February 22, 2013

Alison Galloway, CP/EVC
Chancellor’s Office

Re: Plagiarism Software

Dear Alison,

The Academic Senate has reviewed the possibility of purchasing a license for Plagiarism Software for the campus. Responses are attached from the following committees: Academic Freedom (CAF); Academic Personnel (CAP); Affirmative Action and Diversity (CAAD); Computing and Telecommunications (CCT); Educational Policy (CEP); Graduate Council (GC); Library and Scholarly Communication (COLASC); Preparatory Education (CPE); Planning and Budget (CPB); Research (COR); and Teaching (COT).

The committees’ responses varied from supporting it as a useful choice, to concerns about the specific implementation practices and implications. There are reservations about use of the technology on campus and the potential need to implement policy guiding faculty on how to use and respond to plagiarized material.

We have attached the responses and overall they are mostly positive but it is evident that once implemented additional follow up may be needed.

Sincerely,

Joe Konopelski, Chair
Academic Senate

Enclosures
February 15, 2013

Joe Konopelski, Chair
Academic Senate

RE: Committee Response to the Campus-Wide Purchase of Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

CAF members discussed the benefits and advantages of a campus-wide resource license for plagiarism software (i.e., a campus-wide “academic plagiarism checker”).

The committee was generally positive about purchasing a campus-wide license for software to detect plagiarism. The software should enable comparison with publicly available (Internet-based) sources as well as campus-based sources, including papers written for both current and past offerings of UCSC classes. The committee felt that this could help detect cases of plagiarism, ensuring that students do their own work and encouraging them to uphold high standards of authorship and attribution. Professor Miller noted that when he began to use plagiarism detectors for computer programs in his classes, the rate of (detected) plagiarism fell dramatically; similar results were reported elsewhere in Computer Science.

The plagiarism software must be “opt-in” for individual faculty members and instructors—the committee was unanimous that its use should not be mandated—and should integrate with the eCommons submission system to make its use more convenient for instructors. A system such as that provided by Turnitin would satisfy these needs. The committee felt that, while it was acceptable for papers from past offerings of UCSC classes to be maintained for local use, it was not acceptable for the papers to be made available to other universities for use in detecting plagiarism. It is also worthwhile to note that this software is not perfect; in particular, it cannot catch cases in which a student pays an outside source to write an original paper.

The committee’s primary concerns were over cost and questions of policy in relation to various sorts or levels of infraction, such as with respect to what might happen if a large fraction of a class was identified as having plagiarized material. In addition, some faculty members raised concerns about impacts on faculty time with having to formally deal with the varieties of plagiarism that may be detected, though other faculty members noted that simply failing a student guilty of plagiarism was a low-overhead solution. This response underscores the need to develop policies to guide faculty responses to the various types of plagiarism and their variant levels of severity.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ron Glass, Chair
Committee on Academic Freedom

cc: Senate Committee Analysts
February 15, 2013

Joe Konopelski  
Chair, Academic Senate

**Re: Plagiarism Software License**

Dear Joe,

The Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) reviewed the online summary page on paper analysis tools being considered by UCSC, and discussed the proposed purchase of a campus-wide license for plagiarism software. Members agreed that the advantages and benefits to faculty who would utilize the software would be worth the licensing costs, if the software is utilized by enough faculty. As such, CAP supports the purchase of a campus-wide license for plagiarism software.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Christina Ravelo, Chair  
Committee on Academic Personnel
JOE KONOPELSKI  
Chair, Academic Senate  

Re: Plagiarism Software  

Dear Joe:  

In its meeting of February 4, 2013, the Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity (CAAD) discussed the CP/EVC’s proposal to purchase a campus-wide software license so that faculty, teaching assistants, and students can check work for plagiarism. CAAD is in strong support of the proposal for the reasons discussed below (which are in addition to the committee’s general support on the grounds that academic integrity is critical to the mission of the university).  

As Provost of Oakes College and a member of the Council of Provosts, I tried to provide insight into how issues of campus climate and bias might manifest themselves in relation to instances of plagiarism (and cheating, although that is not necessarily addressed by this software). During my tenure at Oakes College, I have reviewed roughly 120 cases of academic misconduct, and almost all students involved have been ethnic/racial minorities (only 4-5 students have not been); based on informal surveying of the other provosts, it appears that this trend is also seen at other Colleges. While the causes for these alarming statistics are complex and multiple, implementing the use of a software that checks for plagiarism would mitigate the possibility of bias in the review of student papers (e.g., all students’ papers could/should be run against the software which diminishes the likelihood that a professor will write up one student but not another).  

Additionally, CAAD is concerned that students from different class and ethnic backgrounds have varying senses of entitlement that may or may not empower them to contest instances of plagiarism (and cheating). The students who do contest acts of plagiarism sometimes do not have formal charges brought against them, while students who do not, are formally brought to their College Provost. Using a software that detects similarity in submitted work by stating a likelihood for plagiarism will help to level the playing field for students who are less likely to contest plagiarism.  

