on the data.
- Let students develop their own question.

Does Quantity Matter?

“Our study discloses the value of focusing on the quality, not just the quantity, of writing assignments. A 20-page term paper, assigned on the first day and collected on the last, with little attention to design, with no instructional support, and with no clear sense of the criteria for success, may be far less educationally effective than a five-page paper artfully woven into the course and developed over time and with appropriate intervention.”

—from Anderson, Anson, Gonyea, and Paine, “The Contributions of Writing to Learning and Intellectual Development: Results from a Large-Scale Multi-Institutional Study”
## A Continuum of Writing Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Stakes</th>
<th>Middle Stakes</th>
<th>High Stakes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>Early drafts, response papers, to be revised</td>
<td>Formal, polished essays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Logs</td>
<td>Microthemes</td>
<td>Term papers</td>
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<td>Minute papers and exit slips</td>
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<td>WebCT blogs and discussions</td>
<td>Problem analyses</td>
<td>Reports</td>
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<td>Data-set analyses</td>
<td>Proposals</td>
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Sketching Out a Sequence: Low to Middle to High Stakes

- Professor Evaluation
  - in-class work

- Reader Analysis
  - worksheet

- Letter to the Editor
  - microgenre

- Reflection
  - microgenre

- The Slam
  - microgenre

- Commentary
  - major genre

- Evaluation
  - major genre
When You Suspect Plagiarism (1 of 2)

Core Writing policy, three parts:

₀ Arranging a meeting with the student and arranging for a director to be present at your meeting,

₀ Meeting with the student and assessing the nature and severity of the case,

₀ If you decide the student has plagiarized, imposing an academic consequence and contacting the Dean of Students Office.
When You Suspect Plagiarism (2 of 2)

Throughout the process, try to:

0 Keep in mind the distinction between plagiarism and misuse of sources.
0 Avoid becoming a plagiarism cop (maintain a coaching relationship).
0 Document everything throughout the process and don’t do it by yourself.
Preventing and Detecting Plagiarism  
*Using (and Not Abusing) Turnitin*

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What is a Plagiarism Detection Tool?

- Modern plagiarism detection software/services perform the following functions:
  - Search for similar or identical text on the web, in some publication databases, and in document repositories
  - Annotate the document to identify matched text
  - Enable viewing of matched text sources
  - Optionally report an originality or plagiarism “score”

- Given earlier discussion of the fuzziness and context-sensitivity of plagiarism – best to think of the tools as:
  - **Match detection** or **originality** tools
  - **NOT** – plagiarism detection tools

- The distinction implies that **plagiarism is a judgment** based in part on evidence of matching and originality
Available Tools

- **Roll-your-own**
  - Anyone can search for matches using the search engine of their choice (e.g., Google or Bing)
  - Though workable, using search engines directly has disadvantages that include:
    - Lots of cutting, pasting, and typing
    - Inability to easily get behind “pay walls”
    - Inefficient for large amounts of material or large numbers of assignments
    - Lack of related features such as online submission and reporting
    - Lack of integration into other systems
Available Tools - Continued

- The current marketplace:
  - Turnitin/iThenticate – the clear leader with significant market presence and a full feature set
    - Turnitin – optimized for class-related use
    - iThenticate – optimized for research-oriented use
  - SafeAssign – was a separate tool for classroom use, now merged into Blackboard as an optional component
    - Not currently enabled within UNM Learn
    - Limited compared to Turnitin
  - A handful of free or low cost apps
    - Viper
    - turnitoutSafely.com
    - AntiPlagiarism.NET
    - AntiPlagiarist
Turnitin and iThenticate at UNM

- Both tools currently licensed UNM-wide
  - Current license expires August 2015
  - **Renewal currently being negotiated**

- iThenticate
  - Free use by UNM users
  - Authorized users – all faculty, staff, and students
  - See http://ithenticate.unm.edu

- Turnitin
  - Stand-alone or linked into UNM Learn
  - Currently free use by UNM users?
  - Authorized users – all instructors (including TAs) and up to 16,500 students
  - See http://turnitin.unm.edu
Turnitin Within UNM Learn
Capabilities and Limitations

The good:
- Works very well with text, including simple paraphrasing
- Searches documents in multiple languages
- Can detect some but not all text matches of documents in one language with sources in different languages

The bad:
- Type I (false negative) and Type II (false positive) errors
- Images and sounds aren’t matched
- Not easily applied to larger bodies of work including document collections, web sites, and blogs

The ugly:
- As with any tool, automated plagiarism detection:
  - Can be well-used or misused
  - Training helps to achieve desired outcomes
About Turnitin Originality Reports

- **Originality reports** contain information about matches between submission content and various source databases including:
  - Internet-accessible content
  - Publisher databases
  - Student paper repositories

- Originality reports contain a **similarity index**
  - A percentage of matched or unoriginal content
  - Lower score is better – but what’s a good score?

