

Smeal Honor Code

Graduate Programs Disclosure Notice – Fall 2009

In the fall semester of 2009, there was one academic integrity incident within the Smeal Graduate Community of Masters and PhD students. The case details are summarized below.

Please note that all academic integrity case records are maintained in a centralized file at the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Case 1

Team members raised concern about the authenticity of the accused student's contribution for a team deliverable. After receiving the accused student's un-cited work, team members verified through a search engine that the content was copied and pasted from two online sources. A Turnitin.com Originality Report later concluded that 96% of the submitted work came directly from those two sources.

After Investigation and subsequent Review, the Review Board determined there were three instances where the accused student failed to attribute proper ownership to the submitted work:

- The accused student did not cite any source for the content before submitting to teammates.
- After verifying the content's origin through the search engine, a teammate contacted the accused student to ask for clarification about the content's authenticity. It was determined through questioning that the accused student failed to attribute authenticity to the work and to explain that the content, in its original form, lacked proper citations. At this point the team unanimously agreed to omit the accused student's contribution and name from the final deliverable.
- The accused student emailed the team approximately nine hours prior to the deliverable's deadline, asking to view the final version. The Review Board confirmed that during this communication the accused student failed to bring to the teammates' attention that the submitted work was unoriginal and lacked proper citations.

Because the student's contribution was omitted from the final deliverable, the Review Board concluded that the violation could not be considered an act of plagiarism. However, the Review Board determined that the accused student's actions were consistent with an "appearance of impropriety." The Review Board recommended an academic sanction of a reduced letter grade for the course and mandated that the accused student revise and resubmit the assignment in question.

Key Learning

With your input and feedback we will continue the commitment to strengthen our Honor Code. In the spirit of ongoing learning and dialogue, we would like to highlight key takeaways from these experiences.

- It is a fundamental tenet of honor and integrity that reproducing the work of another author without proper attribution and citation is a clear violation.
- The teammates should be commended for their proactive approach to handling the situation. Students should recognize that failing to properly assign authenticity to content that is submitted within a final deliverable potentially places teammates in a precarious academic integrity situation.

We invite you to reflect on these learning opportunities, and if you would like to share your thoughts, please do so by sending us an e-mail. Once again, we thank all of you for your ongoing commitment to honor and academic excellence in the Smeal Graduate Community.

Sincerely,

Jim Thomas (j2t@psu.edu)

Dean

Smeal College of Business

Vernis Welmon (vmw1@psu.edu)

Associate Dean

Diversity and Community

Dennis Sheehan (dps6@psu.edu)

Associate Dean

MBA and Executive Education

Renee Flemish (rbf11@psu.edu)

Director, Leadership Integrity

Smeal College of Business

