Report on Plagiarism Policies for Southern Illinois University
by the Plagiarism Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The committee charged with the review of plagiarism policy for Southern Illinois University has completed its review of the University policies. Subcommittees, consisting of members of the respective home campuses, reviewed the plagiarism policies of the Carbondale and Edwardsville campuses, as well as policies for the Board of Trustees. The committee made specific recommendations for revising existing policies to make them consistent with a Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy proposed in this document.

 The committee finds the following:

To this point, plagiarism policy and the enforcement of that policy have been handled by Southern Illinois University's individual campuses and departments, and there was no established policy on plagiarism at the system (Board of Trustees) level. Although generally adequate, existing campus policies tended to concentrate on willful student plagiarism but did not specifically address plagiarism by faculty and staff or differentiate between the different types or degrees of plagiarism.

The committee believes that the University should make a commitment to minimize the instances of plagiarism and establish consistent guidelines for dealing with instances of plagiarism at the system level and to that end recommends that the Board of Trustees adopt the Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy, defined later in this report, as that official policy. Adoption of this policy would set a consistent University-wide definition of, and approach to, dealing with plagiarism, while allowing each campus to set and enforce its own policy based on individual needs.

Finally, the committee recommends a strong, proactive, educational effort to reduce both the instances and the severity of acts of plagiarism, putting the emphasis on prevention rather than enforcement.

REPORT

Committee Formation and Charge

In December 2006 Vice President for Academic Affairs of the SIU system John Haller formed a committee to review the plagiarism policies of the SIU Board of Trustees and of the Carbondale and Edwardsville campuses. Dr. Haller chose the following SIU employees to serve on the committee:

A. M. (Lain) Adkins	SIU Press	SIUC
Lynn Bartels	Psychology	SIUE
Mike Crider	School of Pharmacy	SIUE
Lisabeth DiLalla	FMC – Behavioral Social Science	SIUC
David Duvernell	Biological Sciences	SIUE
Jane Gillespie	School of Dental Medicine	SIUE
Steve Hansen	Graduate Studies & Research	SIUE
Gerald Nelms	English	SIUC
Pru Rice	Graduate Studies & Research	SIUC
David Worrells	Aviation Management & Flight	SIUC

At the first meeting of the committee in December 2006, Vice President Haller gave the committee the following charge:

Charge to Committee

Review existing policies of the SIU Board of Trustees and of the campuses to determine if the issue of plagiarism is sufficiently identified and defined.

a. Is the definition of plagiarism clear and unambiguous in our policies?

b. Is it evident from reading our University policies what plagiarism is and what it is not?

c. What distinctions, if any, should be made between copyright infringement, fair use, and plagiarism?

d. Should distinctions be made in the type and seriousness of plagiarized material or does one shoe fit all? Should this be recognized in our policies?

e. Should the University have rules or policies governing so-called "work for hire" (ghostwriting, reports, lectures, newsletters, college Web sites, view books, boilerplates, templates, documents, etc.)?

f. Is there a distinction to be made between academe and the business workplace with respect to practices of acknowledgment and attribution?

g. Should the changes that have taken place with the concept of copyright (i.e., the Creative Commons license) influence the manner in which academe treats use of the Internet, as well as other new technologies?

h. Does the so-called "Open Content" policy have implications for academe that are different from the business workplace?

i. Should academe adhere to a higher standard than the private sector workplace in the matter of plagiarism?

j. How might SIU develop what Donald McCabe calls "a culture of academic integrity"?

k. Should there be two different plagiarism policies: one for students and one for faculty and staff?

l. How can a deeper understanding of authorship and plagiarism be developed for faculty members and administrators, and taught to students?

The committee held its first working meeting in January 2007 and adopted the following action items:

- To gain a thorough understanding of the issues involved in plagiarism.
- To develop an acceptable definition of plagiarism for use at Southern Illinois University, along with a glossary of terms pertaining to plagiarism and working guidelines to further explain the variant forms of plagiarism, our "Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy."
- To review all of the existing policies of the SIU Board of Trustees and the Edwardsville and Carbondale campuses using the Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy as the benchmark and determine the adequacy of the current policies. Specifically, the committee was tasked to look only at campus, and not departmental, policy.
- To include in our report to the Board broad recommendations on changes to existing policy. Committee recommendations on policy change were not specified in the charge, but the committee felt that they would be a logical extension of our work.

Definition and Working Guide

The committee spent a considerable amount of time researching plagiarism. We were given an in-depth review of plagiarism by one of our committee members, Gerald Nelms, who fortunately was our resident expert on the subject, and reviewed the plagiarism policies of a number of other institutions.

