Special Expanded Issue:
ETHICS AND THE UNIVERSITY

1991 was quite a challenging year for universities in terms of ethics. A number of cases of abuse come immediately to mind: well-regarded scientists at prominent institutions using questionable data; a journalism professor (who certainly should have known better) appropriating huge chunks of another's work without acknowledging the original source; lawsuits by book publishers and software companies against universities for pirating books or programs; case after case of sexual harassment—unfortunately, the list goes on and on.

The time has come to recognize the fact that ethics cannot be a concern only for students in the philosophy or religious studies departments. All members of the university community have an obligation to act responsibly, ethically, and honorably in all areas of their academic lives, most especially, of course, in regard to their scholarship and their relationships with students and other faculty members.

Although at times it may seem that everyone is dishonest, this is certainly not the case. What seems dishonorable may sometimes be ignorance. Of course, this does not justify or excuse it, but merely explains its prevalence. Anyone who values their discipline works hard to maintain its integrity, for honesty is the very life of the university, the heart of scholarship. Scholars must be rigorous about the use of ideas and sources, scrupulously citing all who contributed to their work. A good rule is that it is better to err on the side of cautiousness. Whether they violate the academic integrity code intentionally or accidently, the work of those researchers who are once found to be careless or dishonest about acknowledging the work of others will always be subject to suspicion among their peers.

This issue of TapTalk will focus on some important ethical issues. As teachers and scholars, TAs have a serious responsibility to understand the ethical standards of the university, to abide by them, and to convey them to their students. The articles here cover a wide range of issue that TAs confront on a daily basis—helping students to be honest; why students cheat; uses/abuses of copyrighted material; sexual harassment. Considering these issues early in a career may prevent others from sliding down this slippery slope, may, perhaps, help make 1992 a better year.
Do the (copy)right thing

TAs know that they have a responsibility to impart to their students a respect for the intellectual property rights of others. Most teachers inform their students at the beginning of the semester that plagiarism is a serious offense and try to educate their students on the use and misuse of the work of others. There are two areas in the university, however, where people seem not so certain about the legal limits, their rights and responsibilities, that is, xeroxing copyrighted materials and in sharing computer software. Because these are gray areas they demand special attention; neglected, they can create serious problems for the faculty member and for the university.

Given the increasingly high cost of textbooks and the relatively lower cost of xeroxing, many faculty members have adopted the practice of having materials xeroxed for a class instead of using a standard textbook. Others copy materials to supplement a main text. By gathering together materials from diverse journals and texts, they are able to compile a group of readings specifically tailored to the course they are teaching without forcing students to purchase a number of expensive books. Doing this is fine, but teachers must be sure not to violate copyright laws in the process. It is illegal to copy large sections of any text without permission from the publisher. There are legal limits to the number of pages that can be copied and still constitute fair use; not observing these limits is a serious infringement of copyright laws. Publishers have successfully sued universities and copy shops for violating copyright laws in this manner.

Because computer technology has developed so swiftly in the past ten years, many people are still unsure about the legal uses of software. Unless disks are copy-protected, it is quite a simple matter to copy software programs, and many people do so without realizing that what they are doing is illegal. Unless a program is in the public domain, it cannot be copied, even if the disks are not copy protected. According to a September 1991 memo issued to the Rutgers Community by Peter Graham, Associate Vice President for Information Services and David Pramer, Associate Vice President for Corporate Liaison: “Unauthorized copying of protected software is illegal. Copyright law protects software authors and publishers, just as patent law protects inventors. Unauthorized copying of software by individuals at Rutgers as elsewhere can harm the entire academic community, and can possibly result in personal liability of the infringer.” Copying computer programs not only jeopardizes the individual but also the university which can be named in a lawsuit. Quite simply, pirating a program is stealing, robbing its creators of their fair remuneration for developing it. As the Graham and Pramer memo further points out: “[Unauthorized copying of software] can increase prices, decrease future support, and reduce interest in the design of new software products.”

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**TapTalk**

is a monthly newsletter produced by the Teaching Assistant Project (TAP), Graduate School, New Brunswick. Letters and suggestions for articles should be directed to the editor:

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**Brown Bag Lunches**

**for**

TAS, GAS, VPLS

Meet fellow teachers for support, advice, & an informal discussion of teaching methods & problems.

**February 12th**, 12 noon-1:30
25 Bishop Place, 2nd floor, CAC

**February 18th**, 12 noon-1:30
Busch Campus Center, 120 ABC

Drinks & dessert supplied.
On Friday November 22nd, the Council on Languages and Literatures and the Teaching Assistant Project held an afternoon conference on teaching for all students in languages and literatures. More than one hundred TAs attended.

