LEARNING IN THE ACADEMY

An Introduction to the Culture of Scholarship

in the Creighton University College of Arts and Sciences

Creighton University

College of Arts and Sciences
“Work means the overcoming of resistance.

A man does work when he lifts a trunk from the platform onto a truck, or when he drags the trunk along the platform.

But the man does not do work, no matter how hard he pushes or pulls, if he does not lift or move the trunk. In other words,

work is measured by accomplishment, not by effort or fatigue.”

N. Henry Black and Harvey N. Davis
**work** [wɜːk] noun

1. physical or mental effort directed towards doing or making something
2. paid employment at a job or a trade, occupation, or profession
3. a duty, task, or undertaking
4. something done, made, etc., as a result of effort of exertion
   - example: a work of art
5. materials or tasks on which to expend effort or exertion
6. another word for: workmanship
7. the place, office, etc., where a person is employed
8. any piece of material that is undergoing a manufacturing operation or process; work piece
   - a. decoration of ornamentation, esp. of a specified kind
   - a. (in combination) example: wirework, woodwork
9. an engineering structure such as a bridge, building, etc.
10. (physics) the transfer of energy expressed as the product of force and the distance through which its point of application moves in the direction of the force
11. a structure, wall, etc., built or used as part of a fortification system
August, 2005

Dear Reader,

Work on this booklet began in the spring of 2002. Members of the College of Arts and Sciences Student Senate, under the leadership of its then-President, Ms. Megan Schreiner, were responding to recent changes in the College’s Academic Honesty Procedures.* The senators felt strongly that students deserved a comprehensive introduction to the standards by which the College had indicated it would judge their conduct—and to their credit, they set about researching and writing such a document.

By May 2002, the Student Senate had prepared a first draft, which they submitted for my consideration. As soon as school resumed for the 2002-2003 academic year, I in turn referred that text to the College’s Academic Policy, Discipline and Appeals Committee, then chaired by Dr. Kevin Graham.

Two years of hard work ensued. As the project moved forward, however, both its scope and its tone shifted. It was increasingly felt that what students needed was less a list of prohibitions (“Thou shalt not …”) and more a description of the system of values by which the members of our academic community live their lives. Our booklet certainly needed to define plagiarism clearly, but it needed also to provide a thorough enough context to allow readers to understand why plagiarism is unacceptable. And we particularly wanted to avoid any appearance that the College doubted the personal integrity and basic honesty of its students. Our tone should be supportive and instructive, we concluded, and not accusatory.

The booklet as you see it here was finally completed in March 2004, and gained the unanimous support of both the Student Senate and the Faculty Senate in April of that year.

Over the course of almost three years, many faculty members and students contributed to the work of reviewing and revising successive drafts, and it is always risky to single out particular individuals for thanks. Nevertheless, in addition to Ms. Schreiner and Dr. Graham, I feel I must acknowledge Mr. T. J. Wilson (President of the Student Senate 2002-2004), Mr. Chris Hogrefe (Student Representative to several crucial committees 2001-2004), and Dr. Elizabeth Cooke (Chair of the relevant Senate subcommittee 2003-2004). Early in the project, Dr. Joe Janangelo of Loyola University Chicago generously provided us with a version of that institution’s handbook as a potential source of ideas. Lastly, Ms. Holly Herman of Herman Nolan Communications has assisted me with final editing and production.

The final proof of the worth of this booklet will be seen as it is used in classrooms and art studios, Freshman Seminars and laboratories. I urge you to read it carefully and thoughtfully. It may generate as many questions as it provides answers, but it is precisely in a respectful continuing dialog that we will have our best chance to establish a solid consensus about our values as members of this College community.

Very sincerely,

Timothy R. Austin
Dean

* These may be reviewed at http://puffin.creighton.edu/ccas/FacStaff/polManual/polManual.htm.
“Creighton exists for students and learning.”

Creighton University’s Mission Statement includes this simple but eloquent statement, a statement that also lies at the heart of this booklet on Learning in the Academy.

Short as it is, that statement lays the critical emphasis in just the right place. It’s not about the diploma you will earn or the career opportunities that lie ahead. What we value at Creighton is the activity that goes on every day in every classroom, laboratory and studio and on every floor of the library. We’re focused on learning.

Learning is not a commodity, like a car or a box of cereal or even a textbook. You cannot just go out and buy learning.

Even if you diligently pay the tuition bills that the university sends you each semester, your professors cannot hand learning to you as a package neatly tied up with a ribbon. Why? Because learning demands that you be an active and committed learner.

It’s up to you. Are you in college simply to get a diploma, or to receive a real education? Are you committed to expanding your skills, enhancing your knowledge, building on relationships and learning in the broadest possible sense? We hope so, because that’s what Creighton is all about.

Think of it this way: learning is like physical fitness. You may join a gym, even pay a personal trainer to set up your own exercise program. Your trainer may show you how to lift free weights to build strength. He may create a challenging aerobics routine for your cardiovascular health. He may hand you the schedules for the exercise classes that the gym offers — and you may even plan to attend them.

But if you don’t make the effort to actually get to the gym, what happens? Do you blame the trainer for your lack of success? Hardly!

Even when you’re filled with good intentions, you know you’ll never see results until you commit to some hard work. You have to put into practice what you’ve been shown. You have to “just do it,” because as the saying goes, “No pain, no gain.”

Your Creighton instructors will introduce you to broad fields of human knowledge. They will share with you skills and techniques you will need both in your chosen field and throughout your life. They are always willing to help you find the best ways to study, to practice and to learn.

