Case 1
Plagiarism or Inspiration?

The prescribed consequence for students who engage in plagiarism is the so-called "Double F."[1] This mark is like a scarlet double letter indicating academic dishonesty and can plague a student for the rest of his career, both in school and beyond. The rules against plagiarism are simple and universal: if you use someone else's unique idea or words, give attribution.[2] However, the boundaries of plagiarism are sometimes murky and in fact, even educators charged with enforcing standards of academic integrity may find that they have crossed the line. That is exactly what happened to Arizona State University professor, Matthew Whitaker.[3]

During a promotion review, accusations arose that Whitaker used exact verbiage from printed articles in his speeches without attributing their source and also used Wikipedia articles without attribution in as many as six of his books. After an investigation, the university determined that his acts were not "systematic or substantial plagiarism" but did create some cause for concern. Whitaker claims that his detractors are motivated not by a concern for academic integrity but also by racism, as he is African American.

Regardless of the motivations of the committee who made these allegations, some question the validity of the charges. Wikipedia is an open source, which does not demand attribution based on its terms of use.[4] More specifically, Wikipedia's article on open sources states that:

> Sites such as Wikipedia and Wiktionary have embraced the open-content GFDL and Creative Commons content licenses . . . . Many of these licenses ensure that content remains free for re-use, that source documents are made readily available to interested parties, and that changes to content are accepted easily back into the system.

Further, the conventions on attributions during a speech are less well-defined than those for the written word. Complete citation is awkward and disruptive during a typical public speaking event. However, academic integrity may require some degree of credit to be given to the source of an idea and/or prose in a speech.

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[1] David Hayes, Kathy Hurtt, and Sarah Bee, "The War on Fraud: Reducing Cheating in the Classroom," *Journal of College Teaching & Learning*, Feb. 2006, Vol. 3, No. 2, http://cluteonline.com/journals/index.php/TLC/article/view/1742/1722.

[2] For more information on Plagiarism, visit http://www.plagiarism.org/.

[3] Anne Ryman, "ASU History Professor at Center of Plagiarism Debate," *The Arizona Republic*, May 6, 2012, http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/2012/04/26/20120426asu-professor-plagiarism-debate.html

[4] "Open Source: Applications, Digital Content," *Wikipedia*, June 25, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source.