

Focus Section Topic of the Week:

*Plagiarism**What is plagiarism, how and why does it happen and ways to prevent it from occurring***Exact definition of plagiarism difficult for many students****Jennie Carman**
Reporter

What is plagiarism? Well that all depends on whom you ask. English professor Iris Chapman defines it as "taking any type of information, print or not-print and using it as if it is your own without citing it." Freshman Robert Crouch defines it as "when you straight up copy information and say it's your own." Elon University student handbook, which can be found online, defines it as "presenting the work or ideas of another person as one's own...without proper acknowledgment of the source."

There are several gray areas when it comes to plagiarism. Examples include how to cite paraphrases, what constitutes common knowledge and where group work ends and individual work starts.

Contrary to popular belief, picking out pieces of information from works of writing and changing a few words is plagiarism, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, Mary Wise, said. Paraphrasing is not simply

changing a few words; it is taking the author's idea and rewriting it in your own words. Even though paraphrases are not direct quotes, they still require suitable citation, or it will appear as if you are trying to pass off the author's ideas as your own.

Wise says a good rule to use is that if the information "is common knowledge, then it is safe to use." She gives the example that everyone knows who the first president of the United States was, so it is safe to use. However, it is not common knowledge what the current population of the United States is, so that would need to be cited. If the information comes in the form of numbers, figures or unusual facts, it should be properly cited.

The issues of where group work ends and individual work starts is a very tricky area. Make sure it is clear which ideas came from which group members and where they got them from.

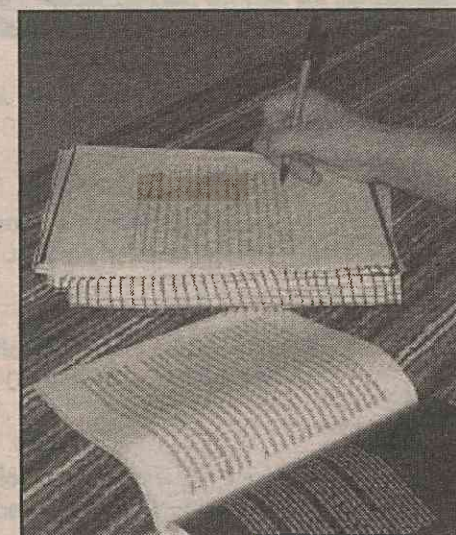
No matter how you define plagiarism, it is a major problem on college campuses across

the nation. Penalties can be severe, ranging from failing the assignment to permanent removal from the class. College students should be extremely interested in what can be done to protect themselves from committing plagiarism.

A student's first defense against plagiarism comes from an unexpected source—their professors. Wise says it is vital for professors to inform their classes about the honor code by including it in their class syllabus and by defining plagiarism and its penalties.

Chapman does several things to help her students protect themselves. Besides teaching her students proper documentation, she stresses that students use authoritative sources. She encourages her classes to incorporate ethos, or the use of authority and credibility, in their writing.

Chapman says there are two things students can do to protect themselves against plagiarism. The first is when researching, "never take notes in sentences," and the second is to "show [the] drafting process" so professors can see where ideas originated.



Amy Cowen/Asst. Photo Editor

Some students do not know how to cite sources correctly. This often leads cases of accidental plagiarism.

Ten Ways to Avoid Academic Honor Code Violations

- 1) Read the syllabus for each class and ask questions to understand assignments.
- 2) Start your work early, and complete assignments on time.
- 3) Ask your instructors for input and feedback on your drafts.
- 4) Be familiar with with style manuals used in your courses.
- 5) Take notes carefully, and record sources as you do your research. Indicate whether notes are paraphrases or direct quotes.
- 6) Schedule a session in the Writing Center on the first floor of Belk Library.
- 7) Arrange for tutoring in subjects that are difficult for you. Tutoring is located on the first floor of Belk Library.
- 8) Do not share work or work closely together with another student unless doing so is pre-approved by the instructor.
- 9) Do not use assignments for multiple classes or re-use previous assignments unless pre-approved by the instructor(s).
- 10) If it feels questionable, ask your instructor for guidance before you act.

- the Elon University Academic Honor Code booklet

Honor code encourages mutual respect among students**Katie Bonebrake**

Focus Editor

The Elon University honor code is a dominating force on campus. It is the one thing that can be seen in every classroom. However, the honor code consists of more than what can be seen on the white foam board that is so prevalent. Until two years ago all incoming students were given a copy of the student handbook, which contained the honor code. "Now it's on the Web so it's even more accessible," Mary Wise, assistant vice president of academic affairs, said. The honor code can be found at www.elon.edu/students/handbook/. Faculty and Elon 101 instructors encourage their students to locate and read the honor code Online, Wise said.

According to Wise, most reported cases of plagiarism at Elon come from one of three sources. The first arises when a student has not had adequate training in citation and incorrectly cites a source or fails to cite

a source. The second occurs when a student waits to the last minute to write a paper and cuts and pastes information off the Internet into his or her own paper. The third, and least common, case occurs when a student downloads or purchases an entire paper off of the Internet. These three types of violations are treated in the same manner.

All violations of the honor code are reported by the completion of an incident report in the academic affairs office. Those filing the reports go directly to Wise, rather than confronting the student first. All those that suspect a violation are required by the faculty handbook to report the offense. "Elon faculty members want to have a good relationship with their students. Most experience this situation with great frustration," Wise said. She says that this system gives the student a voice and an opportunity to defend themselves. After the report has been filed Wise contacts the accused student. The student can make one of two possible choices—the first denying responsibly and the second accepting responsibility for the accused act. If the student denies responsibility for the violation, the case will go to a hearing board. The hearing board consists of three students, one

faculty member and one staff member. The accused student is allowed to make an opening statement and bring witnesses and an advisor, Wise said. If the board finds the student to be responsible for the violation they will assign an appropriate sanction.

If the student initially accepts responsibility for the violation, the case will either go to a hearing board or an administrative hearing. If the student chooses the administrative hearing, Wise will give the appropriate sanctions. Students are given the opportunity to appeal the outcome of the board if they meet preset qualifications, Wise said.

If the student does not know how to correctly cite information, he or she may be assigned to the writing center to be educated as part of their sanction, Wise said. "You need to be able to correctly credit your source when you leave here," she said.

Some institutions do not have an honor code. "When there is not an honor code, [the system] is more about policing and finding out what they did wrong," said Wise. "As is the case with Elon, it's about students saying to one another—we want to do this right." "Elon students really take pride in their work."