AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION:
SUPPORTING STUDENTS’ INTEGRITY

• Provide a link to the AIP in your syllabus and discuss academic integrity with your students on the first or second day of class.
• Throughout the course, link the course material and skills to their lives or professional duties after college.
• Print two or more versions of your quizzes and tests, with the questions in different orders, to prevent easy copying.
• Share clear expectations on the use of electronics during quizzes or exams.
• Break longer midterms and finals into several parts and allow your students to submit Part I, go for a bathroom break, come back and pick up Part II, and so forth.
• If possible, avoid take-home examinations unless you’re okay with students using print, Internet, peer, and tutor sources.
• Student definitions of the legitimate use of sources vary widely: discuss plagiarism and provide a few examples of your discipline’s documentation style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.,) on your syllabus and (even better) in a sample assignment.
• Another reason for clarity in the syllabus: instructor definitions for the legitimate use of sources vary widely. For instance, do you count plagiarism on a rough draft?
• Consider modeling sound documentation practices. For example, try to document each image you use in a PowerPoint. While a university-wide policy goes a long way in establishing a shared set of expectations for integrity in academic work, your students are still being exposed to a variety of actual practices.
• Require a set of data, an in-class comment, or specific academic articles in essay assignments: it’s harder for a student to shop online for papers with really course-specific parameters.
• Research shows the rate of plagiarism is drastically reduced when professors discuss their expectations and assign brief, educational practices in understanding the proper use of sources and practice/quizzing over citation conventions. Dee and Jacob, for instance, found that plagiarism in a trained group of students was reduced by as much as by 65% compared to a control group of students with no additional training.* Such figures suggest that a majority of plagiarism may be due to students’ uncertainty, confusion, reluctance, and time-pressure, rather than a fully-fledged desire to deceive.
• Breaking a longer writing assignment into components (such as annotated bibliographies, proposal, outline, rough draft, etc.,) and suggesting improvements/rewriting/rethinking strategies at key moments in the assignment process helps prevent plagiarism by improving student understanding, time-management, and opportunities for discussion – as well as making it a lot harder to download a fully-formed paper.
