DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
Inspiring Minds

FOCUS ON UNIVERSITY LEARNING & TEACHING

From the Director

Reports of widespread plagiarism cut to the very heart of academic communities. To contribute to discussions of this issue at Dalhousie, **Focus** highlights the perspectives of faculty and students on how we understand, prevent, and respond to plagiarism in our own community.

Plagiarism: Shared Responsibilities, Shared Solutions*

K. Lynn Taylor, *Centre for Learning and Teaching*

Across disciplinary and institutional cultures, academic integrity is a core value of academic communities. The Center for Academic Integrity (1999) defines academic integrity as "a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action" (p.4). Despite its prominence in the academic enterprise, academic integrity has become a pressing concern for academic communities around the world. Preliminary data from an Academic Integrity Survey of more than 15,000 students across 11 Canadian universities indicate that more than one third of undergraduate respondents reported breaches of academic integrity such as inappropriate collaboration on assignments and plagiarism (Christensen Hughes & McCabe, 2003). Increasing reports of academic dishonesty (McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Mullens, 2000) threaten the integrity of academic programs (Walker, 1998) and of the academic work of professors and students, more generally. The recent report of the Dalhousie University Senate *ad hoc* Committee on Plagiarism (www.senate.dal.ca/docs/2004June16_final_Report_ad_hoc_committee_of_plagiarism.pdf) illustrates that, as in many universities, plagiarism is a threat to academic integrity in our own academic community.

The Dalhousie Senate Report is consistent with a growing body of research that demonstrates that increasing reports of plagiarism are the result of a complex interaction among personal, academic, organizational, and social factors. Some of the findings emerging from this research shed light on how students, faculty, and administrators understand and experience plagiarism in contemporary academic culture, and can inform how our community might respond to the Senate Report.

One of the more obvious factors is that, in the personal domain, plagiarism is an issue of personal integrity (Vogelsang, 1997). However, engaging plagiarism as a moral issue by explicitly teaching the ethical aspects of plagiarism or by implementing honour codes (McCabe, 1996) is only part of the solution (Hinton, 2004). Most of the leverage in curbing plagiarism lies in the academic domain: it is what we do in our classrooms to teach and model good practice that has the most impact (Paterson, Taylor & Usick, 2003; Taylor, Usick, & Paterson, in press; Stefani & Carroll, 2001). Evidence is mounting that admonitions to avoid plagiarism have little effect (Braumoeller & Gaines, 2001; Wilhoit, 1994) and that students require more specific instruction on principles and practices that will help them prevent plagiarism (Julliard, 1994; Roig, 1997; Stefani & Carroll, 2001). Such instruction is most effective when it occurs in the context of assignments, and

when it includes opportunities to practice and discuss note-making strategies and best practices for quoting, citing, and paraphrasing (Kennedy & Smith, 2001; Stefani & Carroll, 2001). Research also indicates that education efforts should address more subtle issues such as differing expectations and perspectives about plagiarism across disciplines (Julliard, 1994; Stefani & Carroll, 2001) and cultures (Deckert, 1992; Price, 2002). Because education alone is not an effective deterrent, all students need to be made more aware of university policies about plagiarism, and in particular, the consequences (Sims, 1995; Stefani & Carroll, 2001). However, plagiarism education is more than learning "the rules of engagement" for academic writing; it is a process of socializing students to work in academic communities (Piety, 2002; Stefani & Carroll, 2001). For many undergraduate students, this socialization is simply not occurring (Paterson, Taylor & Usick, 2003; Taylor, Usick & Paterson, in press).

In addition to explicitly teaching how to use the work of others in academic work, students are reporting that it is critical that professors design learning and assessment experiences that encourage personal and intellectual integrity in academic writing. Strategies that address some of the major reasons students say they plagiarize include: increasing the relevance of course content and assignments to students' life experiences, setting assignments in the specific context of the course, changing course assignments from term to term, designing smaller assignments that build on each other to

facilitate time management and to generate a paper trail, and providing clear expectations and feedback to reduce anxiety about outcomes (Baldwin, 2001; Carroll & Appleton, 2001; Harris, 2001). These strategies not only deter plagiarism, but also foster academic integrity and facilitate effective learning and assessment, more broadly.