Finally, CAAD reasoned that there are several other good reasons to move forward with the proposal: the software will eventually reduce faculty and Teaching Assistant workload in manually searching for instances of plagiarism in student papers; it will prompt faculty to have classroom discussions about plagiarism; and, it will likely deter some students from plagiarizing.  

For the many reasons stated above, CAAD is in strong support of the proposal to move forward with purchasing a campus-wide software license to detect plagiarism.  

Sincerely,  

Kimberly Lau, Chair  
Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity
Joe Konopelski, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

The Committee on Computing and Telecommunications (CCT) reviewed the summary page on submitted paper analysis tools being considered by UCSC. The committee is hesitant about adding another element to the ecology of software on campus, especially one that does not connect with Sakai/eCommons. Even those that interface with Sakai/eCommons, such as Turnitin.com have licensing fees that CCT considers exorbitant.

We are not convinced of the need for a campus-wide subscription to anti-plagiarism software. No quantitative data has been sought or provided regarding the prevalence of plagiarism in classes. Also, no survey was conducted regarding how individual faculty members are addressing the issue in their courses. CCT is confident that a free, open-source solution exists for this problem. Purchasing a campus license from Turnitin.com or a comparable provider would be premature.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,

/s/

Greg Laughlin, Chair
Committee on Computing and Telecommunications
February 07, 2013

Joe Konopelski, Chair
Academic Senate

RE: Committee Response to the Campus-Wide Purchase of Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

CEP members discussed the benefits and advantages of purchasing a campus-wide resource license for plagiarism software (i.e., a campus-wide “academic plagiarism checker”). In general, most members expressed cautious support for the purchase, especially given the potential for savings in human resources at all levels.

Members also recognized the possibility that, with clear policies and standardization of practices, there could be increased demand for campus-wide responsibility, both at the student and Senate levels; for example, if rates of plagiarism suddenly spike upward, the Academic Senate would need to respond with educational initiatives and outreach programs. There was also broad acknowledgement that this kind of tool may be especially useful as our campus continues to address distance learning and online instruction environments where issues of scalability and oversight may be particularly challenging to issues of academic honesty. Those members who were in favor of purchasing the software were hoping that any license we acquired would allow students to submit text to see how it would be rated (because we find the idea of the company providing the software making money from our students as they sell the complementary service untenable). Finally, it is useful to note that student representatives to CEP advised us that many California secondary schools already use online software tools to combat plagiarism, so many students have experienced this type and style of academic accountability. For most members, a pilot program would be welcomed.

Other members, however, viewed this proposal more skeptically, raising important considerations and questions regarding costs/benefits and differential levels of concern across campus units. Going forward, CEP recommends that more data and information be obtained prior to purchase or pilot program; more specifically,

- Size and scope: How big is the problem? Where is the problem? What data exists currently for describing rates of plagiarism at our campus?
- Policies and practices: How does this software work at comparable universities? What new policies and/or practices would need to be put into place prior to deployment? Could some departments or divisions “opt out”? Some members suggested that some other UCs that have invested in anti-plagiarism software have since terminated their contracts. If this is true (and we do not know for sure that it is), it would be useful to know why a sister campus would make this choice.
• Survey need: Is this a perceived need or are faculty and staff requesting more tools for dealing with this issue? What is the threshold for justifying the cost?
• Funding models: What is the actual cost of this service? Would there be any savings if some departments or divisions “opt out”?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

/s/

Tracy Larrabee, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

cc: Senate Committee Analysts
February 11, 2013

JOE KONOPELSKI
Chair, Academic Senate

Re: Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

In its meeting of February 7, 2013, the Graduate Council considered the CP/EVC’s proposal to purchase a campus-wide software license so that faculty, teaching assistants, and students can check work for plagiarism. The Council recognized the benefits the software would have for students at the graduate and undergraduate level, as well as for potentially reducing the workload of faculty and teaching assistants who currently have to manually check student work for instances of plagiarism. The council unanimously supports this proposal.

All best,

Bruce Schumm, Chair
Graduate Council
Re: Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

The Committee on the Library and Scholarly Communication (COLASC) reviewed the summary page on submitted paper analysis tools being considered by UCSC. Our discussion focused on Turnitin.com, as this is proposed as a potentially practical choice for our campus.

