Plagiarism

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Problematic Plagiarism Presentation

Plagiarism is an increasing problem throughout academe. The *Plagiarism Handbook* by Robert A. Harris (2001) provided an attitude scale for us to use in surveying freshmen and junior students at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI.

What we did:
- We used Survey Monkey to administer the survey to all freshmen and to juniors between fall 2005 and winter 2008.
- Respondents could enter a drawing as an enticement to complete the survey.
- The questionnaire is a “personal opinion scale.” The answers are neither right nor wrong with both attitudinal and ethical questions posed in the survey.

The Results:
- GVSU students believe they know what constitutes plagiarism; we are not convinced this is true.
- A continuation of this study tracked student attitudes on plagiarism and the effects of implementing deterrents to plagiarism at Grand Valley.

What we think:
- We believe plagiarism is an important issue for faculty and librarians when working with students. Students need more education about plagiarism. Plagiarism is not a victimless crime.
- Faculty need to demonstrate a vested interest in the integrity of their students’ research and writing. (see Wilhoit article on the Selected Resources list).
- Students do not know how to work with using the ideas of others.
- At our institution, Grand Valley State University, a group of faculty members have criticized the use of TurnItIn.com as tool to detect plagiarism, citing the rights of students. Lindsey Asselin, a junior history major at Southern New Hampshire University, writes in the *CAI Integrity Update* newsletter, “Building a supportive community, with strong ethical beliefs and policies about academic honesty, is the biggest contribution a university can make to deter students from dishonesty.”
- Students are struggling with some of the ethical issues surrounding plagiarism. Ask your students why ethics are important to them as students; why might ethics be important five years from now?
- Plagiarism must be understood at the college level to prevent it from becoming a norm after graduation and carried into the workplace.
- Our focus needs to be on prevention of plagiarism.
Selected Resources


Knight Cite: Calvin College citation assistance tool. http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite

Plagiary: An online scholarly journal of “Cross-disciplinary studies in plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification.” http://www.plagiary.org/