In the learning and teaching

Most of the leverage in curbing plagiarism lies in the academic domain: it is what we do in our classrooms to teach and model good practice that has the most impact.

dynamic, professors bear particular responsibility for modeling academic integrity in their own teaching. Students are quick to discount even the most explicit instruction on avoiding plagiarism if we do not acknowledge the work of others in our lecture materials or appear lax in preventing, detecting, and responding to plagiarism in our classrooms (Hinton, 2004; Paterson, Taylor & Usick, 2003; Taylor, Usick & Paterson, in press). "Walking the talk" is critical to maintaining the credibility of our message and failure to do so is interpreted by students as ambiguity about the importance of academic integrity with respect to avoiding plagiarism.

As important as the actions of individual professors are in solving the problem of plagiarism, their actions are set in institutional contexts that also

influence behaviour. For instance, many institutional policies have a narrow discipline focus, while many incidents of plagiarism are seen as education issues. Consequently, the responses to plagiarism by faculty and administrators often differ from stated policy and are largely dependent on the perceptions of the discoverer about the significance of the incident and the perceived motivation of the plagiarist (Julliard, 1994; Taylor, Usick & Paterson, in press ; Vogelsang, 1997; Wilhoit, 1994). Although a decision to ignore formal procedures can be seen as morally defensible, students note these inconsistencies and interpret a strong stance on plagiarism as an "academic quirk" (Paterson, Taylor, & Usick, 2003). The reasons given for the flourishing "underground" system of dealing with episodes of plagiarism also point to the need to clarify a number of plagiarism policy issues, such as those with respect to group assignments (McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Stefani & Carroll, 2001), the use of plagiarism-detection software (Carroll & Appleton, 2001), the protection of whistleblowers, and timely review processes for charges of plagiarism (Hansen & Hansen, 1997). These institutional issues contribute to the ambiguity experienced by both students and faculty with respect to plagiarism and need to be resolved.

Finally, we need to acknowledge the larger social context in developing educational and disciplinary strategies to foster academic integrity (Price, 2002). Well-publicized cases of unethical conduct on the part of public servants, major corporations, and academic communities themselves have undermined perceived standards of integrity

(Fass, 1990; Kibler, 1998). When students' perceptions that cheating is common are juxtaposed with shifting understandings about knowledge ownership and use (Brent, 1991; Latchaw & Galin, 1998; Price, 2002) and the wide distribution of digital information that can be easily copied, changed, or appropriated (Fujita, 1996), it is clear that these societal factors need to be recognized in how we teach students about plagiarism and about academic integrity, more generally.

Teaching students to avoid plagiarism involves more than teaching effective academic research and writing practices. It also requires teaching the values that underpin academic work, and the importance of academic integrity, in particular. To prevent academic integrity from becoming what some students refer to as an "academic quirk" (Paterson, Taylor & Usick, 2003) we will need an integrated, systemic approach to education, teaching practices, institutional policies, and discipline with respect to plagiarism within and across academic communities.

References

Baldwin, A. (2001). Practical plagiarism prevention. *The Teaching Professor, 15* (5), 1 & 3.

Braumoeller, B. F., & Gaines, B. J. (2001). Actions do speak louder than words: Deterring plagiarism with the use of plagiarism-detection software. Retrieved January 29, 2003 from http://www.apsanet.org/PS/dec01/braumoeller.cfm.

Brent, D. (1991). Oral knowledge, typographic knowledge, electronic knowledge: Speculations on the history of ownership. Retrieved August 23, 2001 from http://www.ucalgary.ca/ejournal/archive/rachel/v1n3/v1n3.html.

