Faculty Guide to Combating Contract Cheating

What is Contract Cheating?

This is a type of academic dishonesty that violates the University of Dayton Honor Code and academic honesty policy. Freelancers or companies offer services to students to "help" write their essays and complete assignments for a fee. Students find such services by searching online. The service may email completed essays to the student or may impersonate the student completely by uploading and completing work online. Some contract cheaters may have marketed themselves as providing "help" for assignment completion. Although contract cheating may have existed for a long time, it appears to be a growing threat to academic integrity. It affects all disciplines, at undergraduate and graduate levels and whether a class meets face-to-face or online. Incidents of scholarly papers being submitted by such services on behalf of dishonest faculty have also been discovered at some global institutions.

How to Combat Contract Cheating

1. **Your Syllabus**
   Create course learning outcomes from the perspective of skills/concept development (versus knowledge retention), so assessments naturally seek incremental feedback and improvement - which will help developing familiarity with a student.

   Communicate with students in the syllabus and verbally in the classroom that:
   a. Academic dishonesty defeats the purpose of the course to enrich a student's personal learning
   b. UD students should pursue academic integrity by following the academic honor code and seek to develop a personal sense of academic integrity, which lays the foundation for an ethical life
   c. UD students need to understand that contract cheating is deceitful, cheating, and a violation of the honor code
   d. Contract cheating exposes students to the risk of bribery and extortion (with or without payment and potentially for a lifetime after the course)
   e. Students may be lured gradually into contract cheating after seeking help from online tutoring services
   f. Students caught cheating could be given severe penalties in the course and their academic standing at the university
   g. Contract cheaters are not as thorough or as in-depth at researching as they may claim, so their use of plagiarism can be easy to detect by the teachers
   h. Students should seek help from the teacher or from campus resources such as the Office of Learning Resources if they feel overwhelmed academically

2. **Faculty Next Steps when cheating is found**
   a. Look for and respond to cheating if you detect it. Consult with department chairs and seek their guidance.
   b. Do not take students' cheating personally.
   c. What to look for: Contract cheating can be manifest by a change in student writing style, depth of knowledge, sources of information not covered in class, writing that deviates from the requested assignment prompt. You may need to ask students to explain their assignments in person.

3. **How Faculty can help students avoid cheating**
   a. Get to know your students, to develop familiarity with their writing styles and mode of thinking from informal communications and assessments.
   b. Where possible, use in-class writing to provide a baseline record of student writing skills and prior experience.
   c. Adjust the pattern of assessments so that instead of a small number of high-stakes assessments, there are more frequent lower-stakes assessments. Decreasing the pressure of being successful diffuses the need to cheat.
   d. Require multiple drafts of an assignment to help detect changes in writing style. This is also a best practice to improve student learning.
   e. Carefully consider the page or word limit counts for assignments, since students may feel compelled to look for help if they fall short.
   f. Consider accepting late submissions (perhaps with some small penalty) to lower the pressure of a deadline.
   g. Look for ways to challenge students to write with their about personal experiences or situations. The more generic an assignment, the easier the work would be for a contract cheater to complete.
   h. Consider follow-up in-class discussions or presentations of student work. Does the student know what their assignment contained?
   i. For online courses, consider the use of proctoring services (even for a single assessment) or require an on-campus final exam (with permission of your academic unit).
   j. Use Turnitin.com to detect plagiarism, but be mindful that the best contract cheaters will write original papers.
   k. Ensure students have sufficient assistance if they need help in completing assignments or where to go on campus for writing assistance.

Resources
- University of Dayton, Academic Honor Code; http://catalog.udayton.edu/undergraduate/generalinformation/academicinformation/theacademichonorcode/
- Wolverton, B. (2016) The new cheating economy. *Chronicle of Higher Education;* http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-New-Cheating-Economy/237587
- http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/assets/Revised_FV_2014.pdf
- http://integrity.fiu.edu/pdfs/Contract%20Cheating.pdf

- http://blog.tesu.edu/contract-cheating-what-it-is-and-why-you-need-to-care
- http://integrity.fiu.edu/pdfs/Contract%20Cheating.pdf
- https://wcetfrontiers.org/2016/10/05/how-contract-cheating-works/
- https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5bT3MX6fj6_V0dLX0V5ajF1aWs/view