

The unpublicized trap - plagiarism

by Mike Greenfield

If you are caught plagiarizing and receive F for the paper consider yourself lucky. Dal students have in the past, and could continue to lose an entire year's credits if they are caught plagiarizing. Since ignorance is not a reasonable excuse, it's about time the university community examines the problem and puts into effect preventative measures..

The Political Science Dept. is one department to have made up a statement on plagiarism that is distributed to all its students. In it plagiarism is defined as:

the presentation by an author of the work of another author in such a way as to give his readers reason to think that other author's work is his own.

In the strictest sense 3 consecutive words from a source not properly credited can be termed plagiarism.. However most of the problems with plagiarism concern the borderline cases, where the student is often unsure as to what the right procedure is. One example is a complete sentence used from a source footnoted but without quotation marks around it-thats plagiarism. In the last case of plagiarism brought before the discipline committee, the figures and analysis were present in the same book, but the figures were from a UN report. The UN report was properly quoted but the student evidently missed (through lack of knowledge or carelessness) footnoting the analysis. He nearly lost a full years credits.

Plagiarism is as much of a problem for the professors as it is for the students. Profs. are constantly burdened with the necessity to check for plagiarism and the problem of what to do when its found. Ronald Huebert of the English Dept. has only been teaching for a short while but he claims that if he could have all the hours back from the time spent checking sources a week would be added to his vacation.

A professors reaction to plagiarism can vary widely. In many cases the student is penalized on the individual paper and warned. In some cases the student is failed in the course. However, the prof has

every right, and in blatant cases, the obligation to report it to the discipline committee. Peter Clarke, a member of Senate and on the committee, feels that an honest effort is made by the committee to deal fairly with the student. In the last case brought up before the committee (previously mentioned) it was felt that the student had made an honest mistake and the matter has been dropped.

However everyone agrees the solution to plagiarism is to prevent it. The Polic. Sci. has taken definite steps to prevent plagiarism through its policy sheet. However a policy sheet is only one step that can be taken. Here are some others:

---The library should print up a one or two page sheet on the correct method of footnoting. This has been done at other school libraries.

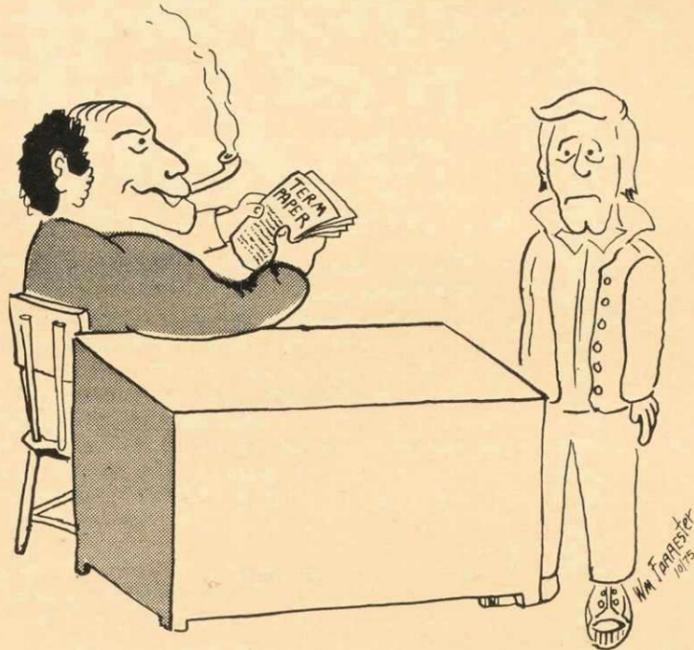
---Professors should inform students as to the level of footnoting they expect, at the outset of the course.

---The student should talk to his professor concerning any question of plagiarism.

---The professor should avoid repeating the same paper topics year after year. Many students find it convenient to take courses which their friends have taken in the previous year, and use their papers.

Evidently, there are students who are determined not to write their own papers. These are of the many that probably do not belong in the university system. They can perhaps get away with it. But beware, those who are considering plagiarism to cover your tracks fully would probably take as much thought and effort as would the term paper. Incidentally to use a research service's papers, supposedly on accepted and legal service of providing papers, for your term papers is illegal. Many of these services have already been prosecuted and put out of business in the U.S.

One final note is that this week Peter Clarke will propose in Senate that a separate committee be set up to define the professorial and administrative responsibility in a case of plagiarism. Hopefully action can be taken quickly to prevent cases of plagiarism that are caused by ignorance.



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