But, just as at the gym, actually acquiring knowledge and mastering skills will always require time and exertion from you.
“LEARNING IS A TREASURE that will follow its owner everywhere.”
— Chinese Proverb

“The teacher if he is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of wisdom but leads you to the threshold of your own mind.”
— Kahlil Gibran
Lebanese poet and novelist, 1883 - 1931

“WORK IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF BEING ALIVE. It’s gotten so abstract. People don’t work for the sake of working.”
— Kay Stepkin
Quoted by Studs Terkel in “Working, Book 8” (1973)
LEARNING and Work

This means that we cannot separate learning from work. The kinds of work involved in learning can vary widely:

- Some courses may call for you to focus on physical effort or dexterity. Playing a musical instrument, or performing a delicate procedure in a chemistry lab, or building strength in an athletic training room can be physically challenging.

- In other courses, you may concentrate on refining your sensory perceptions, learning to see, or listen, or feel in new ways by responding to literature or great works of art.

- Most often, though, the learning that occurs in a university course demands cognitive effort. When students say that a particular assignment is “tough” or “challenging,” they’re usually expressing their assessment of the mental work that the instructor is asking them to do as part of that particular learning process.

For more than 125 years, Creighton University students have committed themselves both to learning and to the hard work that learning requires.

The courses taught here make many demands—intellectual demands, physical demands, and often emotional demands as well. You should expect to work hard if you want to do well—if you want to learn—at Creighton.

Luckily, you’re not alone. Everyone on campus shares this commitment to learning. You can count on all kinds of help from instructors, academic advisers, librarians, peer tutors and counselors.

But all these people will still rely on you to participate actively in your own education. Nobody can learn for somebody else.
A FAIR RETURN for Your Work

When a popular music CD sells a million copies, the songwriter and the recording artist expect their work to be acknowledged. Their names appear on the cover or in the liner notes, and their contracts spell out their right to receive royalties on the sales.

If an engineer develops a revolutionary bridge-building technique, she does not expect to find that it has been put to use by a corporation halfway around the globe without some of the professional kudos—and perhaps some of the profits!—coming back to her.

This is simply a question of “fair play.” Since any achievement demands an investment of effort on somebody’s part, those who have put in the hard work expect that others will recognize and respect that commitment.

In the case of CDs and new approaches to building bridges, society has developed laws that safeguard the interests of the artist and the engineer. The first situation is covered by copyright law, the second by patent law.

When it comes to learning, however, formal laws will get you only so far. Equally important are a set of conventions established over the course of many centuries by scholars in the various academic disciplines.

When you came to Creighton University, you became a lifelong member of a wider academic community. And it’s important for you to understand the community’s expectations regarding who work belongs to, and how we credit individuals—potentially including you—for intelligence, creativity and hard work.
WHO DID THE WORK, ANYWAY?

Sometimes, it’s easy to decide who first came up with an idea. In the physical sciences, the convention of keeping carefully signed and dated lab notebooks evolved in part to resolve disputes about which scientist could claim a particular discovery. But the decisions are not always clear, in part because all human beings naturally rely on the help of others to learn almost everything in life.

As we trace the story of a particular idea back through history, we often discover how challenging it can be to determine its true “origin.” Consider the following example.

EXAMPLE

In February 1676, the physicist and mathematician Sir Isaac Newton used a great metaphor to describe his own remarkable accomplishments in a letter to his colleague Robert Hooke. “If I have seen further,” he wrote, “it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.”

Since then, countless speech writers and authors have repeated his words because they acknowledge so appropriately the debt we all owe to our parents and teachers and to the innumerable scholars, craftsmen, artists and athletes whose contributions shaped the world into which we were born.

The irony is that Newton himself did not invent the phrase “on the shoulders of Giants.” Historians attribute it instead to the twelfth-century monk Bernard of Chartres. But most people who borrow that phrase in their own work today still think of it as Newton’s and are likely to give him credit for having created it.

Your professors at Creighton will help you to understand how each academic discipline works to figure out who first developed a theorem, a technique or a piece of specialized equipment. They will also explain how you should acknowledge the contributions of others—something we will come back to later in this publication.
Even when it’s difficult to determine who first formulated a particular idea or penned a phrase or made a discovery, it’s much easier to know whether or not we worked on a given project. Usually we have a pretty good idea of just how hard we worked on it too.

Remember the analogy of pursuing an exercise program? You know that you can easily tell the difference between days when you work out really hard—and “feel the burn” in your muscles!—and days when you just go through the motions.

In the same way, you also know instinctively when you have worked hard on a quiz or a ballet routine or a term paper.

On the other hand, you also know when you have taken a shortcut or at least settled for the bare minimum.

At Creighton, we value all the work you do in pursuing learning. You should value it too. Never hesitate to point with pride to the efforts you made to complete an assignment effectively or to succeed in a course—especially when it’s been a challenge to you.

But precisely because we value your work, we cannot accept it when someone in our community attempts to lay claim to the work of others without giving them credit.

That’s fundamentally dishonest. It’s stealing the credit from others. And the College has procedures to discipline anyone who is found to have violated this principle.
So far, we have been talking about abstractions (learning, work, originality).

But in real life, you’re confronted not by abstractions but by concrete situations in which you have to decide what exactly you are going to do.

That’s why we hope you’ll find it helpful to walk through some case studies. These examples are fairly typical and you may face something similar. Consider what you might do, and then read what your instructors will expect you to do—and why.

In some cases, what to do may seem pretty obvious. We’ve included them anyway because they illustrate how the right decision often depends on having the appropriate underlying attitudes towards learning and work.

If you understand this in simpler cases, then, when the situations become more complex, those same principles will still provide a firm basis for deciding what you should do.
CHEATING on a Quiz

- Jim strongly dislikes a particular course that he is required to take and has avoided doing any preparation for the class. It’s not in his major and he thinks it’s irrelevant to his career. After a quiz is distributed one day, Jim answers all the questions he can, but he’s stumped on quite a few. Deliberately, he drops his pencil, allowing it to roll down the aisle. As he moves to retrieve the pencil, he scans his classmates’ quiz sheets for answers. Returning to his seat, he silently congratulates himself on his cleverness.

