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SIU accused of plagiarizing plagiarism policy

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The Southern Illinois University Plagiarism Committee has been accused of copying the definition of plagiarism in the university's new plagiarism policy from Indiana University without citing IU, according to a January article in the Chronicle of Higher Education last week.

SIU's draft policy defines plagiarism as "presenting another person's work, original ideas or creative expressions as one's own without proper attribution. Any ideas or materials taken from another source, including one's own work, must be fully acknowledged unless the information is common knowledge."

According to IU's Web site, "plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work, including the work of other students, as one's own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common."

According to Dave Gross, Southern Illinois University Carbondale's executive director of Government and Public Affairs, the SIU Plagiarism Committee is made up of 10 members, five from the Carbondale campus and five from the Edwardsville campus. Their job was to review the current plagiarism policy and rework it after the incidents of plagiarism occurred at both campuses, including SIU President Glenn Poshard's incident of inadvertent plagiarism of his doctoral dissertation.

In response to the plagiarism claims, Gross said the committee chair, Lain Adkins, will call the committee together to look at the section under question and discuss where SIU's definition originated.

"If a mistake was made, it'll be noted," Gross said.

The SIU policy is not at this time in its final form, Gross said. It is in the draft stage in front of constituency groups who will be asked for their comments after reviewing the policy. After that there will be another draft process.

"This is a policy that won't go before the board (of trustees) for awhile," Gross said.

Pamela Freeman, IU's Associate Dean of Students and Director of Student Ethics and Anti-Harassment Programs said it was not unusual for universities to have similarities in administrative documents because they are mostly based on universal templates. IU was unaware of the possible plagiarism until the Chronicle's article.

"I'm not aware of anyone at IU being a complainant," Freeman said.

According to Freeman, if SIU had called IU they would have talked to their provost for permission and there would not have been a problem.

"In administrative documents, universities normally don't object much if colleagues want to use (broad

definitions)," Freeman said.

Senior criminal justice major Bridgette Carter said she found it ironic and almost pointless that SIU was blamed for plagiarizing the definition of plagiarism.

"Aren't there other issues to focus on like putting money into different departments?" Carter said.

Sophomore speech pathology major Katie Spenner said she understood why SIU had to take note of the possible plagiarism.

"It's important to say where the information came from," Spenner said. "However, its all been done and said before."

According to Gross, SIU has not heard from IU in response to the possible plagiarism.

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