# ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM

Trudy Somers, PhD Northcentral University, USA tsomers@ncu.edu

#### **WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

- Penalties or remediation
- Extenuating circumstances, factors to consider
- Case discussions
- \*Additional cases
- \*Additional factors
- \*Special case of international students
- \*Plagiarism training techniques
- \*Policy issues

#### PENALTIES OR REMEDIATION

- Ignore
- Rewrite
- Lower grade for format violation
- O for assignment
- O for course
- Remove from school
- ??

#### FACTORS TO CONSIDER

- Writing skill
- Language proficiency
- Cultural differences
- Plagiarism rules awareness
- Program level
- School policy
- Occurrence

The professor began reading an essay, the fourth writing assignment for the course, submitted by Zoe. Although the course was graduate level, Zoe had struggled throughout with writing in English (not her native language) and following the required APA format. The professor referred Zoe to the university writing center after her first submission. They had painstakingly worked through grammar, punctuation, word choices and other mechanics. The professor gritted her teeth and began to read aloud (that sometimes helped figure out word meanings) and was delighted to find an engaging, well written manuscript. However, the Turnitin report (a requirement for that assignment) showed that the document was copied from another paper, nearly verbatim.

Sincha was writing her PhD dissertation proposal in the area of women and leadership. Her chairperson was annoyed because repeated attempts to correct concept issues, grammar and spelling had been ignored, for the most part. This new paper was different. It was conceptually sound and well written, with a new focus on emotional intelligence in female leaders. The professor was delighted until a phrase stuck in his mind, an unusual way to refer to emotional intelligence that a former student had developed about a year earlier in his dissertation proposal. The professor searched through old documents and found the paper. A comparison revealed startling similarities in the two documents. It looked like a simple search and replace operation had substituted "female" for the industry group mentioned in the earlier document. Sincha acknowledged the wisdom of this former student in another document and expressed her gratitude for his contribution to her work.

The professor submitted Maks' third assignment of the fundamentals course - an introduction to university studies - to a text matching service. The results were returned to Maks. The results showed 30% of the material was attributable to several other sources. Some inaccurate citations were provided. A few paragraphs were copied wholesale without acknowledgement. Although paraphrasing was attempted, changes were not sufficient, even when the work was cited. The professor provided the report to the student with a detailed discussion of major violation areas. Maks' following assignment involves viewing the university academic integrity tutorial and writing an evaluation of this assignment. He must sign an honesty pledge to continue in the program. Should further action be taken at this time?

#### REMAINDER OF TIME

- Additional cases
- Additional factors
- Special case of international students
- Plagiarism training techniques
- Policy issues

A routine text-matching report showed 45% similarity index for a student's final assignment in a content area graduate-level course. When the professor submitted the information to the academic dean, the student filed a petition. Beverly asserted she never cheated before and she learned a lot in the course and appreciated the graduate program, but that she was under pressure from home and work and parents and children. She begged not to be penalized and made promises about future actions.

Beverly, the doctoral student in case 4 (failed) the assignment, passed the class with remaining grades, had a note placed in her file) borrowed a comprehensive examination answer from a friend to help structure her own comments. The text-matching report indicated a high similarity rate. Beverly failed the exam and was removed from the program and dismissed from school. She sued the school because of her prior experience, stating that she expected another chance.

#### **ADDITIONAL FACTORS**

- Consistency
- Fairness

## SPECIAL CASE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- Language proficiency requirements to enter program
- Orientation program

### TRAINING TECHNIQUES

- Maks case
- Proactive or reactive

#### **POLICY ISSUES**

Follow the rules of the institution

#### • QUESTIONS?

tsomers@ncu.edu