- Angie is doing well in her Stats class. Actually, she’s been enjoying it much more than she expected. She understands the material and has been doing really well on the homework. The midterm exam is a take-home and when the instructor passed it out, he was really clear about not using a calculator. “I want to see each problem worked out step by step,” he explained. Angie understands all this, but she also really wants to do well in the course, so after she has finished working the problems, she quickly double checks each of her answers on her calculator. In doing so, she discovers a stupid mathematical error in one problem. She goes back and refigures the steps to correct for the miscalculation.

- Sara has studied hard for an important quiz and she’s pretty sure that she knows the material well. Twenty-four hours before the quiz, she is eating lunch in Brandeis with Rob, another student from the class, when he reveals that he has gotten his hands on a photocopy of the quiz sheet and offers to let her see it. Sara agrees and is relieved to find that she is just as well prepared as she had thought. Next day, she aces the quiz and moves on to the next segment of the course confidently.

How would you evaluate what Jim, Angie, Sara and Rob did in these situations? Is the behavior of one any better or worse than that of another? What might each of them have done differently? And, above all, why?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
DISCUSSION

Contrary to what you may think, teachers don’t give quizzes simply to irritate you or to infringe on your free time.

A quiz gives you an opportunity to demonstrate to your instructor that you have mastered specific material or learned specific skills by responding to his or her carefully planned prompts in a very controlled setting.

Most teachers don’t like to be asked over and over again, “Will this be on the quiz?” Remember: they believe you are at Creighton to learn—not just to take quizzes. But they will understand that you need to find out what kind of learning their quiz is designed to assess, because that in turn will help you determine what kind of work you’ll have to put in if you want to succeed.

Then, when you have prepared thoroughly for the quiz, you’ll go in confident that your work—your own work and nothing else—will form the basis for the score that you earn.

Even when you do your very best, of course, you may still be dissatisfied with the results. We all sometimes underestimate how much work we need to do to achieve the results we want. But even the discovery that one’s best is not yet enough is an important lesson to learn. Not an easy one, but an important one!

Here’s all you need to know if you want to do well on a quiz:

- What topics will be covered?
- How much time will I be allowed?
- May I use my class notes and/or refer to the textbook?

Unfortunately, some students find it hard to do the work it takes to prepare for a quiz. They may be pressed for time, tired or run down, low in confidence or just not very motivated.

So instead they resort to shortcuts like those adopted by Jim, Angie, Sara and Rob. When they do, of course, the grade they receive doesn’t reflect the work they were supposed to have done, but something completely different:

- the work of various fellow students in Jim’s case;
- work artificially reinforced by the use of a calculator in Angie’s case; or
- the memorization of a set of previously researched answers in Rob’s case.

Did you view the behavior of Jim, Angie, and Rob as wrong? We hope so!

Are you surprised to learn that when cases of cheating like these are discovered, the cheaters are punished? We hope not!
But do you understand why this behavior is unacceptable? It’s not simply because the students were caught “breaking the rules.” That’s certainly true, but the more serious problem is that those students were trying to avoid the work that would have otherwise have led them to learn the assigned material. And they were planning on taking credit for time and effort in their courses that other students had put in for real but they had not.

Before we move on, let’s consider Sara’s situation for a moment. What did Sara do that was so wrong? After all, it’s clear that Sara had done the work; she was prepared for the quiz. And she did not steal the quiz questions herself—all she did was look them over.

The problem is that, in stealing a peek at those questions, Sara ignored one of the key features that was supposed to define that quiz: that the questions would be equally new and unfamiliar to everyone in the room.

Sara may not be guilty of theft or laziness (as Rob clearly was), but she violated another key feature of the academic community: the trust that an instructor needs to have that each student’s answer sheet reflects the work that he or she individually has done—in other words, what he or she has learned.

That trust, once broken, is very hard to restore.
FALSIFYING Experimental Data

- Emily feels very fortunate to be studying with Professor Smythe, one of the country’s best-known scientists in her field. At the beginning of the year, she was thrilled to be assigned to his research team as an undergraduate, and now she is anxious that the experiment he assigned her should provide data in support of the analysis that the lab team as a whole is seeking to develop. Unfortunately, her results stubbornly point in a different direction, no matter how many times she repeats the experiment. Believing she owes her professor a set of data that will fit better with his thesis, Emily modifies the records in her lab notebook and adjusts her outcomes to support Professor Smythe’s idea.

- Carlos has been racing to complete his lab assignment by the due date. He’s a member of the Debate Team, and he’ll be traveling with the team both of the next two weekends. Plus, his Mom has told him he had better be home for his grandmother’s 80th birthday next month “… or else!” It seems pretty obvious to him that the equipment he’s been using is messed up. He has been talking to the students around him at other benches and his results are off by the same amount every time he runs a new sample. Obviously, some silly idiot miscalibrated his equipment. Carlos corrects for the error and submits results much more closely aligned with those of his classmates.

How would you have reacted in Emily’s position? Surely Professor Smythe is more likely to be correct than she is? And if the data from the other members of the lab group agree with his, then hers must be wrong, right?

And how about Carlos? His rationale seems pretty plausible, doesn’t it?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
DISCUSSION

When they set up lab groups, professors assign tasks assuming that each person will do his or her share of the work, and that learning will occur as the result of pooling each individual’s contribution. Some students, like Emily in the example above, become aware of the expected (or desired) outcome of an experiment and work backwards to create data that will generate that outcome.

On the other hand, students working on their own, like Carlos, may falsify results for different reasons.

But the bottom line remains the same: made-up data replace the actual observations the students made at the time they performed the experiment.

Each time this happens, a student presents his or her professor with a false picture of the work he or she undertook. In the most serious cases, a complex hypothesis may end up being constructed on the basis of faulty data.

“STRIVING FOR SUCCESS WITHOUT HARD WORK is like trying to harvest where you haven’t planted.”

