

BA 384T FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING

FALL 2013—HOUSTON

Professor Eric Hirst

Office MBA Program Office

Office Hours Monday and Wednesday 1 PM – 3 PM or by appointment; I will be in

Houston prior to class each weekend and available after class as well

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Course Web Page via Blackboard

Teaching Assistants see Blackboard for times and location

Course Objectives

This course provides an overview of financial accounting information and the role of that information in the economy. The first portion of the course presents an overview of the accrual accounting model, how financial information is presented and the mechanics of keeping track of financial accounting information. Without a solid understanding of this material, the remainder of the course will be very difficult. I urge you to do the course prework and to keep up with the course from the start.

The remainder of the course focuses on how corporate financial statements report particular economic events. By the end of the course you should feel comfortable reading the financial statements in published annual reports, and you should be able to come to a reasoned conclusion about a company's financial health and be able to make comparisons across firms and periods of time.

Leadership and this Course

The Texas MBA program is designed to develop influential business leaders. The MBA Program has identified four fundamental and broad pillars of leadership: knowledge and understanding, communication and collaboration, responsibility and integrity, and a worldview of business and society.

In this course, you will enhance your knowledge and understanding of financial reporting (the language of business) and how financial information helps leaders understand and manage their business. Through class discussion, informal study groups, and projects you will enhance your communication and collaboration skills. You will learn how high-quality, credible financial reporting enhances the ability of managers to lead their organizations effectively and with integrity. Finally, many of the cases and examples involve international companies and reporting practices, affording you a global perspective on financial reporting.

Materials

Required

Financial Accounting, 4th edition, by Dyckman, Magee, and Pfeiffer, published by Cambridge Business Publishing.

An extensive set of pre-class and in-class notes are available on Blackboard.

The <u>textbook</u> for the course is *Financial Accounting*, 4th edition, by Dyckman, Magee, and Pfeiffer, published by Cambridge Business Publishing. This textbook also has a companion website that will be important in completing your homework assignments.

There is also a packet for the course that contains both "pre-class notes" and "in-class notes" aligned with the chapters in the textbook and the course schedule (below). As explained below, you are to carefully study the pre-

class notes before coming to class to <u>understand</u> the topic for that session, and during each class session we will together work our way through the in-class notes to help you <u>apply</u> the material you have learned.

I recommend that you acquire a <u>financial calculator</u> and learn how to use it. You will need it for this class and for many of your other classes in the program, and the sooner you get comfortable with one calculator the better. The calculator I am most familiar with is the HP 10B-II(+), made by Hewlett Packard. The Texas Instruments BAII Plus is equivalent.

The "Blackboard" website is https://courses.utexas.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp. I will use this website to post all course-related documents, including those in the packet you have been given. Most importantly, I will post six prior exams at the website along with an index of the prior exams that assigns each question to the appropriate textbook chapter. These prior exams will be very important in your preparation for exams.

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade in the course will be determined as follows:

	<u>Points</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Homework	100	20%
Midterm Exam	150	30%
Final Project	50	10%
Final Exam	200	<u>40%</u>
Total	500	100%

The MBA Programs Committee approved the following target grade distribution for all Core and Flex Core courses: A (4.0) 25%, A- (3.67) 20%, B+ (3.33) 15%, B (3.0) 35%, B- or below (2.67) 5%. This course uses that target distribution as a guideline for establishing final grades.

To determine final grades I rank all of the students in the class from highest to lowest on the basis of total points. I then draw lines between A and A- and between A- and B+, etc., based on the guidelines described above.

Course Description and Requirements

The objective of this course is to help you to become comfortable reading the financial statements of any commercial business, from a large publicly traded company to a small privately held company. We will achieve this in three steps.

<u>The first step</u> is to understand the accounting concepts in general (early part of course) and as they apply to specific situations (later part of course). You will accomplish this step largely on your own by reading the pre-class notes, using the textbook as a resource to understand those notes where needed, and by completing your assigned homework.

