Academic Integrity in Online Learning at Hostos Community College

Introduction

The Hostos college community understands 1) the need to protect students' confidentiality and 2) the need to protect academic integrity in the online arena. These guidelines provide recommendations and identify current practices and policy enforcements to preserve academic integrity in online learning.

Verification of Student Identity

Students in online instruction offered by CUNY must log in through a system that uses IDs and passwords to invoke an authentication triangulated against name, date of birth, and social security number. (These are inaccessible but generate a unique access number; it is this access number that, invoked by the user ID/password combination, gives access to the system) This FERPA-compliant secure login is a student's only means of access to the online learning management system (LMS). All courses (not just online courses) use this same system of authentication for registration. Enrollments are imported directly into the LMS without any action on the part of students, faculty, and staff. What's more, every action within a course site is recorded by the extensive tracking features of the LMS, which monitor each user in terms of time and duration of any action as well as the part of the site involved, even if there is no posting by the student. Students have the opportunity to change their password at any time and are encouraged to do so periodically.

Such mechanical means of verifying student identity and activity in online courses are supplemented by high levels of interaction in small classes. Students introduce themselves in terms of prior knowledge about a course's subject and write posts at least weekly, including responses to one another. Many students also maintain blogs and/or wikis individually or in groups. Such interactivity creates a high degree of familiarity and even intimacy within each online course. And that is increasing as online courses move beyond piloting to program-wide implementations of increasingly sophisticated forms of self-presentation and interaction, including the growing use of cross-course portfolios, learning communities, and synchronous conferencing (including voice and video).

In other words, faculty teaching online courses make extensive use of performance-based assessment and active learning in online instruction. Through these activities, faculty are able to identify patterns in writing styles, levels of achievement, basic content knowledge, and typical types of interaction specific to each student. Such high exposure and high feedback instruction enables faculty to make professional judgments regarding any atypical assignments/assessments turned in that do not match noted student patterns established throughout the semester.

Every online course syllabus contains a statement of expectations and preventative measures to ensure academic integrity. Assessments include but are not limited to papers, projects, group discussions, and/or online chats on a weekly basis. Faculty can check any written work, from discussion posts to submitted papers, with anti-plagiarism software such as Turnitin or SafeAssign.

Faculty members are discouraged from expecting students to disseminate their work or disclose their identity in a public space. They are encouraged to only use technologies hosted by CUNY and CUNY-affiliated organizations.

Prepared by: CUNY Committee on Academic Technology

Academic Integrity Policies

Hostos follows and enforces the CUNY-wide Policy on Academic Integrity. The policy is included in the College Catalog, in various areas on the College website, in the Faculty Handbook, in the Student Handbook, and all Blackboard courses. These policies apply to any teaching modality, including online.

Hostos is committed to enforcing the policy and in supporting faculty and staff in the handling of academic integrity matters. The policy encourages faculty to report suspected violations and act upon it by following the procedures in place.

Link to policy: http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf

Protection of Student Privacy (FERPA)

Hostos Community College and the City University of New York have established several methods to verifying student identity and protect their information regardless of the learning modality as described in the verification of student identity section. These methods comply with FERPA rules, protect student privacy, confidentiality, and fraud. These policies are included in the College Catalog, various areas on the College website, Student Handbook, and all Blackboard courses.

Link to policies:
FERPA: http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Administrative-Offices/Office-of-the-Registrar/General-Info/Family-Education-Rights-Privacy-Act
IT Policies: http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/Administrative-Offices/Information-Technology/IT-Policies

Information Dissemination/disclosure Procedures

The different policies and information are disseminated in, but not limited to, the following places:
- College Catalog
- Student Handbook
- Blackboard courses
- Faculty Handbook
- Information Technology policies
- Registrar's Office
- EdTech Online Learning website

Charges Associated with Student Identity Verification

Hostos Community College does not charge a fee for student identity verification. Students would be notified of additional fees, if any, prior to and during the registration process through various publications, i.e. Schedule of Classes, College Catalog, College registration system, and College website.

Credit: Camden County College

Faculty Training

To ensure that faculty enforce the Academic Integrity Policy, they are trained extensively at Hybrid/Asynchronous Institute training and during their Blackboard certification training, and at faculty interest group meetings addressing issues of teaching with technology.

Library faculty members are available to work with teaching faculty members to offer workshops on finding library resources, and on understanding plagiarism. The Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Educational Technology invite library faculty members to co-present during New Faculty Orientations and other events so that librarians can promote the library's resources and services.

Link to Hostos Online Learning: http://commons.hostos.cuny.edu/online/faculty/

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