Carroll, J., & Appleton, J. (2001). Plagiarism: A good practice guide. Retrieved January 29, 2003 from http://www.jisc.ac.uk/pub01/brookes.pdf.

Center for Academic Integrity. (1999, October). *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity.* [Brochure]. Durham, NC: Duke University.

Deckert, G. D. (1992). A pedagogical response to learned plagiarism among tertiary-level ESL students. *Guidelines, 14* (1), 94-104.

Fass, R. A. (1990). Cheating and Plagiarism. In W. W. May (Ed.), *Ethics and Higher Education* (pp. 170-184). New York : MacMillan.

Fujita, A. K. (1996). The great Internet panic: How digitalization is deforming copyright law. *Journal of Technology Law and Policy, 2* (1). Retrieved on August 16, 2001 from http://journal.law.ufl.edu/~techlaw/2/fujita.html.

Hansen, B. C., & Hansen, K. D. (1997). Academic and scientific misconduct: Issues for nurse educators. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 11* (1), 31-39.

Harris, R. A. (2001). *The plagiarism handbook: Strategies for preventing, detecting and dealing with plagiarism.* Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

Hinton, L. (2004). Plagiarism: Learning from our challenges. *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development, 1* (1), 37-46.

Howard, R. M. (1995). Plagiarisms, authorships, and the academic death penalty. *College English, 57* (7), 788-806.

Julliard, K. (1994). Perceptions of plagiarism in the use of other authors' language. *Family Medicine, 26,* 356-360.

Kennedy, M. L., & Smith, H. M. (2001). *Reading and writing in the academic community.* 2nd Edition, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kibler, W. L. (1998). The academic dishonesty of college students: The prevalence of the problem and effective educational prevention programs. In D. D. Burnett, L. Rudolph, & K. O. Clifford, (Eds.). *Academic Integrity Matters* (pp. 23-37). Washington, DC: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.

Latchaw, J. S., & Galin, J. R. (1998). Shifting boundaries of intellectual property: Authors and publishers negotiating the world wide web. *Composition and Computers, 15,* 145-162.

McCabe, D. L. (1996). Faculty responses to academic dishonesty: The influence of student honor codes. *Research in Higher Education, 34,* 647-658.

McCabe, D. L., & Trevino, L. K. (1996). What we know about cheating in college: Longitudinal trends and recent developments. *Change, 28* (1), 28-33.

Mullens, A. (2000). Cheating to win. *University Affairs, 41,* (10), 22-28.

Paterson, B., Taylor, L., & Usick, B. (2003) The construction of plagiarism in a School of Nursing. *Learning in Health and Social Care, 2,* 147-158.

Piety, M. G. (2002). A culture of plagiarism? *Drexel Online Journal.* Retrieved December 7, 2004 from http://www.drexel.edu/doj/archives/2002/essay/plagiarism.html

Price, M. (2002). Beyond "gotcha!" *College Composition and Communication, 54* (1), 88-115.

Roig, M. (1997). Can undergraduate students determine whether text has been plagiarized? *The Psychological Record, 46,* 113-122.

Sims, R. L. (1995). The severity of academic dishonesty: A comparison of faculty and student views. *Psychology in the Schools, 32,* 223-238.

Stefani, L., & Carroll, J. (2001). A briefing on plagiarism. Assessment Series No. 10. Retrieved November 25, 2002 from http://www.ltsn.au.uk/genericcentre.

Taylor, L., Usick, B., & Paterson, B., (in press). Understanding plagiarism: The intersection of personal, pedagogical. policy. and social contexts. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching. 15* (3).

Vogelsang, J. (1997). Plagiarism - an act of stealing. *Journal of Perianesthesia Nursing, 12* (6), 422-425.

Walker, J. (1998). Student plagiarism in universities: What are we going to do about it? *Higher Education Research and Development, 17,* 89-106.

Wilhoit, S. (1994). Helping students avoid plagiarism. *College Teaching, 42* (4), 161-164.