— David Bly
If a cancer study or the approval of a new drug is involved, of course, the consequences of scientific misconduct are potentially disastrous. As a result, Federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation police very closely the thousands of studies that they fund.*

But even if no such major damage occurs, nobody will be able to trust what any of the individuals involved submit in the future as a fair reflection of work they did. Nobody will be sure any longer that they have in fact learned what their reports and papers suggest they learned.

It’s not only students who make this mistake, by the way. When established scientists misrepresent their data, it is called scientific fraud or scientific misconduct. From time to time, cases like that of Dr. John Darsee make national headlines. If you’re interested, you can read more about his story at http://www.wmich.edu/ethics/ESC/cs1.html.

But whether it’s made by a freshman student or a senior research scientist, the decision to take a short cut means the same thing: someone is avoiding doing the hard work necessary to establish a clear link between accurately observed data and the reported experimental outcome.

*See, for example, the Web site of the Office of Research Integrity at the Department of Health and Human Services: http://ori.dbbs.gov/.

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**FALSIFYING OR Misrepresenting a Situation**

- Shari has missed several theology classes. A nasty bout of the flu early in the semester and the fact that she overslept after an all-nighter two weeks ago mean that she has used up her instructor’s strict allowance of three unexcused absences. Now, as she leaves her apartment, she finds that a delivery truck has double-parked right behind her car. After trying for ten minutes to maneuver out of the parking space, Shari calls Jane on her cell phone and asks Jane to sign her name on the attendance sheet in class. “After all,” Shari reasons, “it certainly wasn’t my fault that I couldn’t get to class today.”

- Jeff had planned to study for tomorrow’s physics test after work tonight, but his supervisor has asked him to work a few hours overtime because the guy on the next shift called in sick. Jeff really needs the extra money to pay off the textbook charges on his credit card—and more than that, he needs to stay on his supervisor’s good side so that he can keep his job between now and Christmas break. But if he does work tonight, Jeff knows he’ll never be ready for tomorrow’s test. Gambling that his physics professor will not ask for a doctor’s note—she never has before—Jeff sends her an e-mail claiming to have a fever and asking if he can take the test later in the week “because I’ll need to go in and see Student Health in the morning.”
Thomas had to go home earlier in the semester when his grandmother died unexpectedly and he missed all of his classes for an entire week. He is enrolled in a sociology course that involves a 30-hour practicum experience and, since he got back to campus, he has put in all the hours he was supposed to, working with an after-school tutoring program. But he never seems to have had time to make up the four hours that he missed the week he was away. Now the end of the semester is looming. Arguing that he had a perfectly legitimate excuse for missing those two afternoons early on, Thomas adds them to his practicum log sheet, signs it, and turns it in to his professor.

As part of her work for an education class, Mary Beth is scheduled to teach a required writing lesson at a local school. Mr. Cooper, her cooperating teacher, hasn’t been too “cooperative,” and it has taken Mary Beth weeks to persuade him to let her complete this assignment. Then a late winter blizzard the night before the chosen day leads the archdiocese to close all the schools. Mary Beth feels desperate. It’s almost the end of the semester and she can’t bear the idea of trying to talk Mr. Cooper into rescheduling—even if she had the time to do it later, which she doesn’t. What she does need to do is to submit her final portfolio to her professor. So she writes up the lesson plan she would have used and makes up a reflection on how the lesson went, just as if she had in fact been able to teach it that day.

What common threads can you see running through these scenarios? Shari, Jeff, Thomas, Mary Beth: do you recognize any of your friends in these characters? Or yourself?

And how about Jane in the first story—if you had been Jane and Shari had called you, what would you have said to her? And above all, why?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
DISCUSSION

As comedian Woody Allen allegedly remarked, “Eighty percent of success is showing up.”* The University’s Undergraduate Bulletin makes the same point (though not as memorably), when it stresses the importance of each student’s “conscientious attendance of classes and laboratory sessions.” That’s why many professors either require that students attend a minimum number of class sessions or factor class participation into the final grade for their courses.

Even so, professors understand that unfortunate and unpredictable events sometimes prevent a student from attending every single class. As soon as you know that you may need to miss a class or two, talk to your professor about the situation—ahead of time if possible, immediately afterwards if necessary.

And share whatever documentation you have to support your reason for being absent. Most professors want to trust your word in circumstances like this. Unfortunately, they may have been lied to in the past by students like Shari or Jeff, Thomas or Mary Beth. The dishonesty of a few can make life more difficult for everyone when the pressures of their own particular situation lead them to misrepresent what they have done.

Think for a moment what lies behind the requirement that students attend every class: it’s the assumption that this is the best way for students to learn the material.

When Shari tried to avoid incurring a penalty for a fourth absence, she also implicitly laid claim to having done the work that the other students would be doing in that class period. And she deceived her professor in order to gain an unfair advantage over the other students—including Jane, by the way.

The students in the three other cases we presented similarly attempted to gain credit for work they had not done. Along the way, Mary Beth, Thomas and Jeff also falsified documents and jeopardized the mutual trust among professors, staff and other students that is so essential to successful learning.

* Quoted by Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, In Search of Excellence (1982, Harper & Row)—but also misquoted repeatedly by authors who did not check their sources thoroughly!
**MULTIPLE Submissions**

- “Oh no!” groans Jason. “It took much longer than I expected to study for my biology exam, and I haven’t even started the paper I owe Dr. Bright in World Lit. But wait a minute! The essay I wrote for my history prof last semester is almost exactly what Bright said she was looking for. Why don’t I just change the title page and print off another copy? It’s not like the faculty are going to talk to one another about students’ paper topics.”

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**WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**DISCUSSION**

Remember, behaving honestly in a college setting is all about doing the work you claim to have done. When you take work legitimately performed for one course and submit it to a second professor in fulfillment of a second assignment in a second course, you’re actually spreading the work that you did twice as thin. One assignment’s worth of work is earning you two grades. That’s a major shortcut.