What appeared to be simple was not. As the working guide below indicates, plagiarism is not always intentional. It may also be inadvertent or unintended and, in addition, can result from a writer's lack of familiarity with the citation and "common knowledge" conventions of the discipline or field within which the person is writing, what Nelms calls "developmental" plagiarism. Moreover, many institutional contexts exist where

plagiarism is an accepted and even encouraged discourse strategy. And finally, not all plagiaristic activity reaches a level of significance.

Therefore, gaining this level of understanding of the issues involved with plagiarism was an essential precursor to the committee's effort to craft the working guide. This document is the centerpiece of our work and serves as the benchmark for all of the committee's evaluations and recommendations

WORKING GUIDE FOR PLAGIARISM POLICY
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
FOR FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS

Working Definition

Plagiarism is defined as presenting existing work as one's own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source, including one's own work, must be fully acknowledged unless the information is common knowledge. What is considered "common knowledge" may differ from subject to subject. To avoid plagiarizing, one must not adopt or reproduce material from existing work without acknowledging the original source. Existing work includes but is not limited to ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, and pictures. Examples of plagiarism, subject to interpretation, include but are not limited to directly quoting another's actual words, whether oral or written; using another's ideas, opinions, or theories; paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written; borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; and offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment.

Glossary

The following are terms and their definitions derived from scholarship on plagiarism and used in this working guide.

- *Common Knowledge:* Knowledge presumed to be ubiquitous among members of the specific community being addressed.[1] Such communities may be broadly conceived, such as the entire citizenry, or much more narrowly conceived, such as only those who have studied geological evidence of the Late Cretaceous Period.

- *Competitive Context:* A context where attribution for a work provides justification for status and advancement of status within a particular community. For example, within the academic community, attribution for published books and articles is used to justify promotion and tenure.

- *Institutionalized Context:* A context where official credit for a work does not represent a means of achieving status and advancement and where plagiarism is accepted and even expected and encouraged. For example, when writing reports and memos within many business settings, writers are expected to employ the organization, language, and even the content of previous reports and memos.

- *Intentional Plagiarism:* Conscious and deliberate plagiarizing of a source or sources.

- *Unintentional Plagiarism:* Plagiarism that is due to carelessness, a misremembering (believing some language or even a substantial portion of a text is one's own creation when it is not), a misreading of context (believing one is producing a text within an institutionalized context when the context is actually competitive), or an inadequate understanding of the citation requirements of authorship within a particular community.

- *Developmental Plagiarism:* (in written communication, called patchwriting[2]): An unintended plagiarism that is caused by the plagiarist's effort to produce work that mimics that of a particular community while she or he is not adequately familiar with the ways of expression of that community. This kind of plagiarism can be seen as the

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[1] University of Tampere, School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies, Foundations in Area Studies for Translators. Retrieved November 14, 2005, from http://www.uta.fi/FAST/PK6/REF/commknow.html.

[2] Rebecca Moore Howard, *Standing in the Shadow of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors, Collaborators* (Ablex, 1999); Rebecca Moore Howard, "Plagiarisms, Authorships, and the Academic Death Penalty," *College English* 57 (1995): 708-736.

product of an intermediate stage in the plagiarist's development from being an
outsider to being an insider.

Working Guidelines

An act of plagiarism can either be intentional or unintentional. As an institution, our first
recourse to fight plagiarism must be to try to eliminate unintentional plagiarism by
educating all members of the University community as to what plagiarism is and how to
avoid it.

Some instances of plagiarism are minor, involving small quantities of copied textual
material, and these minor cases do not warrant extensive investigation. We do not
endorse policies and procedures that might stifle the routine use of source material in all
legitimate research and, thus, the dissemination of knowledge. The academy in general
and this institution in particular, however, cannot abide the intentional misrepresentation
of source material as one's own in order to fraudulently advance one's status within the
academy or outside the academy.

That said, there may be extenuating circumstances involved even in cases of substantial
intentional plagiarism. While such circumstances might mitigate punishment for such
offenses, they cannot altogether absolve the intentional plagiarist from punishment. The
SIU Board of Trustees then seeks to emphasize the responsible investigation of and just
resolution to every case of intentional plagiarism.

Finally, the context of student plagiarism is different from that of others in the academy
and beyond academia. Although students may perceive the context of their work, at least
at times, as being institutionalized, in fact, schoolwork is produced always within a
competitive context. School assignments are intended to facilitate learning or to assess
learning or both. Plagiarism undermines those purposes. The distinction between
institutionalized and competitive contexts within all academic disciplines should be
recognized; students should assume they always produce their schoolwork within a

competitive context that does not allow plagiarism. Faculty members are encouraged to watch for developmental plagiarism in student work, and students should be given opportunities to learn from such cases.