Findings of the Plagiarism Report 2004 Dalhousie University

Lesley Barnes, Chair,
*Dalhousie Senate ad hoc
Committee on Plagiarism*

"I checked the response that I strongly agree that cheating is a serious problem at Dal only because I thought the question meant whether or not I think it happens frequently, which I do. But I don't think it's a problem. I would honestly say that about 30% of my work would be considered cheating, especially when it comes to labs and I would only consider myself an average cheater when compared with the rest of the student body. I know for a fact that other universities are the same way and always have been. You will continue to sanction us when you catch us and we will continue cheat. Although the sanctions are severe, the frequency of getting caught is low enough that we are not deterred. So what can you do to increase the frequency of catching a student who doesn't have 'academic integrity' and what can you do to prevent it?"

(Student response to the Dalhousie on-line academic integrity survey of February 2003)

The statement above captured the mandate for and, to a large extent, the results of the investigations of the Dalhousie Senate *ad hoc* Committee on Plagiarism. Using various tools such as focus groups, special meetings, course outlines, and an online academic integrity survey, the *ad hoc* Committee was charged with assessing the frequency and extent of plagiarism at Dalhousie

and offering potential solutions to its occurrence. It reported to Senate in July 2004.

Thirty-two percent of the 1745 undergraduate students and 21% of the 310 graduate students responding to the on-line academic survey self-reported plagiarizing at least once in their past three academic years. The most common of these activities was "cutting and pasting a few sentences" from the Internet or other written sources without attribution. While these results were higher than most faculty members had predicted, of greater concern to the academic community was the finding that 40% of students did not think of these activities as being a form of academic dishonesty. This is in direct contrast to faculty members who overwhelmingly considered "cutting and pasting" to be an academic offence. Encouragingly, less than 8% of students reported engaging in other forms of plagiarism such as copying verbatim from other students or submitting work completed by someone else. There seems to be a clear understanding among both students and faculty that these activities constitute serious academic dishonesty.

The Committee recommends assisting students to avoid plagiarism through the provision of academic integrity information in the Dalhousie registration packages, information and skills training in required writing courses, accessible web site information, and academic integrity tutorials. With these supports in place the *ad hoc*

Committee believed that the majority of students would have the skills to write, create, and analyze with academic integrity.

Although the mandate of the *ad hoc* Committee concerned plagiarism, students and faculty commented on a wide range of issues that they believe contributed to undermining academic integrity at Dalhousie. They referred extensively to various cheating behaviours. The most frequently reported cheating behaviour was unauthorized collaboration. Forty percent of undergraduate and ~30% of graduate students claimed to have discussed their assignments or take-home exams with other students, despite instructions to the contrary from faculty members. Furthermore, nearly 3/4 of undergraduate students and nearly 3/5 of graduate students believed this to be either not cheating or a trivial academic offence compared to 85% of faculty who believed unauthorized collaboration to be academically dishonest.

...students and faculty commented on a wide range of issues that they believe contributed to undermining academic integrity at Dalhousie.

Approximately one-third of undergraduate students reported cheating on tests in various ways, such as getting answers from someone who had previously taken the test, copying from other students, helping someone

cheat, or using unauthorized notes. Twelve percent of graduate students reported the same behaviours. These results were almost identical to the findings of other Canadian universities conducting the survey.

Widespread cheating on tests was the subject of many comments from students frustrated by those who were not caught. They recognized the important role of faculty members in supervising exams more effectively, noting that unless faculty members were aware of the latest technology in calculator functions, cell phone text messaging, and wireless connections, test cheating would continue. Some solutions suggested by respondents involved changing exams regularly, spacing students sufficiently, disallowing cell phones in exams, and invigilating exams according to regulations.

