

Case #1

Brandon is a senior faculty member who teaches ITDS 3712, Interdisciplinary Studies. In this class, Essay 3 is a weighty assignment that constitutes nearly 30% of the total course point grade. Brandon suspected that one of his students plagiarized on Essay 3. There was strong textual evidence for the extensive use of multiple unacknowledged sources, including bigthink.com, reasonandmeaning.com, and Sparknotes. Brandon used Turnitin, but it did not catch all of the imported passages, so he did some additional web searches regarding the portions of text that appeared suspect.

As it turned out, there were numerous word-for-word substitutions where particular terms from the original were replaced. For example, "time marches on and we cannot stop it" in one online article became "time walking on and we cannot stop it" in the student's essay. The sentence structure and the overall train of thought were left unchanged. This meant, Brandon thought, the student did not do any intellectual work of their own, but mechanically looked for synonyms, disregarding the fact that this frequently led to awkward formulations. The fact that this substitution technique recurred throughout the student's essay suggested that it was done deliberately. The segments imported from the unacknowledged online sources amounted to about 2/3 of the student's essay. Thus, the textual situation was deemed a flagrant case of patchwork plagiarism.

Discuss the following:

- a) a response that aligns with desired learning, and
- b) a strategy for faculty to have prevented a student's ability or motive to cheat.