<u>The second step</u> is to apply these accounting concepts to actual financial statements. This step can be a little tricky because there is some variation across companies and how and where they present the data you will need for any particular task. This step will be the focus of our in-class work, and you will only the get the most out of it if you have done a good job of understanding the relevant accounting concepts before you come to class.

<u>The third step</u> is practice. I can't emphasize this enough. Learning accounting requires practice. The more you practice the more comfortable you will become with financial statements and the better you will do in the course. I hear this over and over from students and I have seen it in class year after year. Likely you are no different. The way to practice is to review all of the problems we do in class, do many of the old exam problems that I provide to you, apply these old problems to other sets of financial statements and solve those, all the while discussing all of this in your groups. Groups are great; use them. My only word of caution is that in the end you will take the exams by yourself, so make sure before each exam that you can succeed independent of the group.

Class Sessions

As you will quickly see, I like class to be very interactive. I hope you will come prepared and that you will ask questions when you don't understand something and that you will bring up examples from your work when they are relevant, this greatly enriches the class discussion. The more you engage the more interesting class will be, the more you will get out of each class session, and the easier the course will be.

Homework

For each class session you will have homework due before class that is detailed in the course schedule on the following page. These problems are all from the textbook and you are to complete the problems at the textbook web site at mybusinesscourse.com. The homework will be computer-graded for both accuracy and completeness. The problems are not intended to be difficult for those who prepare before completing them. I am hopeful that all students will receive full credit for the homework. Please keep in mind that the objective of the course is to become comfortable reading actual financial statements, so that textbook homework problems are only an intermediary step, not the goal itself. What we cover in class and old exams are your best guides to what will be asked on exams. You will not be responsible for material discussed in the text that was not discussed in class.

The schedule lists both graded homework that you are asked to submit <u>prior</u> to class as well as some basic questions that you can use to test your knowledge after class (or before if you wish). Remember that these textbook problems are the building blocks upon which you will extend your knowledge. The old exams are a great place to find additional practice problems and those are the level of difficulty you can expect on your exams this semester.

Individual Report

You will get a chance to use your new financial reporting and analysis skills in completing a short financial statement analysis of a company of your choosing. Details on the report, including company choices and deadlines appear immediately after the course schedule in this document.

Exams

During the semester we will have a midterm exam and a final exam. Both exams are closed book and closed notes. You may bring a calculator to the exams, but it should not have emailing or text features. Each exam will be based on the actual financial statements of a real company. You will be told in advance which company and which fiscal year will be used so that you may specifically study these financial statements before the exam.

Students with Disabilities

Upon request, the University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) is housed in the Office of the Dean of Students, located on the fourth floor of the Student Services Building. Information on how to register, downloadable forms, including guidelines for documentation, accommodation request letters, and releases of information are available online at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/index.php.

Please do not hesitate to contact SSD at (512) 471-6259, VP: (512) 232-2937 or via e-mail if you have any questions.

