Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to a liberal arts education, whose central purpose is to grow the student's mind. Growth requires the student's personal engagement. True academic engagement, however, demands and exercises a number of scholarly virtues: curiosity, activity, persistence, originality, honesty, fairness, and integrity, to name a few. Each person must take active and responsible interest in his or her own work. Such work may be--indeed, must often be--dependent on the work of others, but such dependence should always be openly, honestly, accurately, and properly acknowledged, in ways that honor the conventions long established in the student's field of study. Before another's work is incorporated into one's own, the quality of that work must be evaluated, and the use of it should not unfairly or dishonestly distort that work's intended sense. When work is presented publicly as one's own, the appearance should match the reality. That is, the ownership of the intellectual work should be as advertised. The college's concern with academic dishonesty is the flip side of its central concern to promote intellectual and spiritual growth through practices of academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of trust within the Westmont community, as it both violates the regard for truth essential to genuine learning and Christian consistency, and disadvantages those students who do their work with integrity. Academic dishonesty may consist of:

1. Plagiarism
2. Cheating
3. Falsification

Incidents of plagiarism are to be treated in accordance with the Westmont College Plagiarism Policy as approved by the Academic Senate January 2004. This policy, available on this web site, defines three levels of plagiarism (minimal, substantial and complete) and specifies the attendant consequences. Consequences range from rewriting the paper for a reduced grade in the case of a first minimal offense to expulsion from the college for a second incident of complete plagiarism. This document also provides the specific procedures to be followed in cases of plagiarism as well as the forms to be used for reporting. Additionally, the Westmont College Plagiarism Policy document includes a statement which can be included in a syllabus and aids for reducing the likelihood of plagiarism.

Cheating is the deceptive claim of ownership of work that does not stem entirely from one's own knowledge. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:

- Talking or communicating through signals with another student during an exam;
- Using unauthorized materials such as electronic devices or cheat sheets to obtain information for an exam;
- Copying or sharing information on an individual exam;
- Using or sharing a stolen exam or answers to an exam;
- Leaving during an exam in order to obtain information for an exam;
• Claiming credit for work not accomplished personally;
• Giving false data about the procedure used to take an exam or complete an assignment.

Falsification is the alteration of information, documents, or other evidence in order to mislead. Examples of academic dishonesty of this form would include but not be restricted to:
• fabrication or falsification of data, analysis, citations or other information for assignments, exams, speeches or any other academic work;
• forgery or unauthorized alteration of official documents, credentials, or signatures;
• misrepresentation of one’s academic accomplishments, experiences, credentials, or expertise;
• withholding information related to admission, transfer credits, disciplinary actions, financial aid, or academic status;
• submitting the same work to more than one class without the authorization of the instructors.

The following policies apply to cases of cheating or falsification:

1. If a student has been dishonest in any way, the student is to receive an F in the exercise and the Provost’s Office and the Student Life Office is to be notified of the action.
2. A second violation or instance of dishonesty in the same or different course should be reported to the Provost’s Office and the Student Life Office for action. Sanctions may include suspension from the college.
3. The above are understood to be minimal degrees of discipline. A faculty member may, if he or she has announced the policy, give an F in the course for any type of academic dishonesty.
4. A student who feels that he or she has been unfairly accused or unjustly treated may appeal to the Student Life and Development Committee for a hearing.