After a greeting by Harvey Waterman, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, New Brunswick, a panel of faculty, TAs, and undergraduates discussed “Problems in Teaching.” Responding to questions posed by members of the audience, this panel offered various ways of dealing with common teaching situations. Following this panel were two sessions on “Methods in Language Teaching.” A reception for all participants concluded the event.

On Thursday, November 21st, the graduate program in Political Sciences held a workshop on “Critical Incidents in Teaching.” Students viewed brief vignettes portraying common teaching situations and then discussed ways of handling them effectively.

Ask students why they cheat and the responses they come up with are strikingly similar and surprisingly limited. In fact, a very few statements summarize the major excuses students give for cheating. Fortunately for faculty members, there are simple ways of responding to and deflating each of these statements.

Myth 1: “I needed an “A” in this course to get into Law (Medical, Business, Graduate, etc.) School.” A less than perfect record will not keep anyone out of graduate or professional school, and students who focus so strongly on grades are simply misguided. Better to have a “B” on a transcript than a suspension for cheating. Teachers should explain their grading policies carefully at the beginning of the semester so students understand the level of work necessary for various grades.

Myth 2: “My parents will kill me if I don’t do well.” Most parents would not want their son or daughter to cheat. Of course, students may feel a need to please parents, but they must also recognize that they are adults, responsible for themselves and their own actions. In the end, students should feel better about a “B” gained honestly than an “A” gained dishonestly. Teachers must work to convince students that the main point of the class is that they gain new knowledge and consider new ideas, not that they get an "A".

Myth 3: “Everyone does it.” Even if this statement were true, it would not be an acceptable excuse. Fortunately, however, it is simply not true. In spite of what at times seems overwhelming evidence to the contrary, most of the students at Rutgers care about their education and realize that they benefit most from the work they do themselves. Unless a teacher creates a classroom environment where students feel that it is necessary to cheat, most students won’t be inclined to do so. A strongly worded note detailing expected standards of behavior, included on the syllabus, informs students at the beginning of the semester that you will not tolerate cheating. Enforce this policy strictly throughout the semester.

Myth 4: “No one cares if students cheat.” This perception can be the most damaging one. Teachers must let students know from the beginning of the semester that they are expected to do their own work, encouraging them to seek help early in the semester if they encounter problems. Teachers who ignore cases of academic dishonesty hurt all their students and reinforce the belief that no one cares.
Confessions of a Ghost Writer

[The author of this article, who chooses to remain anonymous, worked for more than ten years as an academic paper writer; he has since retired from the field. The ideas and opinions expressed in this article should not be construed as reflecting those of the Teaching Assistant Project or the Graduate School-New Brunswick.]

For most people, writing term papers is a chore, for others an addiction. Over the course of fifteen years, working first for a term paper mill and then on my own, I researched and wrote several thousand undergraduate, graduate, and professional school papers, a few dozen masters’ theses, perhaps fifteen doctoral dissertations, not to mention any number of journal articles for professors. These papers were written in every subject—graduate physics and math excluded—for the best as well as the worst colleges and universities. I have also been partially responsible for degrees with honors in some of the best MBA and law schools in the country. All this has been done without any background in most of the subjects I have written about and certainly without ever spending time in a classroom. If you have been teaching for some time, there is a good chance this is not the first piece of my writing you have read.

A few of my clients, neglecting even to read what they were handing in, have been caught, but, on the whole, both they and their professors have been satisfied with my work. A few professors have, of course, tried to make my job impossible by asking their students to write initial drafts and bringing in research cards, but these attempts served mainly to increase my income by providing me with additional work. The greatest difficulty I encountered was in gauging the style and content of the paper to make it believable—and many students specifically requested that the work be mediocre and badly written.

The interesting thing about this work was that it was not difficult. After getting the hang of adjusting my writing speed to my typing speed—and the low per-page rate of term paper mills demanded speed—it became possible to write up to five different papers on various topics in a single work day. If I did not have needed references on hand in past papers or notes kept on file, a day in the library might provide enough references for a week’s worth of writing. As I became more and more experienced, I often knew what I was going to write before I even went to the library; with the necessary background in a subject, all I had to do was seek out the books and articles that would document what I wanted to say. As my files grew, and especially after a computer replaced my typewriter, ideas, references, and quotations could be creatively recycled into the most unlikely term papers: a thesis or dissertation literature review would provide a wealth of information that could be applied to a wide variety of topics. Very often, however, there was little need for new references or thought: my files are full of variations on such standard topics as "Oedipus & Willie Loman as Tragic Heroes," "The Great Gatsby and the American Dream," and "The Appropriateness of Prosecuting Victimless Crimes."