Schedule

	Pre-class		After-class activities		
Meeting	activities		Textbook (with answers on Bb)		
iviceting	Notes				
	topic	Graded problems	Key problem(s)	Supplemental problem(s)	
Austin					
July 29-	1-4				
Aug. 1		D0 54 1 1		50.07.50.40.00.66	
Weekend		P3-54, excluding	graded prob P3-54	E2-37, E2-43, P2-66	
#1 Aug. 23-24		questions using FSET	tests the acctg cycle	E3-33, P3-41, P3-52, P3-53I do not use the FSET in the course; use if helpful to you	
Aug. 23-24		E4-35	E4-52	M4-22, M4-28, E4-32, E4-36, E4-38, E4-40	
	4	E4-39	L4-32	1014-22, 1014-20, 14-32, 14-30, 14-30, 14-40	
	(cont)	E4-42			
	5a	none		none	
	6a	M6-14a & M6-14b	E6-30	M6-25, E6-27, E6-32, E6-40	
Weekend	6a	E6-35	E6-35	M6-18, M6-21, M6-23a-c, P6-44a&b	
#2	(cont)	M6-34a-b			
Sept. 6-7	6b				
Weekend	7	M7-19	E7-26, E7-30	M7-23a-c, E7-27, E7-29, E7-31, P7-34a-d	
#3		M7-23a-c			
Sept. 20-21	Cate	ch Up and Review			
Weekend #4	Mid-term Exam				
Oct. 4	IVIIG-tei	III Exaiii			
		M8-11	M8-13a&c, P8-35a-c,	M8-15*, E8-22*, E8-24*, E8-26, P8-38, P8-	
Weekend	8a	E8-35a-c	P8-36	39	
#5 Oct. 18- 19		P8-36			
15	8b	E8-31	E12-41	MC#5, MC#6, Q8-9, Q8-10, M8-21a, E8-34	
	9	E9-38a	E9-43	M6-17, E9-38, P9-51	
Weekend		M9-36a-b	M9-29	MC#2, M9-21, E9-50a-b, P9-58a-b	
#6		E9-39	P9-59	none	
Oct. 25-26	10	M10-16	E10-28	E10-23, E10-25, E10-26, E10-27, P10-35a,c-	
	10			d, P10-36a-c,e	
Weekend		E12-25a(i)(ii)-b(i)(ii)	E12-35a-b, E12-36a-	M12-12, M12-21a-b, M12-22a-b, E12-24a-	
#7	12	E12-30a-b	b, M12-14a-e	b,d(i)-(ii)E12-32a(1)(2)-b(1)(2), M12-15,	
Nov. 8-9	Cat	sh Lin and Daview		M12-16, E12-31a-b, E12-33, E12-38	
Weekend	Cato	ch Up and Review			
weekend #8	Final Ex	am			
Nov. 23	i iiidi Ex	~			
Due	EC. 2				
Dec. 2	FSA Pro	ject			

TEXAS MBA PROGRAM FINAL PROJECT

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING (BA 384T)
FALL 2013

Your "final project" is a financial statement analysis of a company you select. The ratios you are asked to compute are discussed in the class notes and the textbook.

Your completed project should include:

- A completed table of ratios and other financial statement measures for the company you select. This table is shown on the next page.
- A brief (1-2 page single spaced) evaluation of your company's financial ratios, comprising the following four sections:

Section I—A brief (1-3 sentences) summary of your company's business and the economic environment in which it operates.

Section II — A brief evaluation over time of your company's:

- Return on equity (ROE),
- DuPont ratio components (profitability, efficiency and leverage), and
- LT Debt-to-Assets ratio

Section III —A brief evaluation over time of your company's:

- Cash conversion cycle
- Cash liquidity and Cash Sources & Uses

Section IV — A brief (e.g., 1-2 sentence) description of the overall ratio trend and what it implies for current and future financial performance.

Each section should have an appropriate heading and the writing should be in the form of sentences and paragraphs, not bullet points.

You may confer with colleagues and any other resources, including me or the TAs, in thinking about your company financial statement analysis. However, you must individually draft your response to this assignment. The emphasis is on *effort*, not results—full credit is awarded for a good faith effort to complete this assignments.

You will probably be able to find all of the financial statement information you need at the company's website. Note, that you will have to look at more than one annual report to get enough years of data to do all of the computations. If you have trouble finding the information you can pick another company

Company selection. By midnight on Monday, September 9th, you should submit via Blackboard the name of the company you have selected to analyze. To do this use the "Discussion Board" link at Blackboard entitled "DISCUSSION BOARD, Select Your Company" and follow the directions.

Each member of the class must select a different company. Company selection is on a first-come first-serve basis as established by your posting to your cohort's discussion board link. Please review the discussion board link to confirm that the company you wish to select has not already been selected. The company you select may be almost any publicly-traded company of your choosing. **However, please do not select a company in financial services due to this industry's unique nature.**

Company analysis deadline. Your company analysis is due by midnight on Monday, December 2nd. I strongly encourage you to chip away at the assignment during the semester, and you will find that completing it at the end of the semester prior to the final exam is not difficult. I welcome you to submit the assignment before the deadline if you have completed it early.