In providing an appropriate response to any accusation of plagiarism, then, the following factors should be taken into account.

- *Context:* that is, whether the context was institutionalized or competitive. Determination of context should be based on the discipline or community's typical attitude toward the citation of source material for that particular genre and situation as well as past experience of those producing similar texts within the particular discipline or community, and in cases involving student plagiarism, whether the instructor indicated that the assignment was meant to be completed as if within an institutionalized context.
- *Intent:* that is, whether the plagiarist intended to plagiarize in order to fraudulently advance her status within the academy.
- *Seriousness of the offense:* that is, how substantial and significant the plagiarism was.
- *Engagement with the source material:* that is, whether the plagiarist adapted the source material with a recognizable intent to integrate the content honestly within his own work or mindlessly adopted the source material without a recognizable intent to integrate it.
- *Extenuating circumstances:* that is, whether there exist circumstances that mitigate punishment for the offense.

Review of Policies and Recommended Changes

After establishing our working definition and guidelines, we were ready to tackle the review of existing policies. To accomplish that task we decided to break up into three subcommittees to identify and review the three sets of policy and to make recommendations where needed. The results of the subcommittee reviews are as follows:

The SIU Board of Trustees committee: A. M. (Lain) Adkins

The review found that no plagiarism policies had been established at the Board of Trustees level. The committee recommends that the Board of Trustees consider adopting the Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy as official board policy

The committee feels strongly that Southern Illinois University should have a consistent overall definition of and approach to dealing with plagiarism but still allow each individual campus to maintain control of its own policy. The Board's adoption of the Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy would fulfill both of those goals. The new policy would give consistency and structure to dealing with issues of plagiarism throughout the SIU system while allowing each campus and department to set its own policy structured to meet individual research and writing needs.

SIUC committee: Chair, Gerald Nelms; and other SIUC committee members

The committee thoroughly reviewed the SIUC policy and recommended the following changes:

Suggested changes to Research Misconduct: Policy and Procedures in **bold print:**

Page 1, under Introduction, 3rd paragraph:
From "The policy defines research misconduct as an act of deception, distinct from error."
To: "The policy defines research misconduct as an act of deception, distinct from **unintentional or inadvertent error.**"

Page 2, under A. Inquiry, 1. Purpose:
"In the Inquiry, factual information is gathered and expeditiously reviewed to determine if an Investigation of the charge is warranted. An Inquiry is not a formal hearing; it is

designed to separate allegations deserving of further investigation from frivolous, unjustified, or clearly mistaken allegations. **Cases of plagiarism can be especially complicated, because the acts involved may be intended or unintended. Not all plagiarism, even if intended, constitutes research misconduct. In cases involving allegations of plagiarism, the following questions should be addressed:**

(1) **Were ideas or language of a source or sources employed by the writer without acknowledgment of the source? If not, then an Investigation is not warranted.**

(2) **Does the amount or significance of the plagiarism rise to the level where further investigation is warranted? If not, then an Investigation is not warranted.**

(3) **Was the plagiarism committed within a context where the use of others' ideas and/or language is considered acceptable? If so, then an Investigation is not warranted.**

(4) **Does it appear that the writer made an effort to *adapt* the ideas and/or language of the source, rather than merely *adopt* those ideas and/or language? If *adapted,* then the writer may have unintentionally or inadvertently plagiarized and an Investigation may not be warranted.**

(5) **Does the plagiarism appear to be the result of a lack of familiarity with the conventions of the community the writer is attempting to address? If so, then the plagiarism may not have been intended to deceive, and an Investigation may not be warranted.**

Suggested changes to Student Conduct Code in **bold print:**

Page 5, under I. Introduction, F. Definitions: **Add the following definitions:**

"Common Knowledge" refers to knowledge presumed to be ubiquitous among members of the specific community being addressed. Such communities may be

broadly conceived, such as the entire citizenry, or much more narrowly conceived, such as only those who have studied a particularly narrow subject matter.

"Intentional Plagiarism" means the conscious and deliberate plagiarizing of a source or sources.