Now it’s certainly true that some instructors—though not many—are willing to accept papers that were originally written for other courses.

But they always want to know in advance that this is what you are doing, and they almost always expect you to undertake some additional work in the process. In other words, they don’t mind if the paper is submitted in two courses, so long as its author puts in twice as much work to begin with!

If you’re thinking of submitting essentially the same paper in two courses, you need to consult both instructors as soon as possible and get their explicit consent to such an arrangement. But unless you do get permission to do something different, your teachers will assume that you have worked on each assignment independently.

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**Can it ever be OK to submit one paper in two courses? If so, how do you know if Jason is doing the right thing or the wrong thing?**

*(Two questions to consider: What work is Jason actually planning to do on this assignment? and What work will Dr. Bright assume that he did when he passes his paper in to her?)*
“I hate vocabulary tests!” exclaims Louis in annoyance as he slumps onto the sofa. “I never get more than sixty percent, and those vocab scores are dragging down my French grade.” Louis’ fraternity brother glances over from his chair in front of the TV and explains that he uses flashcards to remember key terms in his science classes. “I guess it may sound kinda lame,” he goes on, “but my Mom showed me how to do it when I was in grade school and it really works.” Since Louis doesn’t have any index cards, his friend digs some out of a drawer in his own room, and they scrounge up some colored pens. Using his buddy’s science cards as a model, Louis rewrites his vocabulary list as a series of flashcards and does significantly better on the test the next day.

It’s ten o’clock and Lisa is tired. She had soccer practice all afternoon in the pouring rain; then she had a long and demanding evening class; and on top of that, she can feel herself coming down with a cold. Tomorrow she has to make a speech in her Communication Studies course. She has put off working on it until now (a lousy decision, she realizes) and she has no idea where to start. As she stares at the blank computer screen, an IM pops up from “BuddyOne,” her best friend from high school. Relieved to have someone to complain to who will understand just how awful she feels, Lisa gives BuddyOne all the gory details. Sympathetic, BuddyOne has a brainwave: she will e-mail Lisa the notes for a speech she gave in her Communication Arts class last semester. All Lisa will have to do is change the examples so they are more current, and add a conclusion that ties the subject to the theme that Lisa needs to address.

Bill has written a history paper that he thinks is pretty good, all things considered. But English grammar was never his strong point, and he knows that spell-check doesn’t catch every mistake. So he takes it to Susan, who lives one floor above him in the residence hall and owes him a favor. “Hey, would you look this over for me?” he asks as he heads off to his biology lab. After lunch, he calls in on Susan, picks up the paper, and heads back to his room to enter on his laptop the changes she made to his grammar and spelling.

Carla is unhappy with the sketch of a shoe that she has made for an art class. She has tried over and over again, but each time she adds the shading, it comes out looking all wrong. Luckily for Carla, her older sister Anita graduated three years ago as a Fine Arts major. So while they are both visiting their parents for the weekend, Carla takes her sister down to the family room and shows her the sketches. “Where am I going wrong?” she asks. Anita sees the problem immediately, and explains to Carla how she
can correct it, doing a quick sketch of a plant in one corner of the room as an example. After watching her carefully, Carla goes back to her room and redraws the shoe—this time with results that she feels much happier about.

Asking for help when you need it is just common sense – right? At least you have realized that you’ve got strengths and weaknesses! So what makes one kind of help OK and another kind wrong?

And suppose someone like Louis or Lisa or Bill or Carla asks you for help—how do you decide how far to go and when to tell them to solve their own problems? And above all, why?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

DISCUSSION

Some of the best learning experiences you’ll have at Creighton may take place outside the classroom, the studio, or the lab. And some of your best teachers may not be instructors or counselors but your fellow students. If you’re like most Creighton students, you enjoy sharing what you know with others and hearing from others about what they have learned.

Discovering a network of support and developing lifelong friendships are hallmarks of a Creighton education.

- It makes good sense to ask other students who took a particular course in a previous semester for their ideas about how to study for the exams.

- As sources of learning, formal small-group study sessions and informal gatherings in the lounge of a residence hall or around a table at the Java Jay can be as valuable as hours spent studying on your own.

- Many professors will even encourage you to seek help if this means you’ll be working with others to edit, revise, or discuss topics.
• And you may sometimes have the opportunity to review projects you are working on with experts that you get to know through your off-campus job or a family connection. “That’s what friends are for,” as the saying goes.

However, understanding the difference between appropriate and inappropriate help is very important.

And the key, again, is to think about the work you will be doing and about the learning to which it will lead. You will receive credit for work you are assumed to have done in the courses you sign up for. So it’s important to be careful, when you ask for help from others, that you not allow them to do the work for you.

Let’s briefly explore the scenarios we outlined earlier—because some of them involved behavior that was perfectly acceptable while others “crossed the line” to one degree or another.

• **Louis and the French Vocabulary Test.** It’s certainly true that, without his buddy’s help, Louis would not have done as well as he did. But Louis’ fraternity brother didn’t actually do any of the work assigned by the French teacher; all he showed Louis was a useful technique that he had used for a totally different course. As a result of them working together to solve Louis’ problem, Louis has now learned a study skill that he will be able to apply over and over again. This kind of help is acceptable.

• **Lisa and the E-mailed Speech.** Let’s assume that, when BuddyOne’s script arrives in her e-mail inbox, Lisa adapts it in various ways to make sure that it will fit the assignment that her teacher gave. When she does this, she is putting in some work to be sure. But it’s not the kind of work the instructor had in mind when she gave out the assignment, and Lisa hasn’t learned much about how to compose a speech. Instead, Lisa has used her friend’s material to avoid both work and learning. This kind of help is unacceptable.

