



Plagiarism As a “Source” of Concern

In the information age we live in, students have unprecedented access to vast amounts of data and learning resources. This is both good news and bad news. From one perspective (the good news), it means students can access thoughts and ideas generated by countless experts on any topic imaginable. On the other hand (the bad news), this same information, with only a few keyboard clicks, can easily (and temptingly) be *plagiarized*—copied or altered and directly pasted into written assignments and submitted as original work without properly citing the original source. Today’s college student must constantly balance presenting the wealth of external information available to support a position with offering original thought. Students may also possess varying levels of knowledge necessary to achieve this balance; they may be unaware, marginally aware, or aware but willing to take the risk (banking on the possibility of discovery being low) that their actions constitute plagiarism or academic dishonesty.

In What Ways, How Much, and How Often?

The parameters for defining plagiarism can vary widely across individual faculty members and institutions. To help instructors discuss writing and how to incorporate the work of others into an assignment, Howard, Rodrigue, and Serviss (2010), grounded in Howard’s (1992) earlier work, offered a taxonomy describing the use of original sources:

(a) *Copying* (i.e., direct word-for-word duplication of content), (b) *Summarizing* (i.e., a restatement and compression of the original content), (c) *Paraphrasing* (i.e., restating the original source in a new ways using different words, and (d) *Patchwriting* (i.e., using the original source with some words added or deleted). Where these writing strategies cross the line into plagiarism is the point when the writer fails to appropriately acknowledge the original source either by indicating a direct quotation or a cited reference.

Emerging data suggest the frequency and volume of plagiarism is increasing at a dramatic rate. Badke (2007), citing the work of the International Center for Academic Integrity, reported 40% of a sample of 500,000 college students admitted copying information from the Internet. Perhaps more alarming, Badke noted 77% of the sample expressed the belief that the practice of plagiarism is not a “serious” matter. Parry (2011)—citing The Citation Project, a national study that included the review of 174 student papers—reported the following results:

- 77% of cited quotes came from the first three pages of the original source (regardless of the length of the source).
- 96% of the cited material came from two or fewer sentences extracted from the original source. This is indicative of a pattern where students are seeking out brief



“If you steal from one author, it’s plagiarism. If you steal from two, it’s research.”

– John Burke, Author

“Plagiarists at least have the quality of preservation.”

– Benjamin Disraeli, First Earl of Beaconsfield

“What a good thing Adam had. When he said a good thing, he knew nobody had said it before.”

Mark Twain, Humorist and Author

snippets that back up the contentions they are trying to support in their written assignments. This practice reflects a lower level of complexity and involvement than actually engaging with longer portions of the original text.

- 19% of the papers reviewed included copied materials that were not cited as quotations.
- 56% of the papers misused sources by either using patchwriting or failing to cite as a quotation or both (15%).

These data and the work of Howard, Rodrigue, and Serviss (2010) suggest today's students rely heavily on the practice of picking out isolated quotes that support their own contentions rather than making the effort to actively engage with the big picture of the original source. Further, the research implies college students are in need of additional information and guidance for the correct and proper use of source citations in writing.

Strategies to Use and Cite Sources Correctly

There is clearly work to be done. Faculty in the first-year seminar can play a pivotal role in assisting students to use and cite sources correctly in their written work. Consider the following strategies to assist students as they write, grow, and learn.

Ensure Faculty Awareness

Faculty development initiatives should provide course instructors with an awareness of best practices in source use and citation. This should include (a) information related to source citation expectations and campus policies, (b) the various ways students typically use source materials (e.g., copying, summarizing, paraphrasing, patchwriting), (c) available tools for identifying inappropriate source use and citation, (d) ways to teach these skills to students, and (e) the established procedures and channels for reporting student violations.

Define Campus Expectations

For first-year and transfer students, it is critically important to review and explain prevailing campus policies and expectations for source citation and the consequences of violations. Belter and du Pre (2008) described an instructional module included in a general psychology course for first-year students that significantly improved students' awareness of policies and expectations. The module was self-taught and focused on the definition of plagiarism, ways to avoid it, and the penalties and consequences of academic dishonesty. It also included an 11-question quiz on the topic, which students were required to complete with 100% accuracy (on the first or subsequent administrations). Another option would be to create a learning module that is systematically available across a number of first-year courses as a resource for effective writing.

Tools for Detecting Plagiarism

With increasing frequency, electronic tools are being made available for the purpose of assisting both students and faculty in detecting inappropriate source citation and plagiarism. These programs scan the Internet for phrase, sentence, and content matches to a student's written work and are available as plug-ins for learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle) or free-standing downloadable software.



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Although not foolproof, these tools can greatly enhance the efficiency with which faculty can identify suspicious content and help students avoid plagiarism. Examples of free or low-cost programs include

- Dupli Checker (<http://www.duplichecker.com/>)
- Plagiarisma (<http://plagiarisma.net/>)
- Viper (<http://www.scanmyessay.com/plagiarism-detection-software.php>)

With the growing availability of digital resources and a blurring of the lines that surround appropriate boundaries for citing a source, it becomes the obligation of faculty, particularly in first-year programs, to educate students on when to credit sources and preferred citation styles in their written assignments. This proactive approach may serve to prevent later difficulties in the academic careers of students.

Help your students to consider the source!

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The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success

Volume III: Teaching in the First-Year Seminar
— Brad Garner

Highly practical in nature, yet grounded in educational theory and research, Volume III offers a concise guide to teaching in the first-year seminar from organizing a syllabus, structuring individual class sessions, and engaging students to conducting meaningful assessments of their learning. The strategies offered are highly portable to a range of seminar types and undergraduate courses. An invaluable resource for college instructors looking to improve their own teaching.