You should submit the assignment to me via Blackboard. Please follow these instructions: (a) combine the text for your report and the table with your financial ratios into one pdf file and (b) name the file using the following convention: **Smith_Jack_Starbucks_2013.pdf** for a report covering the Starbucks Corporation (don't use Starbucks or HP) completed by Jack Smith in the Fall 2013 semester. It is not necessary to turn in copies of the company's financial statements or the spreadsheet you used to compute your ratios. Calculate these ratios on your own using the financial statement data. Do not use a commercial data service or, say, Google Finance, for the ratios.

	FINANCIAL STATEMENT ANAYLYSIS YOUR COMPANY
Company name:	
Company ticker:	
Your name (coho	rt):

Ratios and Other Analysis Measures	Year End (3 years)		
ROE and DuPont Ratios			
ROE (NI / OE _{avg})			
Profitability (NI / Sales)			
Efficiency (Turnover = Sales / Assets _{avg})			
Leverage (Leverage = Assets avg / OEavg)			
Additional Efficiency Ratios			
AR Turnover (Sales / AR _{avg})			
Days Receivables Outstanding (DRO) [AR _{avg} / (Sales/365)]			
Inventory Turnover (COGS / Inventory _{avg})			
Days Inventory (DI) [Inventory _{avg} / (COGS/365)]			
AP Turnover (Purchases / AP _{avg})			
Days Payables Outstanding (DPO) [365 / (Purchases / Accts Payable _{avg})]			
CASH CONVERSION CYCLE (DI - DPO + DRO)			
Additional Leverage Ratio			
LT Debt-to-Assets (LT Debt, including current portion / total Assets)			
Cash Liquidity and Cash Sources & Uses			
Working Capital (CA - CL)			
Current Ratio (CA / CL)			
Quick Ratio [(Cash + ST Securities + AR) / CL)]			

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REGISTERING ON MYBUSINESSCOURSE.COM

Course Registration Code: (coming soon via e-mail)

Course Name: BA 348T: Financial Accounting

First Time Users: To access your instructor's course, you will need to do the following steps.

- 1. Register with a new account at myBusinessCourse by going to www.mybusinesscourse.com
- 2. Select **Start Here** under the "Students" section
- 3. Enter your Course Registration Code in the "Enter Course Code" section
- 4. Confirm that the Course Name matches the course found
- 5. Create a new account by filling out the registration form. (If you already have an account, do not create a new one. Sign In by enter your username and password in the "Sign In" field)
- 6. Enter your **Purchase Code** from your textbook or select **Purchase Access**

McCombs Classroom Professionalism Policy

The highest professional standards are expected of all members of the McCombs community. The collective class reputation and the value of the Texas MBA experience hinges on this.

You should treat the Texas MBA classroom as you would a corporate boardroom.

Faculty are expected to be professional and prepared to deliver value for each and every class session. Students are expected to be professional in all respects.

The Texas MBA classroom experience is enhanced when:

- Students arrive on time. On time arrival ensures that classes are able to start and finish at the scheduled time. On time arrival shows respect for both fellow students and faculty and it enhances learning by reducing avoidable distractions.
- Students display their name cards. This permits fellow students and faculty to learn names, enhancing opportunities for community building and evaluation of in-class contributions.
- Students do not confuse the classroom for the cafeteria. The classroom (boardroom) is not the place to eat your breakfast tacos, wraps, sweet potato fries, or otherwise set up for a picnic. Please plan accordingly. Recognizing that back-to-back classes sometimes take place over the lunch hour, energy bars and similar snacks are permitted. Please be respectful of your fellow students and faculty in your choices.
- Students minimize unscheduled personal breaks. The learning environment improves when disruptions are limited.
- Students are fully prepared for each class. Much of the learning in the Texas MBA program takes place during classroom discussions. When students are not prepared they cannot contribute to the overall learning process. This affects not only the individual, but their peers who count on them, as well.
- Students attend the class section to which they are registered. Learning is enhanced when class sizes are optimized. Limits are set to ensure a quality experience. When section hopping takes place some classes become too large and it becomes difficult to contribute. When they are too small, the breadth of experience and opinion suffers.
- Students respect the views and opinions of their colleagues. Disagreement and debate are encouraged.
 Intolerance for the views of others is unacceptable.
- Laptops, iPads, tablets and smartphones are used to enhance the learning process and not as distractions. When students are surfing the web, responding to e-mail, instant messaging each other, and otherwise not devoting their full attention to the topic at hand they are doing themselves and their peers a major disservice. Those around them face additional distraction. Fellow students cannot benefit from the insights of the students who are not engaged. Faculty office hours are spent going over class material with students who chose not to pay attention, rather than truly adding value by helping students who want a better understanding of the material or want to explore the issues in more depth. Students with real needs may not be able to obtain adequate help if faculty time is spent repeating what was said in class.
- Phones and wireless devices are turned off. We've all heard the annoying ringing in the middle of a meeting. Not only is it not professional, it cuts off the flow of discussion when the search for the offender begins. When a true need to communicate with someone outside of class exists (e.g., for some medical need) please inform the professor prior to class.