This is not to say that none of my work was well-researched or carefully considered. There are certainly papers in my files that I would not mind publishing under my own name. Over time, as I became interested in a topic, I would, by suggesting related topics to students, research and work out my own ideas. For the most part, how-

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ever, I found it quite amazing how easily a standard set of commonplace ideas could be applied to almost any subject to produce a paper that would often rate an excellent grade. My ability to write, with minimal background or reading, intellectually trite analyses judged worthy of honors in distinguished professional schools provides an indication of the low standards that exist in many disciplines. The ease with which my clients could achieve success based on my work seems to indicate how little contact professors must typically have with their students. It is perhaps indicative of the educational process that often the most reliable signal that a term paper has been purchased is that it contains an original thought. The term paper certainly could be among the most important learning experiences of a student’s career, but I do not think that many of my clients missed much by not doing their own work. Given the quality of the paper assignments, most, left to their own devices, could have gone to the library and patched together an adequate set of unassimilated references and ideas to get a passing grade. The papers that really could have been useful to the students were those that demanded that they think for themselves about a relevant topic and write a paper containing their own ideas. Given such an assignment and a teacher who had time and was willing to discuss the ideas and force the student to defend and modify them, the paper would not only help the student learn how to think, but the teacher would be more able to insure that the students’ work was his own.

Keeping Students Honest

How strongly does a teacher influence a student’s efforts in a course? More, perhaps, than many might think. Although there may be some hardened students who, as a general policy, think it is always better to cheat than to work honestly for a grade, these students represent no more than a tiny percentage of the student body. For most students, the decision to cheat is either born out of desperation or the result of an on-the-spot decision, not a premeditated action but a case of taking advantage of an unexpected opportunity. These cases are the preventable ones, and the intervention of a teacher can help the students confronting such ethically trying situations.

To help students avoid situations where they feel they have to cheat to pass a course, teachers should be firmly in charge of the course from the beginning. Frequent quizzes and small exercises or writing assignments early in the semester will identify students who are having difficulty keeping up. Seek out the students who are not doing well or who are missing too many classes to try to help them get back on track, either through tutoring or extra assignments, time management workshops, or even university counseling. Make sure that students who are failing receive official warning notices and require that they come to speak to you. Teachers whose students are writing research papers should have them report on their work frequently, either in writing or orally, not only to weed out cheaters but also to motivate students to make the paper a term-long project, not just a write-anything-the-night-before-it’s-due paper.

The other form of student cheating that can be controlled is spur of the moment cheating, when a student taking an exam, for example, is able to read his/her neighbor’s paper without difficulty. Although this student would never plan to cheat, if the opportunity present itself and the student is feeling stressful about passing the

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Perhaps the clearest thing to emerge from the many discussions about sexual harassment prompted by the confirmation hearings of Justice Thomas is that there is widespread confusion in this country as to what constitutes harassment. Obviously, men and women do not agree; to be sure, there is not even agreement among men and among women. Because it is such an emotionally charged issue, it is sometimes difficult to have reasoned debate. Lack of consensus, however, does not mean that there is no need to be concerned about the matter, that one can sit back and wait until decisions are handed down by some greater authority.

All TAs have an obligation to examine their own behavior in regard to this issue. Sexual harassment always involves a power relationship. Because the role of TA gives graduate students a position of authority over undergraduates, it is essential that they be aware of this power and take care not to abuse it. The TA/student relationship is a mirror of the faculty/graduate student relationship, so the dual role of graduate student/TA should give TAs some insight into the dynamics of such relationships.

Some questions are easily answered. Is it permissible to date a student? No. Never. A teacher who asks a student on a date is unfair not only to that individual student but to the entire class. Other questions about behavior, however, might not be answered so easily. One of the loudest complaints voiced over the past year has been about the difficulty of knowing when normal social behavior becomes sexual harassment. The criteria established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex have been adopted by the university. Rutgers’ policy is:

1) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment or admission to an academic program,

2) Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting an individual’s employment status or academic standing, or

3) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s performance on the job or in the classroom or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or study environment.

