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Academic Integrity Memo

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PROVIDENCE
COLLEGE

Office of the Dean of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies

September, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to take this opportunity—before the semester gets underway—to ask you to think about issues of academic integrity within your courses. I bring this up for a number of reasons:

- Stories of plagiarism in the academic community and the press (and politics!) currently abound;
- Errors of judgment have destroyed careers, and I want our students to have developed the habit of making good choices;
- Academic integrity should be especially important to an academic community such as Providence College, whose motto is Truth and whose Mission is grounded in Judaeo-Christian principles;
- The College has a formal “Academic Integrity” Policy.

The *Undergraduate Catalog* section on Academic Policies (<http://catalog.providence.edu/content.php?catoid=21&navoid=712>) includes our policy on Academic Integrity. All members of the College community are called on to be people of integrity. Students are challenged to produce and submit their own work for evaluation; instructors are expected to ensure their students understand their course policies and to enforce standards of academic integrity.

While the policy leaves to the instructor discretion as to how to deal with academic misconduct within a course, it does require them to notify me of each incident and their response to the infraction. I take no action in this first instance, unless it is egregious, but notification is important so that I can keep on file a confidential report of these first incidents. If there is a second instance of academic dishonesty, the policy requires me to refer the case to the College’s Academic Integrity Board. This policy thus distinguishes a single error in judgment (eminently forgivable) from a pattern of dishonesty. I believe this is a good distinction.

The foundation of my distinction between an *instance* and a *pattern* of dishonesty relies on each instructor's informing the Dean's Office of each breach of academic integrity. I ask, therefore, for your support and cooperation.

More importantly, though, I also ask that you make very clear in your syllabus and first class meeting your own response to academic dishonesty, and I suggest that (within your syllabus) you define for your students precisely what would compromise academic integrity within writing assignments, project work, etc. Some students are genuinely confused as to how to cite sources, how to paraphrase, when group work is inappropriate, etc. I have found this website useful for helping students distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate paraphrasing, and what constitutes plagiarism:

<http://owl.excelsior.edu/plagiarism/>. The Phillips Memorial Library has prepared a Citation Guide, to which you may want to direct your students:

<https://providence.libguides.com/c.php?g=283816&p=2021490>. In addition, I have prepared an on-line tutorial for all incoming students to take. You are welcome to review it to see what each freshman student will have taken:

<http://vle.credoreference.com/providence-college-academic/providence-academic-integrity-module>.

I would like to cultivate on our campus a culture of honesty and integrity, where our students know what constitutes good choices in their studies, and why compromises of integrity are, *ipso facto*, poor choices. I hope that our students form such good habits that they recoil from bad choices. I believe that the clear and wholehearted support of our faculty and the understanding of the issues by the whole College community will foster this culture at PC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark D. Nowel, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

(Fr.) Mark D. Nowel, O.P., Ph.D.
Dean of Undergraduate & Graduate Studies