

Academic Integrity and Authentic Education

Integrity in the Academic Community

All the members of the university community benefit from respecting the values that support academic integrity. Those values begin with honesty, the fundamental value underlying integrity. Integrity also denotes wholeness, or as *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* puts it: "an unimpaired condition: soundness" ("Integrity" def. 2). Those students who honestly earn their accomplishments also earn a complete and genuine or *authentic* education.

To obtain all the benefits of a university education, students must represent themselves honestly when submitting work produced as the result of their own efforts. Independent work helps students demonstrate verifiable mastery of the foundational knowledge required in a particular field. In addition, students who have completed their work as directed will receive the greatest possible benefit from instructor feedback.

Fair and equal evaluation of student work depends upon all students creating graded work *under the same circumstances*. For example, if an instructor requires an assignment be completed independently, a student who completes that assignment without consulting a textbook, tutor, or other expert should not have his or her work evaluated alongside work completed with the unfair advantage of unauthorized assistance.

Academic excellence, fostering the original ideas and discoveries of each member of the community, thrives best when faculty and students share mutual respect and trust. Adherence to the professional standards that regulate research practices for students and faculty members demonstrates that respect and strengthens that trust.

Authentic education provides the best possible preparation for the opportunities that follow from a university education. In addition, upholding the values that support authentic education enhances the reputation of the university, and by extension, the value of each graduate's education.

At UC Davis, Student Judicial Affairs (SJA) administers the "Code of Academic Conduct" which provides an overview of university standards for academic integrity:

All members of the academic community are responsible for the academic integrity of the Davis campus. Existing policies forbid cheating on examinations, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is contrary to the purposes of the University and is not to be tolerated. A code of conduct for the campus community must exist in order to support high standards of behavior. ("Code of Academic Conduct")

What is academic integrity?

Integrity, or honesty, as it applies to academic life, simply means no cheating.

What is cheating?

Any act that misrepresents the origin or authorship of academic work can be called cheating. The SJA handout, "The Student Disciplinary System," lists numerous examples: "receiving or providing unpermitted assistance on exams; using unauthorized materials during an exam; altering an exam and submitting it for regrading; taking an exam for another; failing to stop working on an exam when time is called; providing false excuses to postpone tests or due dates; fabricating data or references." Submitting work that has already been submitted in another class without asking for permission from the

instructor also misrepresents the origin of academic work (in this case, the time and circumstances of origin) and would be considered cheating.

Disciplinary Action

Student Judicial Affairs

Student Judicial Affairs (SJA) promotes and supports academic integrity and ethics within the university community at UC Davis. Located in Dutton Hall, the SJA office also monitors academic conduct and “maintains centralized, confidential disciplinary records” of all incidents of misconduct (“The Student Disciplinary System”).

Referrals

The Code of Academic conduct makes clear that both faculty members and students are responsible for referring any incidents of possible academic misconduct to Student Judicial Affairs. Though SJA will investigate misconduct based on an anonymous tip, such cases will not be resolved without authenticated corroborating evidence. In addition, all parties must treat the incident and any attendant information confidentially. Any member of the university community may contact SJA by phone (752-1128) or by email (sja@ucdavis.edu) for advice about how to handle cases of suspected academic dishonesty. Students and faculty members may refer cases to SJA by completing and submitting a referral form—available @ <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/form-a.pdf>.

Notification

A Student Judicial Affairs officer will contact the referred student by email and notify him or her “in writing of the alleged misconduct” and request the student “to schedule a meeting with SJA” (“The Student Disciplinary System at UC Davis”). Then, “[a]t the initial meeting, the student is advised of his/her rights and informed of the evidence supporting the charges” and may respond to the charges and “discuss possible resolutions of the case” (“The Student Disciplinary System”).

Informal Resolution

The complaint will often be resolved informally, by agreement between the SJA officer (in consultation with the referring party) and the student, only if the student and officer agree upon both the facts that occurred and any recommended sanctions. During the informal disposition stage, the student must meet with SJA when summoned. Though a student need not necessarily respond to charges, any student who chooses to discuss the referral is expected to be honest.

Formal Resolution

If the SJA officer and the student cannot agree on a resolution informally, a panel of student and faculty volunteers may hear the case; this panel will consider the evidence, listen to any witnesses, and determine whether a violation occurred. If a student is found in violation, the hearing panel recommends the appropriate disciplinary action, which is reviewed and approved by the university.

Unilateral Action

If a student does not meet with SJA as required, the university may place “administrative holds on registration, transcripts, graduation and/or diploma.” In certain circumstances, SJA has the authority to impose unilateral sanctions including “disciplinary Probation, Suspension, or Dismissal from the University” (“The Student Disciplinary System”). To avoid such actions, students should respond “promptly” to notices from SJA and should “participate in the process” (“The Student Disciplinary System”).

Student Rights

A student has a right to be informed of the charges against him/her, has the right to “consult an advisor or attorney at any stage in the informal or formal process,” may appeal any sanctions imposed through unilateral action or may appeal the outcome of a formal hearing (“The Student Disciplinary System”). For a formal hearing, the student has a right to request a university-appointed advisor or assistant, to introduce evidence and/or witnesses, and to review all evidence supporting the charges.

Consequences for violating the Code of Academic Conduct include **disciplinary sanctions** ranging from a written notation of the violation in the student’s academic record, disciplinary probation, deferred separation, suspension, and/or dismissal. SJA may also assign **educational interventions** that could include but are not limited to attending a workshop on avoiding plagiarism, writing a paper on academic integrity, rewriting a plagiarized assignment, and/or completing community service. **In addition**, any work that is the product of cheating is generally assigned a grade of “zero” by the instructor.

Students applying to medical school, law school or other graduate programs must answer honestly when asked about previous instances of misconduct which resulted in institutional action. University policy allows for discretionary release of any incidents of misconduct but permits that record to be expunged upon graduation, at the prudence of SJA.

For more information on student discipline, see “The Student Disciplinary System”:
<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/Integrity1.pdf>

Strategies for Success: Valuing the Authentic Education

- **Recognize and protect the value of authentic education.**
- **Educate yourself on the rules: learn how to cite sources properly, how to collaborate responsibly, and how to avoid accidental plagiarism.**
- **Stand up for the value of your education. Inform an instructor or Student Judicial Affairs of any potential misconduct you encounter.**
- **Foster communication with your instructors. Ask them to clarify the rules if necessary.**
- **Tell the truth. When asked about your knowledge of potential misconduct, be candid.**

Works Cited

“Code of Academic Conduct.” Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. September 15, 2003
<<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/CAC.pdf>>.

“Integrity.” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. 1999.

“The Student Disciplinary System at UC Davis.” Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. 18 July 2003 <<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/pdf/Integrity1.pdf>>.

“Unauthorized Collaboration: What Students Need To Know.” Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. September 25, 2003. <<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/collab.htm>>.