In addition to these solutions to address cheating, the *ad hoc* Committee also recommended that faculty and teaching assistants be made more aware of Dalhousie policies and procedures around academic integrity. Many faculty were disillusioned by the discipline process or unaware of their duty to report. Fifty-one percent of faculty members reported ignoring

cheating of various kinds in the past three years. Proposed solutions to these difficulties included new support services to assist faculty in reducing the likelihood of plagiarism in their classes, and the creation of an Academic Integrity Office to coordinate educational materials and disciplinary procedural information.

In an effort to support academic integrity, both Dalhousie students and faculty noted the necessity for a discipline procedure to be in place for those students who would commit offences regardless of the policies and procedures designed to prevent such cheating. Slightly more than 80% of students perceived that sanctions for academic offences at Dalhousie were severe, although the likelihood of getting caught was low. Conversely, less than 40% of faculty members thought penalties for academic offences were severe. However, there was widespread discontent with the current one-stop discipline process from faculty members. Dalhousie is one of the very few institutions where suspected cases are immediately referred to a Senate level committee. The *ad hoc* Committee, recognizing the

limitations of any discipline process, recommended devolving procedures to the Faculty level for certain offences. The proposed process incorporated a less formal mediation option.

The *ad hoc* Committee report is the first in a series of steps in assessing and combatting plagiarism and other issues of academic dishonesty at Dalhousie. Building an environment that celebrates academic integrity is a continuous but important process that is the responsibility of not only the faculty and administration but also the students. As succinctly stated by one student,

"An institution can and should set high standards for their students, but it is ultimately the role of each individual self-respecting student to set their own standards of behaviour. We should be encouraging students to feel good enough about themselves that it would be a dishonour and a disservice to themselves, to participate in plagiarism."

Promoting Academic Integrity ~ Useful Web Resources ~

The Center for Academic Integrity
http://www.academicintegrity.org/

Dalhousie's Plagiarism and Intellectual Honesty web site
http://plagiarism.dal.ca/

Dalhousie's Writing Centre
http://writingcentre.dal.ca/

Plagiarism from a Student's Perspective

Jill Houlihan
Vice-President Education,
Dalhousie Student Union

Intellectual property and academic integrity have been major issues over the last year both on this campus and abroad. Internationally, debates over the practice of downloading music and films are on-going; in Canada, over the summer, the media reported accusations of plagiarism made against Alberta Premier, Ralph Klein; and at Dalhousie the Senate *ad hoc* Committee on Plagiarism released its Final Report.

In my role as VP Education and as a student at this university, I have had the opportunity to observe this issue closely and from a variety of perspectives. I have witnessed the effects of plagiarism on those students who have committed offences and I have observed how these offences have shaped perspectives within the student body. It is in this context that I would like to offer some insight into the student experience of plagiarism.

According to their final report, the Senate Discipline Committee (SDC) passed a guilty verdict on 130 cases last year. Yet, if my observations are any indication, this is only a tiny fraction of the number of violations that occur. Many of these offences are never seen by the SDC because instructors simply choose to deal with cases themselves or, even more often, misconduct is not caught.

Students are increasingly frustrated by this inconsistency. Those who work hard and uphold academic integrity are frustrated when classmates pass off another's work as their own and are neither caught nor punished. Students whose cases are sent to the SDC may feel a sense of injustice knowing that many of their peers committed similar acts but went unnoticed. Also, in what can be a highly competitive environment, students may cheat on assignments, despite a desire not to do so, because they believe they would be at too great a disadvantage otherwise, knowing so many other students are able to put in less work by copying or collaborating without permission. These difficulties create division within the student body and foster bitterness toward the university and the academic community.

What, then, is the solution to this crisis? The answer is not simply a matter of finding more effective methods of catching students or broadcasting the SDC's rate of penalty in an attempt to scare students into compliance. Rather, we must consider that academic integrity is as important to students as it is to their professors and the other members of the university community. The solution involves discussing academic integrity in class, structuring assignments so as not to make cheating easy, and providing students with the tools they need to be successful.