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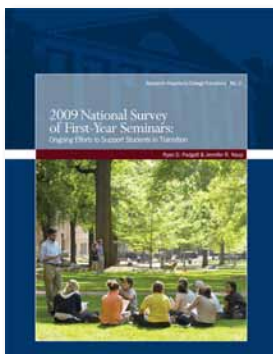
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Research Report on College Transitions No. 2

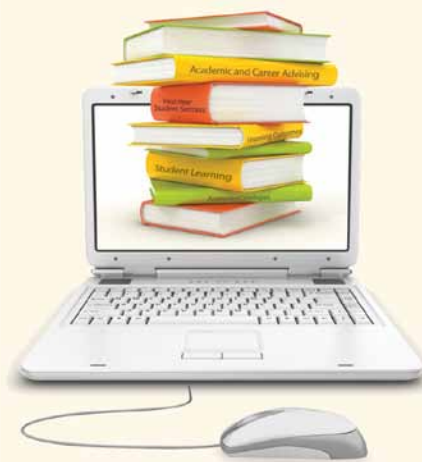
2009 National Survey of First-Year Seminars: Ongoing Efforts to Support Students in Transition

Ryan D. Padgett and Jennifer R. Keup

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The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success, Volume III: Teaching in the First-Year Seminar

Brad Garner

Release Date: May 2012

Building on the conversation begun in Volume II on instructor training and development, Garner delves deeper into the concepts and strategies undergirding effective educational practice. Highly practical in nature, yet grounded in educational theory and research, Volume III offers a concise guide to teaching in the first-year seminar from organizing a syllabus, structuring individual class sessions, and engaging students to conducting meaningful assessments of their

learning. The strategies offered are highly portable to a range of seminar types and undergraduate courses. An invaluable resource for college instructors looking to improve their own teaching. To learn more or order a copy, visit www.sc.edu/fye/publications.



Special Journal Issue on Peer Education

In April, the *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition* is launching a special theme issue on peer education with guest editor Robert Kenedy from York University. The National Resource Center has long had an interest in documenting the effectiveness of peer education programs, and the articles in this issue address a range of social, academic, and developmental outcomes and processes associated with participation in peer education experiences, from the perspective of both the peer leaders and the students they serve. The intent of this issue is to inform practice and improve learning and development outcomes in these initiatives.

For more information, visit www.sc.edu/fye/journal/.

NRC Exhibits and Presentations

Like many of you, the staff of the National Resource Center is actively involved in the conference circuit. We are pleased to share the following upcoming opportunities to hear about the results of research studies conducted by the Center, learn about best practices, and to meet NRC staff members.

Senior Capstone Experiences, Assessment, and Effectiveness. Discussion group session by Jennifer R. Keup, National Resource Center Director, at the 2012 AIR Forum, June 5, 1:55 p.m.-2:35 p.m. in New Orleans, Louisiana.



A biannual publication from the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition

E-Source for College Transitions provides practical strategies for supporting student learning and success. Articles on a variety of topics related to student transitions are welcome, including those focusing on:

- > Strategies for addressing the first-year, sophomore, senior, and transfer transitions at different types of institutions
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Visit www.sc.edu/fye/esource to sign up for content alerts or view archived issues.

31st Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience Updates

National Resource Center Philanthropy Project

The National Resource Center would like to express our gratitude to participants at the 31st Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience who contributed funds during the conference that resulted in the donation of 1,000 copies of the Spanish-language version of *Empowering Parents of First-Year College Students: A Guide for Success* for use in high schools in the Harlandale Independent School District of San Antonio, Texas. Harlandale Independent School District actively supports a college-going culture among its students in support of its motto and mission: "A family working together to provide high quality education where all students graduate to become productive and successful citizens for the 21st Century." The guides will be distributed to students and their parents to help them prepare for college.

2012 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates

The National Resource Center and Wadsworth/Cengage Learning announced the 10 educators who were selected as the 2012 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates at the 31st Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience in San Antonio, Texas. These educators share a common goal of improving the educational experience for entering college students. They have been awarded this distinction for their exceptional work on behalf of first-year students and for the impact their efforts have on the students and culture of their institutions. Their achievements can be viewed at http://tech.sa.sc.edu/fye/awards/advocate_award/current_year_list.php.



Left to right: **Christine M. Nowik**, Assistant Dean of Student Success & Retention, Cedar Crest College; **Katherine Lehman**, Assistant Dean for Student Success, Otterbein University; **Nicole Henderson**, Associate Professor of English & Director of First-Year Experience Program, Southern Connecticut State University; **Andrew Grant**, Dean of Academic Services, Walsh University; **Andrew Person**, Executive Director, Center for Student Success and Engagement, Mercy College; **John A. Lanning**, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Experiences, University of Colorado Denver; **Amybeth Maurer**, Director of First Year Programs and Student Life, Elgin Community College; **Karen Palmunen**, Associate Professor of French/Coordinator of First Year Seminar, Saint Joseph College; **Karen Weathermon**, Director of Learning Communities, Washington State University; **Margaret Garroway**, Co-Director of the First-Year Experience Program & Associate Professor of English, Howard Community College

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The Toolbox

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The Toolbox is an online professional development newsletter offering innovative learner-centered strategies for empowering college students to achieve greater success. The newsletter is published six times a year by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.

The online subscription is free. To register for newsletter alerts and access back issues, please visit www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox.

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