Remember, you are competing for the best faculty McCombs has to offer. Your professionalism and activity in class contributes to your success in attracting the best faculty to this program.

Academic Dishonesty

I have no tolerance for acts of academic dishonesty. Such acts damage the reputation of the school and the degree and demean the honest efforts of the majority of students. The minimum penalty for an act of academic dishonesty will be a zero for that assignment or exam.

The responsibilities for both students and faculty with regard to the Honor System are described on the final pages of this syllabus. As the instructor for this course, I agree to observe all the faculty responsibilities described therein. As a Texas MBA student, you agree to observe all of the student responsibilities of the Honor Code. If the application of the Honor System to this class and its assignments is unclear in any way, it is your responsibility to ask me for clarification.

As specific guidance for this course, you should consider the *writing* of all examinations to be an individual effort. Group *preparation* for examinations is acceptable and encouraged. Homework assignments are to be turned in individually but I encourage you to work together in answering the questions. You should, however, develop your own answer and not cut and paste the work of others.

Honor Code Purpose

Academic honor, trust and integrity are fundamental to The University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business community. They contribute directly to the quality of your education and reach far beyond the campus to your overall standing within the business community. The University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business Honor System promotes academic honor, trust and integrity throughout the Graduate School of Business. The Honor System relies upon The University of Texas Student Standards of Conduct (Chapter 11 of the Institutional Rules on Student Service and Activities) for enforcement, but promotes ideals that are higher than merely enforceable standards. Every student is responsible for understanding and abiding by the provisions of the Honor System and the University of Texas Student Standards of Conduct. The University expects all students to obey the law, show respect for other members of the university community, perform contractual obligations, maintain absolute integrity and the highest standard of individual honor in scholastic work, and observe the highest standards of conduct. Ignorance of the Honor System or The University of Texas Student Standards of Conduct is not an acceptable excuse for violations under any circumstances.

The effectiveness of the Honor System results solely from the wholehearted and uncompromising support of each member of the McCombs School of Business community. Each member must abide by the Honor System and must be intolerant of any violations. The system is only as effective as you make it.

Faculty Involvement in the Honor System

The University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business Faculty's commitment to the Honor System is critical to its success. It is imperative that faculty make their expectations clear to all students. They must also respond to accusations of cheating or other misconduct by students in a timely, discrete and fair manner. We urge faculty members to promote awareness of the importance of integrity through in-class discussions and assignments throughout the semester.

Expectations Under the Honor System

Standards

If a student is uncertain about the standards of conduct in a particular setting, he or she should ask the relevant faculty member for clarification to ensure his or her conduct falls within the expected scope of honor, trust and integrity as promoted by the Honor System. This applies to all tests, papers and group and individual work. Questions about appropriate behavior during the job search should be addressed to a professional member of the Career Management Office. Below are some of the specific examples of violations of the Honor System.

Lying

Lying is any deliberate attempt to deceive another by stating an untruth, or by any direct form of communication to include the telling of a partial truth. Lying includes the use or omission of any information with the intent to deceive or mislead. Examples of lying include, but are not limited to, providing a false excuse for why a test was missed or presenting false information to a recruiter.