Although the statistics may be discouraging, I believe that ultimately students want to be proud of the work they do and that if the proper academic atmosphere is created much can be done to curb this trend. Indeed, much can and must be done, for the sake of the university and its students.

Dalhousie Conference on University Teaching and Learning

May 4, 5, and 6, 2005

Connections Across the Curriculum

Expertise in a discipline is characterized not only by how much knowledge we have, but also by the connections that exist among elements of that knowledge, how they can be applied, and how they are related to the knowledge of other disciplines. When teaching and learning experiences assist students in explicitly making these connections, learning is deep, functional, and lasting. Professors provide many different kinds of connection-building strategies, including opportunities to apply concepts and methods, assignments that encourage critical reflection, learning portfolios, team teaching, interdisciplinary courses, service learning, and capstone courses. The 2005 Dalhousie Conference on University Teaching and Learning will feature sessions focusing on the work of colleagues who, in their teaching, foster connections within and across courses and disciplines. Please plan to respond to the call for proposals in February and to participate with us in the Conference on May 4, 5, and 6, 2005.

New in the CLT *Library*

Writing in the Disciplines: A Reader for Writers (Fifth Edition) 2004
Mary Lynch Kennedy,
William J. Kennedy, and
Hadley M. Smith
"Provides an anthology of readings that represents various rhetorical approaches across academic disciplines such as humanities, the natural sciences and technology, and the social sciences."
Pearson Education

Reading and Writing in the Academic Community (Second Edition) 2001
Mary Lynch Kennedy and
Hadley M. Smith
"A comprehensive rhetoric with assertive, critical readings."
Pearson Education

New Canadian Environmental Literacy Project at Dalhousie

The Canadian Environmental Literacy Project (CELP) is a new entity with a mandate to develop educational materials to support the teaching of environmental studies in Canada. Ultimately, the aim of CELP is to promote environmental literacy by making it easier to teach relevant subjects. To achieve this objective CELP is developing a series of well-researched, Canadian-focused materials, available free of charge to instructors, to assist in teaching environmental studies to introductory classes at the university, college, and senior high-school levels. Any of these modules can be used "as is," or they can be modified to suit the needs of individual instructors. The modular content includes:

- presentation materials, such as PowerPoint lectures on specific topics
- to experiential activities, including calculations and field-trip exercises
- to readings in support of the discussion of controversial and strategic topics

Educators can now examine and download the first of the completed modules at www.celp.ca. It is expected that, as the network of collaborators expands, the portfolio of modules will become much larger. To this end, CELP is seeking experienced educators from across Canada to develop and/or review modules for shared use. If you have any materials you would like to contribute to the project or for more information please email sbone@dal.ca

Professional Development Workshops

for Academic Staff

Beyond the Essay: Diversifying the use of writing as an assessment strategy
Wednesday, January 19 (1:30 to 3:00)
Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building, Room 319

Your Teaching Dossier
Thursday, February 3 (2:30 to 4:00)
Killam Library, Learning Commons, Room G62

Using Student Feedback to Enhance Teaching Effectiveness
Friday, March 4 (1:30 to 3:00)
Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building, Room 319

Academic Writing
Wednesday, April 27 (1:30 to 3:00)
Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building, Room 319

for Teaching Assistants

Connecting Learning to Life
Tuesday, January 18 (1:30 to 3:00)
Killam Library, Learning Commons, Room G62

Bridging Learning Styles to Promote Effective Teaching and Learning
Monday, February 14 (1:00 to 2:30)
Killam Library, Room 4106

Learning to Lecture
Wednesday, March 2 (1:30 to 3:00)
Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building, Room 319

Creating an Inclusive Atmosphere for Racialized Students
Friday, March 18 (1:00 to 2:30)
Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building, Room 319

For detailed descriptions go online to www.dal.ca/clt

To Register:
call 494-1622 • email clt@dal.ca • go online www.dal.ca/clt

Centre for Learning and Teaching
Dalhousie University
Halifax, N.S. B3H 4R2
Phone: (902) 494-1622