• **Susan’s Proofreading of Bill’s Paper.** When Bill gets back to his room and starts to type up on his PC the changes that Susan marked up for him, he has no idea whether her suggestions are in fact improvements. He has done no work since he finished the first draft (though Susan certainly has), and he has learned nothing new in the process. Nevertheless, he does expect to be credited for the overall quality of “his” final draft. As we described it here, Bill’s behavior is unacceptable.

But there’s an important note to add to this example. Suppose that

• Bill had instead asked Susan only to mark with highlighter any parts of his paper that she found difficult to understand;
• or that Susan had limited her contribution to putting an “x” in the margin against each line in which she thought there was a grammatical error or a spelling mistake;

• and that the two of them had then sat down to discuss Susan’s concerns and that Bill had made only the changes that he felt would improve his paper.

Now we have a very different picture, in which Bill has put new work into the project and has learned from considering Susan’s reactions to what he wrote.

Under these circumstances, Bill could submit his paper with a clear conscience.

Carla and the Shoe Sketch. By the end of the weekend at home, Carla has put in about as much work as she could have on that sketch (and probably much more than most students, since she kept going when her first efforts didn’t measure up to her own standards). And thanks to her sister’s demonstration, she has learned the skill with shading that lay at the heart of the original assignment.

In this case study, Anita’s help was entirely acceptable.
If you’re having trouble figuring out what kinds of help you should accept from your family and friends, ask yourself these questions:

✓ If I accept this help, will it result in my doing at least as much work as I would have done anyway? (Or am I looking to make my life easier by relying on someone else?)

✓ If I accept this help, will I still have learned as much as—or more than—I would have learned on my own? (Or am I trying to take credit for having learned something without actually doing so?)

✓ Am I doing the kind of work that the assignment requires? (Or am I misrepresenting to my teacher the kind of work I have done?)

Answering these questions honestly should give you a fairly reliable measure of whether your instructor will regard that help as acceptable.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

ARTISTIC Influences

- Molly has always loved the artwork of Modigliani. Those long angled faces and slanted, mysterious eyes intrigued her as a child. She adores Modigliani’s brush strokes and rich colors. In fact, as she looks back, Molly realizes that it was her hope of one day being able to create portraits like his that led her to try to become an artist in the first place. But Molly also feels inspired by Georgia O’Keefe’s gorgeous flowers. As she assembles her MFA show for an opening at the Lied Center Gallery, Molly identifies as her favorite work the portrait of Georgia O’Keefe’s strong-featured face that she completed in the style of Modigliani.

One of the reasons that we read great authors, listen to great musicians and observe great works of art may be to absorb their influence and apply it in our own work.

Many of us hope to become better writers, musicians or artists by paying close attention to the work of those we admire. We may even deliberately mimic the styles of those we admire most. After all, isn’t “imitation ... the sincerest form of flattery”?

*Attributed to C. C. Colton (1780–1832): The Lacon in John Barlett, Familiar Quotations, 10th ed. 1919.
What material may appropriately be borrowed from someone else will often depend on the nature of the art form itself. For example, it is understood that when you submit a portfolio of photographs that you took of architecturally important buildings in Chicago, you have in fact incorporated into your portfolio the work of the architects who created each of those structures. But your portfolio is not that of an architect; it is that of a photographer. So it is understood that you are claiming only to have contributed work appropriate to that art form: choosing the subject matter, composing and then taking the photographs, processing the images, and framing and presenting them appropriately for evaluation.

Borrowing styles may also be permitted—and even expected—in many creative assignments.

- A creative writing professor may ask her class to try their hand at writing a short story using the succinct, direct lines of Hemingway’s sentences.
- In preparing a piano performance, you may want to borrow from the musical nuances of the great pianist Vladimir Horowitz.
- Understanding how tiny dots of color created Seurat’s pointillism is essential to growing as a student in the visual arts.
- And theater students benefit from learning the Alexander Breathing Technique.

What matters in all these cases is that you not misrepresent the kind of work you have contributed to the final product, whatever that may be.

There is a crucial difference between mastering a technique that was created by someone famous, and submitting their actual performance or artwork (or the work of a fellow student) as if it were your own. Your writing may be influenced by a Hemingway novel. Your playing may come as close as you can get to Horowitz’s technique. Your painting—like Molly’s—may be true to the style of Modigliani. But however great those influences may have been, the work you present to your instructor must reflect the learning you have achieved and the work you have contributed.
You may recall from an earlier section of this booklet a quotation we used about “standing on the shoulders of Giants.” You may even remember who said it. But even if you don’t, you do at least know that it wasn’t the authors of this booklet. You know that because when we used the quotation, we placed it inside “quotation marks,” a sure sign that we were not claiming that the phrase was original with us.

At the same time, we also introduced the quotation in a way that indicated that we too had contributed some important work. We showed that we had researched the source and that we had carefully considered its importance and relevance for the topic we were discussing at the time. In a more formal essay for a different audience, we might have dug even deeper, providing additional background material and including more detailed information about our source in the footnote.

Most research papers and many other kinds of written assignment contain both ideas and language that (so far as you can tell) you came up with completely on your own. But they also contain ideas and language that you found in source materials and then introduced into your paper as support for your major points.

One of the most difficult tasks in academic writing is to use the techniques appropriate to each discipline to make it 100 percent clear where your ideas begin and end and where the ideas of other writers have been integrated into your text.

Getting this right is important for a variety of reasons:

• In making this distinction, you’ll earn the appropriate respect for your own original contributions. But you’ll also earn respect for the accuracy and generosity with which you acknowledge the work of others.

• Your writing will become more mature and more sophisticated—and you’ll feel prouder of your achievement as a result.

• You’ll be able to keep and even build the trust of your instructors by taking credit only for ideas, insights and experiences that are your own.
When writers fail to discriminate appropriately between their own work and that of others, or when they fail to give credit for material they have borrowed, they are guilty of plagiarism—a kind of shortcut to undeserved praise that is viewed as a serious breach of academic policy not just at Creighton but at any college or university.