Stealing

Stealing is wrongfully taking, obtaining, withholding, defacing or destroying any person's money, personal property, article or service, under any circumstances. Examples of stealing include, but are not limited to, removing course material from the library or hiding it from others, removing material from another person's mail folder, securing for one's self unattended items such as calculators, books, book bags or other personal property. Another form of stealing is the duplication of copyrighted material beyond the reasonable bounds of "fair use." Defacing (e.g., "marking up" or highlighting) library books is also considered stealing, because, through a willful act, the value of another's property is decreased. (See the appendix for a detailed explanation of "fair use.")

Cheating

Cheating is wrongfully and unfairly acting out of self-interest for personal gain by seeking or accepting an unauthorized advantage over one's peers. Examples include, but are not limited to, obtaining questions or answers to tests or quizzes, and getting assistance on case write-ups or other projects beyond what is authorized by the assigning instructor. It is also cheating to accept the benefit(s) of another person's theft(s) even if not

actively sought. For instance, if one continues to be attentive to an overhead conversation about a test or case write-up even if initial exposure to such information was accidental and beyond the control of the student in question, one is also cheating. If a student overhears a conversation or any information that any faculty member might reasonably wish to withhold from the student, the student should inform the faculty member(s) of the information and circumstance under which it was overheard.

Actions Required for Responding to Suspected and Known Violations

As stated, everyone must abide by the Honor System and be intolerant of violations. If you suspect a violation has occurred, you should first speak to the suspected violator in an attempt to determine if an infraction has taken place. If, after doing so, you still believe that a violation has occurred, you must tell the suspected violator that he or she must report himself or herself to the course professor or Associate Dean of the McCombs School of Business. If the individual fails to report himself or herself within 48 hours, it then becomes your obligation to report the infraction to the course professor or the Associate Dean of the McCombs School of Business. Remember that although you are not required by regulation to take any action, our Honor System is only as effective as you make it. If you remain silent when you suspect or know of a violation, you are approving of such dishonorable conduct as the community standard. You are thereby precipitating a repetition of such violations.

The Honor Pledge

The University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business requires each enrolled student to adopt the Honor System. The Honor Pledge best describes the conduct promoted by the Honor System. It is as follows:

"I affirm that I belong to the honorable community of The University of Texas at Austin Graduate School of Business. I will not lie, cheat or steal, nor will I tolerate those who do."

"I pledge my full support to the Honor System. I agree to be bound at all times by the Honor System and understand that any violation may result in my dismissal from the McCombs School of Business."

The following pages provide specific guidance about the Standard of Academic Integrity at the University of Texas at Austin. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask me any questions you might have.

Excerpts from the University of Texas at Austin Office of the Dean of Students website (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

The Standard of Academic Integrity

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin, as emphasized in the standards of conduct. More specifically, you and other students are expected to "maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work" undertaken at the University (Sec. 11-801, Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities). This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's Honor Code. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline;
 and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to Chapter 11 of the Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities.

What is Scholastic Dishonesty?

In promoting a high standard of academic integrity, the University broadly defines scholastic dishonesty—basically, all conduct that violates this standard, including any act designed to give an unfair or undeserved academic advantage, such as:

- Cheating
- Plagiarism
- Unauthorized Collaboration
- Collusion
- Falsifying Academic Records
- Misrepresenting Facts (e.g., providing false information to postpone an exam, obtain an extended deadline for an assignment, or even gain an unearned financial benefit)
- Any other acts (or attempted acts) that violate the basic standard of academic integrity (e.g., multiple submissions—submitting essentially the same written assignment for two courses without authorization to do so)

Several types of scholastic dishonesty—<u>unauthorized collaboration</u>, <u>plagiarism</u>, and <u>multiple submissions</u>—are discussed in more detail on this Web site to correct common misperceptions about these particular offenses and suggest ways to avoid committing them.

For the University's official definition of scholastic dishonesty, see <u>Section 11-802</u>, *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*.

Unauthorized Collaboration

If you work with another person on an assignment for credit without the instructor's permission to do so, you are engaging in unauthorized collaboration.

