The following information has been compiled from the results of a survey sent out to fill the responsibilities set out in the resolutions of the 29th abstract. The survey was meant to elicit responses from professors in the community as to their feelings about various aspects of plagiarism and its occurrence at Haverford and in academic spheres in general. As you are reading it, ask yourself where your opinions fit in: what do you agree with? what do you feel are appropriate answers to these questions? Please use the time you take to read this information to learn about the true dangers and problems with plagiarism, and to reaffirm your own commitment to honest work that will enable you to maintain your academic integrity and the highest possible rewards from your work.

The following questions were asked on the survey:

1) How would you define plagiarism?
2) What would you do or what have you done when you have suspected a student has committed an act of plagiarism?
3) What do you think the general campus response is to plagiarism? Is this an appropriate response?
4) What do you feel are the most harmful effects of an act of plagiarism?
5) Do you think there should be a set procedure established to dictate the handling of a plagiarism case? Why or why not?
6) Why do you think a student would plagiarize?

The responses to the first question, the definition of plagiarism, were fairly similar. The basic answer was "an appropriation of another's work and presenting it as one's own without acknowledgment to its correct source." Many professors elucidated their definition further. One wrote that an important aspect in plagiarism is the "discrimination of what is new or original and what has become commonplace in discourse." Several professors responded by describing plagiarism as "theft," or "stealing." The following quotes made the magnitude of an act of plagiarism quite clear: "It is the theft of intellectual labor, a deliberate act to cover up one's own inadequacies." "It is every bit as much an act of criminal theft as stealing a car, a stereo, a watch, or whatever."

In response to the second question, most professors were also in agreement, most said that if they were in a situation where they suspected a student of plagiarizing, they would personally confront the student with their suspicions and the reasons for their suspicions. One professor wrote
Answers to the third question regarding the campus response to plagiarism became a bit more diverse. The best way to share the response to this question, I feel, would be to quote from the surveys directly:

- "I'm not sure everyone in the community understands how serious an offense to the practice of open and honest intellectual inquiry plagiarism is. Too often it is ignored, brushed up, or responded to with leniency. I think it should be more publicly discussed and that plagiarists should be expelled or at least suspended."
- "Honor Council is spending far more of its energy than it should on these cases and trials. There is no such thing as perfect justice (or perfect anything else). Writing a letter (anonymously) is no hardship in this highly verbal community."
- "If Honor Council decisions are an indication, I would describe the response as lenient, for giving, conciliatory. The view seems to be that plagiarism is a painful mixture of error in judgement that needs to be brought to the individual's attention. I do not think that this is an appropriate response."
- "Playing the moral high ground, hysteria, petty vengeance, morbid voyeurism. No, this is not an appropriate response."
- "Unfortunately, most students respond to plagiarism with intellectual paralysis. Students are unwilling to work collectively and therefore never learn an important mode of intellectual inquiry. Also, students are so worried about documenting their sources that they sometimes do not pay enough attention managing their research and submitting their research findings to their argument."
- "Consent means which is appropriate in some cases."
- "I am frustrated that the level of tolerance as judged from the Honor Council's sanctions is so high."
- "As far as I can tell, the response is that plagiarism cannot be tolerated. It cannot, if we are to remain an academic community."
- "My understanding from the abstracts is that the penalties/punishment can vary greatly. It needs to be standardized so more students and faculty will be comfortable using the system rather than handling it themselves."
- "Too much tendency to excuse it as a natural result of "being under pressure." Most "casual" crime is in fact the result of some individual being "under pressure.""

Since confidentiality was granted to those who filled out the survey, the quotes will remain anonymous.
The responses to the fourth question were also so diverse and thoughtfully articulated that it would not do justice to them were they to be summarized. The following is a compilation of some of the responses to the question, which asked the professors to comment on what they feel are the most harmful effects of plagiarism.

