

New Approach to Academic Honesty

by Helen Scott (October 1994)

This fall, the college is trying a new approach to the issue of academic honesty. In addition to having individual tutors talk about the issue with their tutees, the college is requiring all first year and transfer students to attend a lecture on the subject of academic honesty given by Judy Hunter, Assistant in the Writing Lab and Lecturer. After the lecture, the students are given a revised exercise on paraphrase and citation, as well as a handout telling them where they may find various systems of documentation; they then complete the exercise and discuss it with their tutors.

The lecture focuses on why the academy places such a heavy emphasis on the issue of academic honesty. It talks about the issue of the ownership of ideas and explained how the students' responsibility as a member of a community of scholars requires them to allow their readers to separate the ideas of the students from those of their sources. It also shows how good documentation is related to good writing. The lecture then reviews and gives examples of the Student Handbook's advice on academic honesty, including a lengthy discussion of how to paraphrase. Finally, the lecture focuses on the college's procedure for dealing with violations of its standards on academic honesty. For a complete text of the talk, as well as of the exercise on paraphrase and citation and the document on Systems of Documentation, see the Gopher Server.

The college is implementing a new policy because the tutorial committee was concerned that the college's message to students on this issue was neither clear nor focused. In addition, the Committee on Academic Standing hopes to prevent some of the cases with which the Subcommittee on Academic Dishonesty has had to deal. Through this uniform approach, as modified and discussed in particular tutorials, the college hopes for increases discussion of and attention to the issue of academic honesty.

When students and faculty evaluate the tutorial, they will also be asked to evaluate the academic honesty lecture and exercise. Based upon these evaluations, the tutorial committee can then decide whether to retain this approach, modify it somewhat, or change it altogether.