- This common form of academic dishonesty can occur with all types of scholastic work—papers, homework, tests (take-home or in-class), lab reports, computer programming projects, or any other assignments to be submitted for credit.
- For the University's official definitions of unauthorized collaboration and the related offense of collusion, see Sections 11-802(c)(6) & 11-802(e), Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities.

Some students mistakenly assume that they can work together on an assignment as long as the instructor has not expressly prohibited collaborative efforts.

 Actually, students are expected to complete assignments independently unless the course instructor indicates otherwise. So working together on assignments is *not* permitted unless the instructor specifically approves of any such collaboration.

Unfortunately, students who engage in unauthorized collaboration tend to justify doing so through various rationalizations. For example, some argue that they contributed to the work, and others maintain that working together on an assignment "helped them learn better."

- The instructor—not the student—determines the purpose of a particular assignment and the acceptable
 method for completing it. Unless working together on an assignment has been specifically authorized,
 always assume it is not allowed.
- Many educators do value group assignments and other collaborative efforts, recognizing their potential for developing and enhancing specific learning skills. And course requirements in some classes do consist primarily of group assignments. But the expectation of individual work is the prevailing norm in many classes, consistent with the presumption of original work that remains a fundamental tenet of scholarship in the American educational system.

Some students incorrectly assume that the degree of any permissible collaboration is basically the same for all classes.

The extent of any permissible collaboration can vary widely from one class to the next, even from one
project to the next within the same class.

Be sure to distinguish between collaboration that is authorized for a particular assignment and
unauthorized collaboration that is undertaken for the sake of expedience or convenience to benefit you
and/or another student. By failing to make this key distinction, you are much more likely to engage in
unauthorized collaboration. To avoid any such outcome, always seek clarification from the instructor.

Unauthorized collaboration can also occur in conjunction with group projects.

How so? If the degree or type of collaboration exceeds the parameters expressly approved by the
instructor. An instructor may allow (or even expect) students to work together on one stage of a group
project but require independent work on other phases. Any such distinctions should be strictly observed.

Providing another student unauthorized assistance on an assignment is also a violation, even without the prospect of benefiting yourself.

- If an instructor did not authorize students to work together on a particular assignment and you help a student complete that assignment, you are providing unauthorized assistance and, in effect, facilitating an act of academic dishonesty. Equally important, you can be held accountable for doing so.
- For similar reasons, you should not allow another student access to your drafted or completed assignments unless the instructor has permitted those materials to be shared in that manner.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is another serious violation of academic integrity. In simplest terms, this occurs if you represent as your own work any material that was obtained from another source, regardless how or where you acquired it.

- Plagiarism can occur with all types of media—scholarly or non-academic, published or unpublished—written publications, Internet sources, oral presentations, illustrations, computer code, scientific data or analyses, music, art, and other forms of expression. (See Section 11-802(d) of the Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities for the University's official definition of plagiarism.)
- Borrowed material from written works can include entire papers, one or more paragraphs, single phrases, or any other excerpts from a variety of sources such as books, journal articles, magazines, downloaded Internet documents, purchased papers from commercial writing services, papers obtained from other students (including homework assignments), etc.
- As a general rule, the use of any borrowed material results in plagiarism if the original source is not
 properly acknowledged. So you can be held accountable for plagiarizing material in either a final
 submission of an assignment or a draft that is being submitted to an instructor for review, comments,
 and/or approval.

Using *verbatim* material (e.g., exact words) without proper attribution (or credit) constitutes the most blatant form of plagiarism. However, other types of material can be plagiarized as well, such as *ideas* drawn from an original source or even its *structure* (e.g., sentence construction or line of argument).

• Improper or insufficient paraphrasing often accounts for this type of plagiarism. (See additional information on <u>paraphrasing</u>.)

Plagiarism can be committed intentionally or unintentionally.

