

# Student Academic Dishonesty and Disciplinary Sanctions<sup>1</sup>

*'The integrity of this academic institution, and the quality of the education provided in its degree programs, are based on the principle of academic honesty.'* (CSUSM, Academic Honesty Policy)

## Academic Sanctions: Disciplinary Sanctions Imposed by Faculty<sup>2</sup>

In cases of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating and plagiarism) '[t]he instructor reserves the right to discipline any student...in accordance with the general rules and regulations of the university. Disciplinary action may include the lowering of grades and/or the assignment of a failing grade for an exam, assignment, or the class as a whole.' (Academic Honesty Policy)

The Academic Honesty Policy and Executive Order 1006 require faculty to submit a written incident report to the Office of the Dean of Students that must include the following information: student name and ID; class code, CRN, and semester; the issues of dishonesty that occurred, the actions or consequences taken by the professor.<sup>3</sup>

## Administrative Sanctions: Disciplinary Sanctions Imposed by the Dean of Students<sup>4</sup>

After reviewing the report filed by the faculty member and conducting an interview with the student, the Dean of Students makes a determination of further disciplinary sanctions which are then recorded in a file held in the Office of the Dean of Students. The Office of the Dean of Students informs the faculty member reporting the misconduct of the disciplinary actions take.<sup>5</sup> The possible disciplinary sanctions are:

1. **Warning:** A warning is not noted on the student's transcript and the student remains in good standing.
2. **Probation:** Recorded on the student's transcript, but only during the period of probation. During probation, a student may still enroll and attend classes and participate in university events and programs. However, organization, department, divisional, or national by-laws or policies may prevent students from participation in a leadership or organizational role. Once this period is concluded without additional acts of misconduct the student is returned to good standing with the university.
3. **Suspension:** Recorded on the student's transcript during the period of suspension. During the period of suspension the student is considered not to be in good standing with the university and is not allowed to attend classes or participate in university related events and programs. If the suspension is longer than one academic year, it will remain permanently on the student's transcript. Once this period is concluded without additional acts of misconduct the student is returned to good standing with the university.
4. **Expulsion:** Recorded on the student's transcript permanently and the student may never enroll again at any CSU campus.

Aggravating and mitigating factors taken into consideration by the Office of the Dean of Students when assigning disciplinary sanctions include:

- Severity of academic misconduct
- Prior acts of academic misconduct
- Level of maturity in assuming responsibility/accountability for the misconduct
- Status of student (i.e. transfer versus first year enrollment) and year in school
- Other circumstances (e.g., academic achievement, familial issues, emotional disturbance, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> The Student Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate has been charged by the Academic Senate to consider faculty input on disciplinary sanctions involving academic honesty.

<sup>2</sup> Student may appeal academic sanctions with the Student Grade Appeals Committee (SGAC). Faculty may be called to testify at the SGAC hearing.

<sup>3</sup> The Office of the Dean of Students incident report is the *Reporting Academic Dishonesty Form*. This form and additional information regarding Academic Honesty, such as the Student Honesty Policy, is available online at: <http://www.csusm.edu/dos/judaffairs/reportdishonesty1.html>

<sup>4</sup> Student may request a conduct hearing (not connected to the grade appeals process) to appeal administrative sanctions. Faculty may be called by the hearing officer to testify at the conduct hearing.

<sup>5</sup> This was previously thought by University counsel to violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), but the current interpretation is that faculty members have an educational need to know.

Excerpt of the **2009-10 Judicial Affairs Conduct Case Report** issued by the Dean of Students Office:

<u>Academic</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>	<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>
Total cases	63	96	113	89
Sanctions				
Expulsion	0	0	0	0
Suspension	3	2	3	2
Probation	31	39	51	38
Warning	24	40	50	47
Exoneration	1	9	4	1
No Action	0	5	3	1
Consultation	4	1	0	0
Pending	0	0	2	0

The following examples of actual cases illustrate some of the issues considered by the Office of the Dean of Students when deciding on administrative sanctions.

### **WARNINGS**

CASE #1 – First year student taking a GEO course plagiarizes a take-home assignment worth 20 points out of 500 potential points for the course. The student is also taking GEW and has struggled to understand the nuances of citing work appropriately. The student did not intentionally plagiarize the work and took complete responsibility when confronted with the allegation. The GEO professor speaks with the student and allows him to re-write the assignment using appropriate citations.

CASE #2 – Third year student working on a group project for a SOC course which requires an oral presentation and a 12 page paper plagiarizes a small section of the paper due to rushed work. In one part of the paper the same author is cited and in another section it is omitted. While all three students on the project were responsible for the assignment, the student in question was in charge of integrating group work into the paper and making sure all citations were appropriately noted. The oral presentation is received well and the professor allows the student to re-write the paper using appropriate citations.

### **PROBATION**

CASE #1 – Three students (two juniors and one senior) in a PSCI course must visit a site and write up an observation log which will be accompanied by an in-class oral presentation. The students never make the site visit and fabricate the required write-up. When approached by the faculty member who is informed by a third party of this behavior, two of the students admit to the fabrication while the third denies the accusation. The intentional fabrication coupled with taking responsibility when confronted warrants the sanction of probation for one calendar year. The student who denies the accusation is suspended for one semester but refuses to accept the sanction. A formal hearing is conducted and the Hearing Officer recommends suspension for one calendar year which is upheld by the President.

CASE #2 – A third year student enrolled in a WMST course turns in a rushed paper and knowingly plagiarizes the work. The student takes complete responsibility for the plagiarism and given that the incident is a first offense receives probation for the rest of the academic year.

### **SUSPENSION**

CASE #1 – A junior student enrolled in a PSYC course plagiarizes a final paper and takes responsibility for her behavior. The level of plagiarism is so egregious that suspension would be the normal rule of thumb. However, the student has evidence of being under tremendous stress which includes her husband being deployed to Iraq for the third time. The student is placed on probation but is informed that any additional cases of such behavior will result in suspension. The same student plagiarizes a BIO paper and is immediately suspended for two semesters.

CASE #2 – A senior student enrolled in a BUS course where plagiarism and cheating are covered in the syllabus (one full page including which tools the professor uses to detect acts of plagiarism) plagiarizes 32% of a final paper. The student knowingly plagiarized the paper and when confronted noted that he did not know how to go back and retrieve a citation from the website. The student is suspended for one semester which will delay his graduation from the university.