

The Plagiarized Paper

You are a faculty member who had a student in a class last semester who was bright, delightful and diligent and who helped confirm your choice of becoming a college professor. He did very well in your class, while holding several part-time jobs trying to make ends meet. You got to know the student to some extent outside of class and think of him as a student who is a friend. Based on these experiences you even have hopes for him as a future professional in your field.

This semester, the student is enrolled in another of your classes. He continues to work hard and is doing very well in the course. In addition, he stops by office frequently for friendly conversation and to discuss course related matters too.

After the most recent class session, he mentioned in the passing that he earned some money writing a paper last semester for another student. He also mentioned the topic of the paper, which you immediately recognized (because it was a very unique and obscure topic in your discipline) as one submitted by another one of your students. You had awarded a grade of "B" to the person who submitted the paper that was turned in as a "re-write" of a paper that had initially received a grade of "D". The final grade of the student who turned in the paper was not altered by the "B" grade. He would have received the same final course grade if he had let the original "D" grade for this paper stand.

The student who wrote the paper and told you about it didn't seem the least bit ashamed of having done so. You were so astonished to hear this that you didn't say anything other than, "Why are you telling me about this?" The student's response was "Why wouldn't I tell you? I'd tell you anything." Does the student think that writing a paper for another and for profit at that would be acceptable to you?

- Now what do you do?
- What are the issues?
- Since you somewhat crossed the boundary from teacher to friend with this student, how does this affect or restrict the use you might make of this information that he voluntarily provided?
- Should you file an academic integrity complaint, knowing that if you do you will have to testify against him, and that if found responsible for a violation he will probably be suspended? Is this the best way for him to learn? What do you want him to learn anyway?
- What about the student who actually submitted the paper when someone else wrote it?