The Daily Tar Heel



Site catches cheaters, controversy

BY CLINT JOHNSON STAFF WRITER

If you're a UNC student, you are prob ably a cheater.

probably a cheater. At least that's the conclusion of a study done by the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University. It found that on most campuses 70 percent of students admitted to cheating in some form. To combat academic dishonesty many institutions are subscribing

many institutions are subscribing to an online service called TurnItIn, but controversy concerning students' intellectual property rights has turned some away

Creator John Barrie said TurnItIn, founded in 1998, is a "technology used in the digital assessment of student work." It

consists of three primary functions: It checks for originality of written assignments, facilitates peer review and allows instructors to digitally assess students' work.

Instructors submit essays toTur-Instructors submit essays to fur-nItin, where assignments are com-pared against other essays, billions of Internet pages and databases of journal articles and periodicals. Instructors then receive an orig-inality report, which indicates the percentage of plagrarized material

percentage of plagiarized material in the paper. TurnItIn boasts contracts with

about 7,000 institutions in more than 90 countries. About 80,000 papers are added to the database

how education works," Barrie said. Teacher Amanda Harder, who uses TurnitIn in her Honors English classes at East Chapel Hill High School, said she thinks it greatly reduces the chance of plagiarism.

"It gives me an extra level of security," she said. Critics have said the service vio-

lates students' intellectual property rights, which protect a creator's work including class essays — and pre-vent others from profiting off it.
 But to be effective as a plagia-

rism deterrent, teachers must sub-mit students' papers to TurnItIn, often without a student's consent.

"There is no controversy," Barrie aid. "There is a misunderstanding every day, he said. "TurnItIn has become a part of of how TurnItIn works." The service

is legal under the U.S. Copyright Act, he said, and if there were a legal problem, reputable universi-had a teacher who used TurnItIn. ties would not be using it. Though some UNC professors

pay for the service out of pocket, the University does not subscribe to it.

"With the controversy surround-ing TurnItIn, it's not a good invest-ment for UNC right now," said Candace Debnam, undergraduate

student attorney general. Barrie said studies have shown that institutions that have used the service for five or more years have seen dramatic drops in plagiarism rates.

Some students disagreed regarding its effectiveness. "I'm not convinced that their

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is the best vo

He said the originality report

does not necessarily indicate whether someone borrowed another person's ideas; they could have

merely rephrased them. "There's a big gray area," he said. "Unless someone blatantly cheats, it can't be black or white."

Debnam said the responsibility ultimately lies with students.

"Professors can put up every stopgap in the world, but if a student wants to plagiarize, they'll find a way."

> Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

Other universities who use Turnitin:

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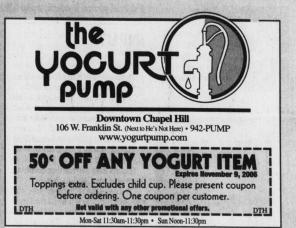
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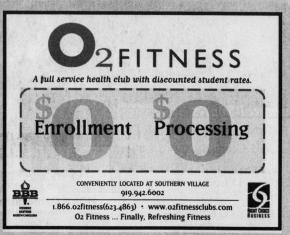
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