Indeed, plagiarism is frowned on in the wider world as well. Consider a couple of relatively recent examples:

- In 2002, Stephen L. Ambrose, the popular historian of the Second World War and author of many widely-read books, was accused of having borrowed phrases from fellow scholars without giving the appropriate credit for them.

- And in May 2003, The New York Times was forced to devote page after page to a formal exposé of one of its most promising young reporters, Jayson Blair, after its editors determined that he had taken a wide range of shortcuts in writing his acclaimed feature articles for the paper.

Nobody is suggesting that the conventions governing the citation of sources are simple. Unfortunately, many parallel methods have developed side by side, and the rules within each system can be complex, subtle, and hard to apply in specific situations.

But the fact that it can be difficult to learn how to attribute every piece of material you take from your sources doesn’t mean you’ll be excused from working very hard to do so properly.
It’s your responsibility to learn about plagiarism and to ask questions whenever you are unsure what you should do.

Along the same lines, it’s fair to say that reading this section of our booklet certainly won’t teach you everything there is to know on this topic. But it will get you started.

**What is the starting point, then, from the reader’s perspective?**

In general, the reader of an academic text begins by assuming that *all* the ideas it contains originated with the person whose name appears on the title page. Wherever that’s not the case in something you write, you need to use one of the accepted conventions to make it clear that you have borrowed material.

And this is not just a matter of borrowing someone else’s words. Even if you steal someone else’s idea (by paraphrasing it, for example), though the words may be yours, you are still trying to receive credit for an idea that someone else conceived.

It’s not that you won’t have done some work too. *You* found the source material in the first place; *you* selected the most relevant part of it; *you* adapted it to the point you were trying to prove in your own paper; and *you* worked to rewrite it in your own words.

As in many of the other cases we have discussed, however, the critical consideration here is that if you paraphrase someone else’s ideas without acknowledging it, you are misrepresenting the **kind of work** you contributed to the final product.

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**PLAGIARISM in Action**

Let’s take a brief look at three of the most common types of plagiarism.

Let’s assume that two students are writing research papers for a history course. On a visit to the library they both come across the following excerpt from a compilation, *Napoleon: The Final Verdict*, copyrighted in 1996 by Arms & Armour Press. The passage refers to the closing stages of the Battle of Waterloo and was written by Andrew Uffindell.
Read over the excerpt carefully, then we’ll look at how our two students might decide to use it in their papers.

**THE ORIGINAL**

At this stage many a general would have broken off the battle and retreated. But Napoleon could not afford a single setback for it would destroy his reputation and embolden the political opposition in Paris. He had no choice but to stake everything on an attack by his Guard against Wellington. To boost his army’s flagging morale, Napoleon sent messengers around the battlefield falsely to announce that Marshal Grouchy was arriving. This ruse was risky for if Napoleon’s troops discovered the truth, the sudden disillusionment would shatter the army. But Napoleon was a gambler, and the cheers of “Vive l’Empereur! Soldats, voila Grouchy!” certainly galvanized his army into a renewed effort in support of the Guard attack.
**Copying Words Directly**

The most obvious and most egregious form of plagiarism is to take words or phrases directly from another author’s work, to fail to place those words or phrases in quotation marks, and to include no footnote or endnote that would point to the fact that they were borrowed.

**EXAMPLE A**

Unacceptable

All seemed lost for Napoleon, and *many a general would have broken off the battle and retreated*. Yet, he *could not afford* to do so as *a single setback would destroy his reputation and harden the political opposition in Paris*.

**EXAMPLE B**

Acceptable

According to Uffindell, all seemed lost for Napoleon, and “*many a general would have broken off the battle and retreated*. But Napoleon *could not afford* a single setback for it would destroy his reputation and embolden the political opposition in Paris” (186).

**Discussion**

Even though the writer of Example A changed a few of the words in Uffindell’s text, she still copied most of it directly from the original. In Example B, the student has correctly placed all of the words he borrowed in quotation marks and has provided his reader with the author’s name and the relevant page number.

**Important Note.** As we said a little earlier, there are many different styles for citing the relevant information about your sources. The so-called “parenthetical” style that the author of Example B used is just one of them. Your professors should tell you which style they want you to use (MLA, APA, Turabian). If they do not, it is entirely appropriate to ask them to specify a style. As you move forward in your major, you will learn which style is regarded as the approved one for your discipline.
**Blending**

A second form of plagiarism results when writers blend their own words with those of their sources, often changing the order in which they occurred in the original. The fact that the resulting text is a mixture of original and borrowed material usually makes it stylistically awkward.

More importantly, though, it also makes it virtually impossible for the reader to separate out the work done by the writer of the paper from the work done by the person he has borrowed from. And this is problematic even if the *majority* of the words and the ideas are in fact the writer’s own.

**EXAMPLE C**  
Unacceptable

Napoleon had a *choice* to make. He could either *retreat* and face almost certain *political* collapse back in Paris or *stake everything* by confronting the British troops with his Imperial *Guard*. Never one to *break off* an engagement willingly, Napoleon chose the latter option. Then, to *boost his troops’ morale*, the Emperor dispatched *messengers* around the camp with the *false announcement* that Marshal Grouchy would soon arrive to relieve them.

**EXAMPLE D**  
Acceptable

According to Andrew Uffindell, Napoleon had a challenging decision to make at this point: either fall back and face almost certain rejection at home or “*stake everything on an attack by his Guard against Wellington.*” Never one to accept defeat, Napoleon chose the latter and, “[to] boost his army’s flagging morale, ... sent messengers around the battlefield falsely to announce that Marshal Grouchy was arriving” (Uffindell, 186).

**Discussion**

In Example C, the writer picks numerous words and phrases from Uffindell’s paragraph, sometimes changing their form slightly (for example, substituting *false announcement* for *falsely to announce*). But he does nothing to disguise his wholesale adoption of Uffindell’s analysis of the situation. The resulting text is plagiarized because the author could fairly claim very little as his own work beyond some superficial editing.