"Plagiarism" means the representation of previously existing work as one's own creation. Any ideas or language or visual design taken from another source, including one's own work, must be fully acknowledged unless the information is common knowledge. What is considered "common knowledge" may differ from subject to subject. To avoid plagiarizing, one must not adopt or reproduce material from existing work without acknowledging the original source. Existing work includes but is not limited to ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, and pictures. Examples of plagiarism, subject to interpretation, include but are not limited to directly quoting another's actual words, whether oral or written; using another's ideas, opinions, or theories; paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written; borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; and offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment.

"Unintentional Plagiarism" refers to plagiarism that is due to carelessness, a misremembering (believing some language or even a substantial portion of a text is one's own creation when it is not), a misreading of context (believing one is producing a text within a context where copying others' ideas and/or language is acceptable when the context is actually one where such plagiarizing is not acceptable), or an inadequate understanding of the citation requirements of authorship within a particular community.

Page 5, under II. Violations, A. Acts of Academic Dishonesty:
1. **Intentional** plagiarism, representing the work of another as one's own work **with the intent to deceive one's audience**;

1. **Plagiarism Investigation: Investigations of plagiarism should follow the investigatory procedures applicable to academic dishonesty, as previously outlined. The objective of all investigations into academic dishonesty must be the separation of allegations deserving adjudication from frivolous, unjustified, or clearly mistaken allegations. Cases of plagiarism, however, can be especially complicated, because the acts involved may be intended or unintended. Not all plagiarism, even if intended, constitutes academic dishonesty. In cases involving allegations of plagiarism, the following questions should be addressed:**

    a. **Were ideas or language of a source or sources employed by the writer without acknowledgment of the source? If not, then further investigation is not warranted.**

    b. **Does the amount or significance of the plagiarism rise to the level where further investigation is warranted? If not, then further investigation is not warranted.**

    c. **Was the plagiarism committed within a context where the use of others ideas and/or language is considered acceptable? If so, then further investigation is not warranted.**

    d. **Does it appear that the writer made an effort to *adapt* the ideas and/or language of the source, rather than merely *adopt* those ideas and/or language? If *adapted,* then the writer may have unintentionally or inadvertently plagiarized and further investigation may not be warranted.**

    e. **Does the plagiarism appear to be the result of a lack of familiarity with the conventions of the community the writer is attempting to address? If so, then the plagiarism may not have been intended to deceive, and further investigation may not be warranted.**

2. **Plagiarism Adjudication: Sanctions for plagiarism should not differ from those options discussed previously with regard to violations of academic dishonesty. However, the reasons students plagiarize can be complicated by extenuating circumstances that can mitigate the punishment for plagiaristic behaviors.**

   a. **For unintentional plagiarism, students may be required to redo the plagiarized assignment. The sanctions described in Section III and in Section V. B. 2 and V. C should not be imposed on students who have not intentionally plagiarized.**

   b. **Intentional plagiarism may warrant the harsher sanctions described in Section III and in Section V. B. 2 and V. C. 6, but even in cases of intentional plagiarism, extenuating circumstances may mitigate the punishment. Students who exhibit inadequate time management skills or feelings of low self-efficacy (that is, a lack of confidence in accomplishing the tasks that they plagiarized) and who seem to genuinely exhibit shame and remorse at having plagiarized may deserve less harsh punishments. Requiring such a student to redo the assignment or assigning such a student a failing grade on the one assignment may be appropriate in such cases. In cases where such mitigating circumstances do not exist, harsher punishments are warranted.**

SIUE committee: Chair, Steve Hansen; and other SIUE committee members

The SIUE committee reviewed its policies and made the following recommendations:

The committee recommends that SIUE completely revise policy 1I6 "Plagiarism." Currently this policy is directed toward students. We recommend that the Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy developed by the SIU Plagiarism Committee replace the existing SIUE 1I6 and that this **new policy be made explicitly applicable for students, faculty, staff, and administrators.** We recommend that at the end of the new policy,

specific issues regarding students, faculty, and staff be referred to the appropriate specific policies and procedures. For example, for issues involving student plagiarism, see Policy 1I7 and Policy 3C2; for issues involving faculty plagiarism, see the Faculty Handbook and Policy 1Q5; and for issues involving staff and administrative plagiarism, see Personnel Policies. We further recommend that those specific policies remove their definitions of plagiarism and refer back to this new 1I6 policy.

Comments on Other Questions Raised in the Charge

The working guide and the recommendations above address the core issues of the charge of the committee, specifically:

- a. Is the definition of plagiarism clear and unambiguous in our policies?
- b. Is it evident from reading our University policies what plagiarism is and what it is not?
- d. Should distinctions be made in the type and seriousness of plagiarized material or does one shoe fit all? Should this be recognized in our policies?
- f. Is there a distinction to be made between academe and the business workplace with respect to practices of acknowledgment and attribution?
- i. Should academe adhere to a higher standard than the private sector workplace in the matter of plagiarism?
- k. Should there be two different plagiarism policies: one for students and one for faculty and staff?
- l. How can a deeper understanding of authorship and plagiarism be developed for faculty members and administrators, and taught to students?

