

9-26-2013

It's Only Cheating If You Get Caught: Undergraduate Student Attitudes About Plagiarism

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Recommended Citation

Giles, K. "It's Only Cheating If You Get Caught: Undergraduate Student Attitudes About Plagiarism". Presented at the Virginia Library Association Annual Conference. Williamsburg, VA. Sept. 26, 2013.

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It's Only Cheating If You Get Caught

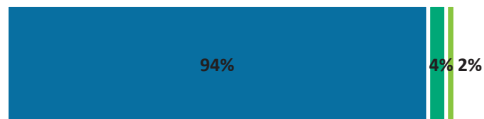
Undergraduate Student Attitudes About Plagiarism



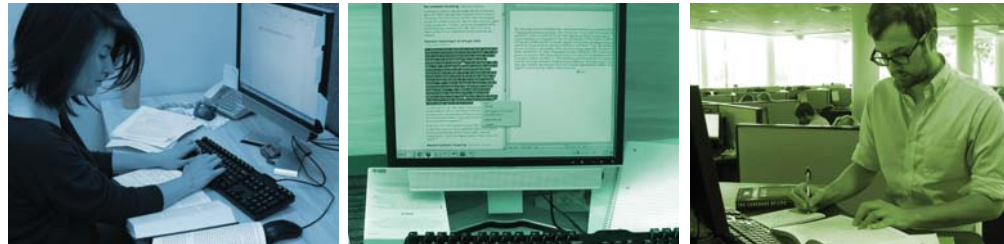
james madison university libraries
Kelly Giles, Applied Sciences Librarian
Rose Library, James Madison University

This poster presents the results of a survey on student attitudes about plagiarism conducted in 2011 and 2012. The survey was distributed to students in a 100-level Integrated Science and Technology (ISAT) course required of all ISAT majors. This course was chosen because in previous years I had detected a high rate of plagiarism on an annotated bibliography assignment. Through this survey I hoped to learn more about why students plagiarize. I predicted that students did not fully understand that paraphrased material needed to be cited and that they considered plagiarism a minor academic offense that would merit only a "slap on the wrist" punishment.

■ Agree/Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree



Plagiarism is copying someone else's words or ideas and presenting them as your own in an assignment.



◀ How Serious Is It? ▶

Contrary to my expectations, the vast majority of respondents agreed that there are serious punishments for plagiarism. However, most had doubts as to whether professors usually catch students who plagiarize. If students believe that plagiarism often goes undetected, the severity of the potential punishment is less likely to deter them. Rather than acting from ignorance, students who plagiarize may be taking a calculated risk.



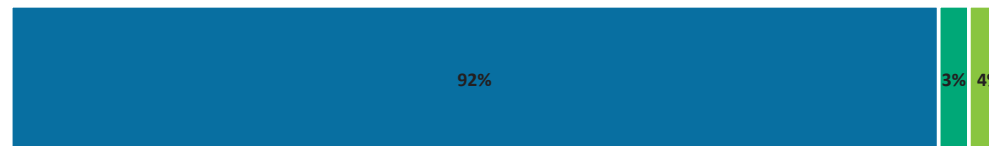
It's difficult to follow all the rules for proper quoting and citing.

◀ What Is Plagiarism? ▶

Most respondents appeared to possess a good general understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. A large majority agreed that both quotes and ideas must be cited and that it is plagiarism to turn in a paper written by someone else.

Half of the respondents agreed that it is difficult to follow the rules relating to proper citing of sources, and in 2011 57% agreed that confusion about citation rules is the usual reason for plagiarism.

■ Agree/Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree ■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree

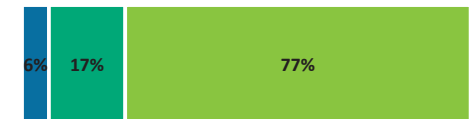


There are serious punishments for JMU students who are caught plagiarizing.

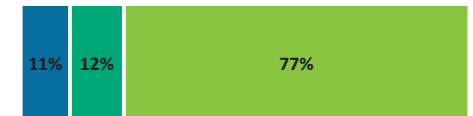


[JMU] professors usually catch students who plagiarize.

■ Agree/Strongly Agree ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
■ Disagree/Strongly Disagree



If I didn't have time to do a good job on an assignment, I would copy from an article, book, or website to get it done.



Plagiarism detected (2011 and 2012 combined)

■ Clear Plagiarism ■ Inappropriate Paraphrasing
■ No Plagiarism Detected

◀ How Common Is It? ▶

While most students do not plagiarize, nearly a quarter of respondents indicated that they might be willing to plagiarize if pressed for time.

Respondents proved to be surprisingly honest on this point. The percentage of students who indicated that they might plagiarize matched closely with the actual rate of plagiarism that I detected on their assignments.