- "In most cases plagiarism is a manifestation of virulent dishonesty. The plagiarism not only has minimal consequences, except in confirming those dishonest habits as a permissible strategy for coping. The real consequences of the inability to police oneself probably occurs later."
- "It contradicts academic values."
- "If it is intentional, the most harmful effect is the choice of the easy way out and the lack of responsibility."
- "One, the student doesn't learn, and two, it violates the honor and integrity of the professor, the class and the person from whom the work was plagiarized."
- "It is theft; when not treated seriously, it undermines in crucial ways the sense of trust between students and faculty. If I knew who plagiarized, I would not allow her to take any of my courses. Given the record displayed in the abstract, how could I trust her?"
- "For the individual: loss of integrity, inability to see education as a process of learning, reinforcement of a "get away with it" character. For the community, destroys trust. If perpetrator is not caught or if caught and not treated, shows that community 'doesn't care.' The nature of sanctions shows the level of seriousness the community feels about the issue."
- "Generally, plagiarism undermines the free and open exchange of ideas that is the very essence of intellectual life. At Haverford, it undermines the code of honor that allows us to operate without the kind of constant policing and monitoring, etc., that one finds at many other colleges and universities. Such police practices are themselves an affront to open intellectual inquiry and the free expression of ideas."
- "The trust between the student and his/her instructor is destroyed. The trust that not only does it become difficult for the two to work productively with each other, but also other faculty members begin to doubt the work the student has done in their courses even before the plagiarism occurred. Even when the student's identity is not known, every instance of plagiarism reminds me that it is possible. Personally, I dislike being positioned as a policeman. I would rather devote my time and energy to the intellectual growth of my students. But when I hear of plagiarism in the college, I feel that I must be vigilant to see that it does not occur in my courses and feel horrified by this new imposition."
- "On the person who commits plagiarism, there is often a personal but unacknowledged guilt that colors future life."
- "In the short term, loss of trust between teachers and students. In the long run, more loss of guilt on the student who gets away with it."
- "It leads people to suspect and doubt their own capacity to produce or at any rate to value their own product as beneath someone else's."
community such as Haverford is not merely a mistake or error in judgment; it represents a fundamental disrespect for (and perhaps a disinterest in) the community and its ideals. To misrepresent ideas for expressions one's own is to take the product rather than the process to be of intrinsic value; it is to hold that the end justifies the means. But an institution such as Haverford does not at its core value as much as the mean of representation that can be realized in polished work. To plagiarize is to devalue absolutely the aim of education and of intellectual work generally. In the process, the student is similarly devalued, his work conceived as an isolable text rather than as the expression of her unique place in the traditions. (To plagiarize, I want to say, is to treat oneself and others as more means of production rather than as unique and irreplaceable ends in themselves.)

In the context of an institution such as Haverford, nothing is as harmful as plagiarism. To understand it, to excuse the plagiarist, requires that we understand ourselves not as involved in a dialogue or process of discovery, but as legs in a mechanism that produces individuals capable of success in a technological society. To put it simply, our attempts to rationalize the plagiarist's actions, if those attempts succeed, will at some time succeed in distorting our own thinking about who we are. (To cheat-for example, to use a crib sheet - is to use a shortcut because one is or thinks oneself too weak to walk alone. To plagiarize is to deny validity of the little altogether.)

The fifth question, asking about the establishment of a set of procedure to dictate the handling of plagiarism, usually elicited one of two responses. Some professors noted that plagiarism should still be handled on a case by case basis, while others felt that there should be automatic sanctions in such situations. One professor wrote that “the question of whether a student should remain at the college should always be an open one, even in what may seem ‘minor’ cases. One never knows whether the case being tried is unique, or just a sample of careless attitudes and behavior.” The statements of the several professors who felt there should be automatic sanctions against an act of plagiarism should, once again, be quoted directly, so that the force of their statements is not lost in the process of summarizing:

- “I firmly believe that public statements from the College should be automatic in all cases of willful plagiarism, except perhaps the first semester, or at most the first year of a student’s time at the College. I believe this to be a necessary and appropriate response which would make the seriousness of the offense manifest to all.”
- “What has drifted has been the sense of community sanctions which too often, seemingly recently, have been held at a step for blunter offenses. Separation from college for a semester should be (and needs to be) a standard penalty for a blunter, clear case of plagiarism, e.g., copying a text and presenting it as one’s own work.”
- “Students who plagiarize should be ‘expelled’ from the College permanently. Students have a choice; Haverford is not the only place from which to get a degree. Plagiarism should be seen as an expression of such a choice. Why? Because any community that strives to function according to an ideal rather than in the with the
the answers to the final question encompassed a wide range of thoughtfully considered possible reasons for plagiarism. Most professors saw academic pressure and panic as the main causes of plagiarism, while others noted as possible causes a sense of inadequacy on the part of the student, fear that we cannot live up to expectation or reputation, a belief in that academic work is not that important, time constraints, the inability to distinguish an idea in the public domain from a new academic concept, the possibility that the “diluted penalties do not sufficiently deter,” that the student has not been taught to think for him- or herself and to trust his/her mind, a lack of knowledge with regard to correct citation procedures, not seeing plagiarism as stealing, or allowing “dishonest impulses to prevail when it becomes necessary.” Most professors were careful to clearly state that they viewed these situations as possible causes but not in any way as acceptable excuses. This is surely one of the most important distinctions to result from this survey.