Other Questions Raised by the Charge But Not Previously Answered

- c. What distinctions, if any, should be made between copyright infringement, fair use, and plagiarism?

The distinctions are significant. Copyright infringement and fair use are legal issues, but the act of plagiarism is not. For example, a person can plagiarize a work that is not copyrighted. There is no legal issue in the act itself, but there may be other consequences, such as violation of company policy or student code that could cause plagiarism to become a quasi-legal issue.

While not a plagiarism issue, the determination of what constitutes fair use has become a problematic one, pitting the author/publishers against the researcher/writers. The result is an ever changing definition of fair use and uncertainty for all. To alleviate some of that uncertainty, the committee recommends that a review of fair use guidelines be added to the charge of the standing committee on copyright and open content recommended below.

e. Should the University have rules or policies governing so-called "work for hire" (ghostwriting, reports, lectures, newsletters, college Web sites, view books, boilerplates, templates, documents, etc.)?

The Working Guide for Plagiarism Policy covers the plagiarism aspect of the "work for hire" issues but not the legal aspects. SIU should review the need to insert language in purchasing documents or contracts that could shield the University from potentially damaging acts of an unscrupulous contractor.

g. Should the changes that have taken place with the concept of copyright (i.e., the Creative Commons license) influence the manner in which academe treats use of the Internet, as well as other new technologies?
h. Does the so-called "Open Content" policy have implications for academe that are different from the business workplace?

These two issues are very important but monumental in scope. We recommend that the University consider creating a standing committee or task force to monitor these issues and the issue of fair use mentioned above.

j. How might SIU develop what Donald McCabe calls "a culture of academic integrity"?

McCabe and colleagues have been conducting extensive surveys of cheating in higher education since 1990. In an article published in *Liberal Education* in fall 2005, McCabe discussed his early motivation when returning to the academy after twenty-plus years working in the corporate world: "to see whether campus honor codes were still a viable strategy [for addressing student academic dishonesty]."[3] This ongoing survey research continues to suggest that honor codes can reduce the incidence of cheating, but from the beginning, McCabe has noted provocative findings that complicated any easy correlations between honor codes and reduced cheating rates. McCabe has concluded that it is *not* the existence of honor codes per se that has an effect on the incidence of cheating:

> Rather, the student culture that existed on campus concerning the question of academic integrity was more important. The existence of a code did not always result in lower levels of cheating. More importantly, the converse was also true: some campuses achieved high levels of integrity without an honor code . . . . What was important was the culture of academic integrity to which incoming students were exposed. (26)

Two major conclusions can be drawn from this scholarship: (1) institutions of higher education can provide policies, procedures, programs, and initiatives that can significantly reduce the incidence of cheating on their campuses; and (2) this culture of academic integrity does not *require* the institution of honor codes. At the very least, then, this committee recommends that the University create a task force to research the ways that such a culture can be developed on each of its campuses.

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[3] Donald McCabe, "It Takes a Village: Academic Dishonesty and Educational Opportunity," *Liberal Education* 91 (3): 26.

CONCLUSION

Members of the Plagiarism Committee have greatly appreciated having the opportunity to educate themselves about plagiarism and its surrounding issues. We recognize that in today's digital environment, it has become easier than ever to deliberately or inadvertently borrow another's work.

However, plagiarism is an age-old problem, whether the borrower is operating with the assistance of powerful search engines or alone in a library carrel surrounded by books. Our task as educators requires that we clarify our policy, educate all informed of that policy, enforce it consistently, and review and update it regularly. Absent that, researching and writing an essay could become a matter of cutting and pasting excerpts from a wide array of copyrighted and public domain sources, leading to a pastiche of melded texts that form an unoriginal product heavily indebted to the work of others. With proper plagiarism policy in place, however, we can foster an environment where the writer/researcher at Southern Illinois University accumulates and assimilates the work of others, then produces his or her own original contribution. In the committee's view, this difference in outcomes highlights the importance of an informed plagiarism policy.

With this in mind, the committee makes one more recommendation: that we, or a successor committee, regroup informally at the beginning of every academic year to examine SIU's plagiarism policy and that we regroup formally every five years to undertake a more thorough overview.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve on this committee.