The writer of Example D has correctly put into quotation marks those words that she has borrowed and has cited her source. In the process, she has presented herself as a student scholar—someone who researches and frequently synthesizes material on a topic—and not as an independent expert in the field entitled to make sweeping statements about such significant historical events in her own right.
Paraphrasing and Summarizing Source Material

As noted earlier, writers may still plagiarize even if they rely entirely on their own words. It's always possible to track down synonyms that will enable you to restate the ideas of an author you are relying on for material. And it doesn't take very much skill to condense what someone else wrote in summary form. But the process of paraphrasing or summarizing someone else's thoughts doesn't make them your thoughts.

Out of fear that his debilitated army would be unable or willing to make a final charge, Napoleon started the rumor that Marshal Grouchy was nearby and would be arriving to assist them at any moment. This could have been a dangerous move for the Corsican; if his soldiers had found out it was no more than a rumor, they would most definitely have lost heart and with it the desire to fight. But Napoleon was always one to take chances. His ruse worked, and a newly invigorated army prepared to attack the British line.

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Discussion

If you study Examples E and F very carefully, you'll find that they're very nearly identical. In both cases, the writers' words are wholly their own, but in both cases they simply represent Uffindell’s story of the battle.

What then distinguishes the plagiarized Example E from the acceptable Example F? The writer of the second passage has introduced his paragraph with the words, “According to historian Andrew Uffindell” and then followed her summary with a cross reference to the appropriate location in Uffindell’s book. As a result, no reader could possibly make the mistake of thinking that that passage was the result of her own analysis of primary materials. They could—indeed they probably would—reach that conclusion if they read the paragraph written by the author of Example E.
INTEGRITY IN ACTION:
The Integrity Code

It is your obligation as a student to learn what your professors and your fellow students expect of you here at Creighton.

But the College can at least help by reminding you of this important responsibility from time to time. That’s why the Student Senate drafted an Integrity Code in 2003 and asked the College to endorse it, promote its use by the faculty, and include it as the final section of this publication.

The Code exists to remind you of your responsibilities . . .

- to work as hard as you can,
- to learn as much as you can, and always
- to ensure that the work you submit is your own (or that those portions of it that have been based on outside sources are appropriately acknowledged).

It also reinforces the important lesson that these responsibilities never take a break.

After you graduate from Creighton and begin to make your way in the “real world,” it’s likely that no one will remind you of the importance of integrity.

But your years here on the Hilltop should have given you such a foundation in personal integrity that you will in turn enhance the integrity of every community you join for the rest of your life.

This Code calls for your signature on papers, quizzes, and tests. Each time you sign your name, you are attesting that the work you hand in is your own.

When you sign on the dotted line, you do so in front of the College faculty, but even more so, in front of your fellow students and the thousands of alumni and alumnae who preceded you at Creighton.
The students and faculty of the Creighton College of Arts and Sciences comprise an academic community established within the framework of Jesuit ideals and firmly rooted in the concept of integrity.

In an effort to instill integrity in those attending this College and to reaffirm its significance along each student’s academic journey, the College has set in place an Integrity Pledge. Your instructors will from time to time present the Pledge for your signature on tests and quizzes and ask you to include it with your signature on written assignments you submit.

The Pledge promotes a shared culture of integrity amongst Creighton students, while also acknowledging in its language that each of us holds him- or herself accountable for any attenuation or neglect of the conventions that define academic integrity.

The intent of this Pledge is not to act heavy-handedly. The College’s students and faculty strongly believe that each student intends to present his or her own original work. But the Pledge serves as a regular reminder of Creighton University’s commitment to the very highest standards of integrity—not only academic but also personal integrity.
The Pledge reads as follows:

**Pledge of Academic Integrity**

In keeping with Creighton University’s ideals and with the Academic Integrity Code adopted by the College of Arts and Sciences, I pledge that this work is my own and that I have neither given nor received inappropriate assistance in preparing it.

__________________________
Signature

“**Diligence is the mother of good luck.**”

— Benjamin Franklin

“**Thinking well is wise, planning well, wiser; doing well, wisest and best of all.**”

— Persian proverb
Sanctions

Remember, the education that you or your parents are paying for at Creighton can only be gained if you are willing to work hard and work consistently during your four or more years on campus.

We know that some students take shortcuts. Some individuals decide that the effort required is too much and they try to get something for nothing by stealing the efforts of others or in other ways shirking their responsibilities.

Such a decision has consequences. Nobody likes to discuss the nature of the punishments that inappropriate behavior may bring. But we do need briefly to alert you to where you can find that information.

- This booklet is not a substitute for Creighton University’s Academic Honesty Policy. You may find that Policy in its entirety in the Undergraduate Bulletin and in the Student Handbook.

- The College’s procedure for handling cases of academic dishonesty is clearly laid out in its Policy Manual on the College of Arts and Sciences Web site.*

Both these statements of policy and procedure are authoritative, and nothing in this booklet alters or supersedes what they say.

CONCLUSION

“Creighton exists for students and learning.”

It’s where we began, and there’s probably no better place to end.

A university is not just a more challenging version of high school. Nor is the community at its heart quite like any you are likely to encounter after you leave here.

Nowhere else will you find a group of talented individuals who have committed their lives to expanding your mind and your sensibilities in a shared search for truth and insight.

We hope that we have given you a taste of Creighton’s aspirations to excellence in this spirit. We hope that we have begun to reveal for you the carefully balanced privileges and obligations that inhere in the academic life, the life of the scholar. And we invite you to ask questions, to challenge assumptions, and to contribute to the ongoing exchange that dynamically creates our understanding of the culture of learning.
If institutions or individuals wish to adopt or adapt ideas or language contained in this Handbook, they are welcome to do so. Creighton University asks only that such borrowings be suitably acknowledged in any publication or public presentation that results.