- **Overview video**
Sample Turnitin Originality Report
Interpreting the Similarity Score

Does a high similarity index equal plagiarism or a poor grade?

- Is “unoriginal material” cited properly?
  - Turnitin can’t tell you
  - Do your students know how to properly cite?

- How much properly cited material is allowed in an A/B/C/F paper?
  - That’s your choice - should be clearly communicated in the assignment instructions

- Do you have a specific honesty or plagiarism policy for your school, department, or course?
  - See sample – http://averia.unm.edu/MGMT337/Current/General/HonestyPolicy.html
  - Is it linked to your course home page and all relevant assignments?
Using Originality Reports - Advice

- Turnitin is a tool for identifying some instances of potential plagiarism
  - The tool will generate false positives and negatives
  - The instructor, TA, and/or grader needs to:
    - Examine the matches and decide whether they constitute plagiarism
    - Watch for missed matches (e.g., passages that sound too sophisticated/polished, style mismatches, …)
    - Determine how similarity (proper or improper) impacts grade

- Turnitin streamlines the process of identifying potential plagiarism and follow-up investigation
  - Similarity indices can be used to identify targets for investigation (e.g., above a certain percentage or the top few percentage values)
  - Matches are visually summarized and paired to sources
  - Source material can be viewed with a single click in most cases

- Summary – the tool is simply that – a tool – not a substitute for your own judgment or follow-up effort
  - “Every (or any?) tool is a weapon - if you hold it right” – Ani diFranco
Using Turnitin Well

- Determine why you are using it:
  - To teach students to avoid plagiarism, and/or
  - To help you catch plagiarizers

- **Configure the tool** to match your intended use(s), best practices, and personal preferences:
  - Student access to originality reports
  - Draft and final submission due dates
  - Which sources to search
  - What constitutes a match
  - Student repository
    - Match student submissions with the repository
    - Add student submissions to the repository
Instructor-Defined Configuration Options
Student Access to Originality Reports

- **Can students see them (and when)?**
  - The instructor controls this through a yes/no setting and a related settings for drafts
    - **Yes** – students can see/correct their own “mistakes”
      - Multiple schools of thought:
        » Helps teach students what is and how to avoid plagiarism
        » Helps teach students how to improve their plagiarism skills
        » Helps keep trouble out of the instructor’s inbox
    - **No**, or yes but with little time for correction and resubmission
      - Gotcha !?
      - Now what?

- **Which approach should you adopt?**
Report Content – Sources and Matches

- Instructor controls what is included/excluded from “matches” via assignment or global settings
  - What sources are searched?
    - Most significant issue is whether the student repository is searched
    - Best way to catch reused and purchased papers
  - Exclude bibliographic material from Similarity Index?
    - Do bibliographic similarities = plagiarism?
  - Exclude quoted material from Similarity Index?
    - Does quotation imply proper citation?
  - Minimum match size
    - Word count – match must equal/exceed this size (default is 5)
    - Percentage – useless in most cases, avoid!
Originality Report Settings – Key Issues
Adding Student Submissions to Repository

- Instructor-defined repository options – Store student papers in:
  - The standard paper repository
  - The institution paper repository – disabled at UNM
  - No repository
  - Allow students to choose between the standard paper repository or the institution paper repository – disabled at UNM

- Arguments against
  - You’re enabling iParadigms to “make money off of student papers” without compensating the students
    - License terms limit iParadigms use to generating originality reports
    - Current law and recent cases considers this fair use
  - You and/or your students may not consider this to be fair use

- Arguments for
  - UNM does its part to detect intra- and inter-institution plagiarism

- Your thoughts?
The instructor chooses which role(s) Turnitin fills:
- Provide originality/plagiarism feedback to students
- Streamline the process of obtaining and evaluating evidence of plagiarism

The instructor has considerable control over how the tool is used and works:
- Can students see originality reports and when?
- Can students revise and resubmit?
- What sources is/aren’t scanned?
- How is a “match” defined?
- Are student papers added to the global repository?