There is no problem with TAs who interact with their students in a friendly but professional manner. Problems only arise when one of the parties fails to recognize the limits of the relationship, and definite limits must be maintained. When a student crosses the border of acceptable behavior, it is the responsibility of the TA to inform the student that his or her behavior is unacceptable and explain why. TAs themselves should be careful not to drift unknowingly into relationships that could compromise their ability to treat all students fairly. Only consider the difficulty of having to give a good friend a failing grade.

TAs should also be aware that they too may be the victims of sexual harassment. No student, undergraduate or graduate, has to accept unwelcome advances from anyone. Graduate students have a right to be treated in a professional manner and should not be subjected to undue pressures. If a faculty member persists in such behavior after you ask him or her to stop, it may be necessary to report this behavior to the Graduate Dean.
Academic Integrity & University Policy

It is up to TAs to protect the rights of the honest students in his or her class and to report all cases of academic dishonesty to the proper authorities. Inform students of the rules before they get into trouble: no lying, no cheating, no plagiarizing. If students do not know the proper way to cite sources, they need to find out before they even begin to write their first paper. It goes without saying that graduate students must also maintain high standards of academic integrity in their own work.

The Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) describes how the community views academic dishonesty and how different levels of academic dishonesty will be treated. What follows is a brief summary of certain key aspects of the policy. The complete policy is available from the office of the Associate Provost for Student Affairs.

Level One:
These violations may occur because of ignorance or inexperience on the part of the person(s) committing the violation and ordinarily involves a very minor portion of the course work.

Examples:
Improper footnoting or unauthorized assistance on academic work.

Possible Sanctions:
Make-up assignment at more difficult level, or assignment of no-credit for work in question, or required attendance at a workshop on ethics.

Level Two:
Level two violations involve incidents of a more serious nature and affect a more significant aspect or portion of the course.

Examples:
Quoting directly or paraphrasing without proper acknowledgement on a moderate portion of the assignment, failure to acknowledge all sources of information and contributors who helped with an assignment, submission of the same work for more than one course without permission from the instructor.

Possible Sanctions:
Probation, a failing grade on the assignment, or a failing grade in the course.

Level Three:
Level three offenses involve dishonesty on a significant portion of course work, such as a major paper, hourly or final examination. Any violation that is premeditated or involves repeat offenses of level one or two are considered level three violations.

Examples:
Copying from or giving others assistance on an hourly or final examination, plagiarizing major portions of an hourly or final, using a purchased term paper, presenting the work of another as one's own, altering a graded examination for the purpose of regrading.

Possible Sanctions:
Ordinarily the minimum sanction is a one semester suspension from the university.

Level Four:
Level four violations are the most serious breaches of academic integrity. They include repeat offenses of level three violations.

Examples:
 Forgery of grade change forms, theft of examinations, having a substitute take an examination, sabotaging another's work; fabrication of evidence, falsification of data, quoting directly or paraphrasing without acknowledging the source, and/or presenting the ideas of another as one's own in a senior thesis, within a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, in scholarly articles submitted to refereed journals, or in other work represented as one's own as a graduate student.

Possible Sanctions:
Expulsion from the university and a permanent notation on the student's transcript.
Keeping Students Honest (cont'd from page 5)

exam, there is a strong possibility that he or she might yield to temptation. This situation can easily be avoided. When giving an exam, make sure that students do not sit next to each other. Move desks or ask students to leave empty desks between themselves and their neighbors. Do not allow students to bring books or notebooks into the classroom and tell them beforehand of this restriction. Students who do bring books or papers should leave them in the front of the classroom. Always make sure that there are enough proctors for the size of the room; proctors should not just sit in the front, grading papers or reading but should move around the classroom, making their presence felt.

Although not always possible, personal knowledge of the students and an understanding of their capabilities make it much more difficult for students to cheat, much easier for you to recognize their own work. A teacher who reaches out to students and who displays a genuine interest in and enthusiasm for his or her field increases the likelihood that students will catch that enthusiasm, respond to that personal interest, and work hard to produce work that reveals their own abilities more fully to the teacher.

Teaching Assistant Project

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February

February 3rd
Chinese New Year
February 4 through March 9
Students may withdraw from courses without academic penalty. Advisor's approval is not required.
Students withdrawing from a course after February 3, 1992, receive a "W" and do not receive a refund for that course.

February 12th
Brown Bag Lunch for TAs
12:00 noon, 25 Bishop Pl., 2nd floor, CAC.

February 14th
Valentine's Day

February 17th
President's Day

February 18th
Brown Bag Lunch for TAs
12:00 noon, Busch Campus Center, 120 ABC.