COLASC is supportive of a concerted effort to educate UCSC students about plagiarism. The committee has serious reservations, though, regarding the use of the proposed technology. We feel that more information is needed regarding the use of the student work by Turnitin.com. Especially given the Senate’s recent response to the proposed Open Access Policy for faculty scholarly work, allowing an external company to maintain a database of UCSC student work is not a choice COLASC supports. We are also skeptical about the need to pay such a high annual licensing fee to address this problem. A limited number of individual faculty licenses may address the problem for our campus. The committee did not see the data that warrants a campus-wide license in the request that was sent from the Executive Vice Chancellor.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,

Roberto Manduchi, Chair
Committee on the Library and Scholarly Communication
February 15, 2013

Joe Konopelski, Chair
Academic Senate

RE: Committee Response to the Campus-Wide Purchase of Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

CPE members discussed the benefits and advantages of purchasing a campus-wide resource license for plagiarism software (i.e., a campus-wide “academic plagiarism checker”). The committee was supportive of the idea. While the committee recognized that many instructors might be reluctant to use the tool in a punitive context, we feel that it should be actively publicized to the faculty that these systems can be very valuable, whether used by students, instructors or both, as an educational rather than punitive tool, used for demonstrating to students what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it. The best and hopefully most frequent use of the system should be to get students to rewrite plagiarized work, since misunderstanding of what constitutes plagiarism is extremely prevalent, and probably more so than calculated deception.

The members thought that its utility might be greatest in disciplinary courses outside the committee's purview, however, since in preparatory writing courses it is often very clear when the students’ writing departs from their own voice. CPE Chair Smith has seen the Turnitin system used very effectively an another institution, and pointed out that the tool would be useful even in the physical sciences for upper division disciplinary writing (e.g. lab reports and senior theses).

CPE hopes that the decision as to whether students' submitted work would be incorporated anonymously into the system's master database will be one that individual instructors can make. On the one hand, being a "good citizen" of the system requires helping to improve its database; if all institutions opted out of this, the system would become entirely ineffective. Chair Smith noted that the most common way that Turnitin recognizes material plagiarized from websites is not by catching resemblances to the websites themselves, but instead by finding matches to other student-submitted papers that plagiarized the same source. On the other hand, some faculty may be so uncomfortable with requiring students to submit their work to the database, even anonymously, that they will simply decline to use a system that would be otherwise valuable to them and their students. Therefore we hope that, whatever system is chosen, this decision can be left to individual faculty; and that, indeed, the presence or absence of this flexibility might be considered as a factor when the vendor is selected. CPE considers the "gold standard" for privacy in a system like this to be that the vendor completely removes information about the origin and authorship of submitted papers when including them in the database. If this
is indeed the practice of the selected vendor, we suggest that this be publicized to faculty to increase their comfort with allowing student papers to be incorporated.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

/s/

David Smith, Chair
Committee on Preparatory Education

cc: Senate Committee Analysts
February 8, 2013

Joe Konopelski, Chair
Academic Senate

Re: Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

The Committee on Planning & Budget (CPB) has reviewed the EVC’s proposal that the campus purchase a software license that does plagiarism checks. CPB is inclined to support purchasing the license, on an ongoing basis only if it were generally accepted and used by enough faculty to justify the cost. It could also be beneficial in educating students on what constitutes plagiarism.

CPB recommends that the software be compatible with e-commons (or whatever platform UCSC is moving to next) and that we monitor usage statistics to determine the value of the program before renewal. CPB further recommends that faculty, through their departments, be explicitly informed about this new software as well as receive training opportunities in its use.

Sincerely,

Lynn Westerkamp, Chair
Committee on Planning and Budget
Re: Plagiarism Software

Dear Joe,

The Committee on Research (COR) reviewed the documents regarding anti-plagiarism software being considered by UCSC. If the cost is justified, Turnitin.com would be ideal for our campus, given its ability to integrate with eCommons and the fact that eight of the ten UCs currently subscribe to its services at the campus (4) or departmental (4) level. Some COR faculty are very concerned about plagiarism. Several members related cases of blatant plagiarism observed firsthand in their courses; they feel that the problem has become rampant with the search engines and online sources available nowadays.

COR recommends that quantitative data be collected — through a trial period with the software and/or through a survey — to gauge the demand for this much needed service. The author of the 2010 report on Turnitin.com was unclear about the expected usage among faculty across campus; COR also heard reports from faculty who are not concerned about this issue.

COR urges that if a Turnitin.com license is purchased, that it be funded centrally, whether the license is purchased campus-wide or for individual departments.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,

Scott Oliver, Chair
Committee on Research
JOE KONOPELSKI  
Chair, Academic Senate  

Re: Plagiarism Software  

Dear Joe,  

The Committee on Teaching (COT) reviewed the proposal from CP/EVC Galloway to purchase a campus-wide software license to help students and faculty detect plagiarism. COT recognized that not all faculty will have a use for the software, but that the writing based disciplines might greatly benefit from it both in terms of reduction in the workload of faculty searching to uncover plagiarism, and in terms of students learning more about what constitutes plagiarism. If campus administration and the relevant Senate committees deem the software cost effective, COT is in support of the proposal.  

Sincerely,  

/s/  

Charlie McDowell, Chair  
Committee on Teaching