- Strictly speaking, any use of material from another source without proper attribution constitutes
 plagiarism, regardless why that occurred, and any such conduct violates accepted standards of academic
 integrity.
- Some students deliberately plagiarize, often rationalizing this misconduct with a variety of excuses: falling behind and succumbing to the pressures of meeting deadlines; feeling overworked and wishing to reduce their workloads; compensating for actual (or perceived) academic or language deficiencies; and/or justifying plagiarism on other grounds.
- But some students commit plagiarism without intending to do so, often stumbling into negligent plagiarism
 as a result of sloppy notetaking, insufficient paraphrasing, and/or ineffective proofreading. Those
 problems, however, neither justify nor excuse this breach of academic standards. By misunderstanding
 the meaning of plagiarism and/or failing to cite sources accurately, you are much more likely to commit
 this violation. Avoiding that outcome requires, at a minimum, a clear understanding of plagiarism and the

appropriate techniques for scholarly attribution. (See related information on <u>paraphrasing</u>; <u>notetaking and</u> <u>proofreading</u>; and acknowledging and citing sources.)

By merely changing a few words or rearranging several words or sentences, you are *not* paraphrasing. Making minor revisions to borrowed text amounts to plagiarism.

• Even if properly cited, a "paraphrase" that is too similar to the original source's wording and/or structure is, in fact, plagiarized. (See additional information on paraphrasing.)

Remember, your instructors should be able to clearly identify which materials (e.g., words and ideas) are your own and which originated with other sources.

 That cannot be accomplished without proper attribution. You must give credit where it is due, acknowledging the sources of any borrowed passages, ideas, or other types of materials, and enclosing any verbatim excerpts with quotation marks (using block indentation for longer passages).

Plagiarism & Unauthorized Collaboration

<u>Plagiarism</u> and <u>unauthorized collaboration</u> are often committed jointly.

By submitting as your own work any unattributed material that you obtained from other sources (including the contributions of another student who assisted you in preparing a homework assignment), you have committed plagiarism. And if the instructor did not authorize students to work together on the assignment, you have also engaged in unauthorized collaboration. Both violations contribute to the same fundamental deception—representing material obtained from another source as your own work.

Group efforts that extend beyond the limits approved by an instructor frequently involve plagiarism in addition to unauthorized collaboration. For example, an instructor may allow students to work together while researching a subject, but require each student to write a separate report. If the students collaborate while writing their reports and then submit the products of those joint efforts as individual works, they are guilty of unauthorized collaboration as well as plagiarism. In other words, the students collaborated on the written assignment without authorization to do so, and also failed to acknowledge the other students' contributions to their own individual reports.

Multiple Submissions

Submitting the same paper (or other type of assignment) for two courses without prior approval represents another form of academic dishonesty.

You may not submit a substantially similar paper or project for credit in two (or more) courses unless expressly authorized to do so by your instructor(s). (See <u>Section 11-802(b)</u> of the *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities* for the University's official definition of scholastic dishonesty.)

You may, however, re-work or supplement previous work on a topic with the instructor's approval.

Some students mistakenly assume that they are entitled to submit the same paper (or other assignment) for two (or more) classes simply because they authored the original work.

Unfortunately, students with this viewpoint tend to overlook the relevant ethical and academic issues, focusing instead on their own "authorship" of the original material and personal interest in receiving essentially double credit for a single effort.

Unauthorized multiple submissions are inherently deceptive. After all, an instructor reasonably assumes that any completed assignments being submitted for credit were actually prepared for that course. Mindful of that assumption, students who "recycle" their own papers from one course to another make an effort to convey that impression. For instance, a student may revise the original title page or imply through some other means that he or she wrote the paper for that particular course, sometimes to the extent of discussing a "proposed" paper topic with the instructor or presenting a "draft" of the paper before submitting the "recycled" work for credit.

The issue of plagiarism is also relevant. If, for example, you previously prepared a paper for one course and then submit it for credit in another course without citing the initial work, you are committing plagiarism—essentially "self-plagiarism"—the term used by some institutions. Recall the broad scope of <u>plagiarism</u>: all types of materials can be plagiarized, including unpublished works, even papers you previously wrote.

Another problem concerns the resulting "unfair academic advantage" that is specifically referenced in the University's definition of scholastic dishonesty. If you submit a paper for one course that you prepared and submitted for another class, you are simply better situated to devote more time and energy toward fulfilling other

requirements for the subsequent course than would be available to classmates who are completing all course requirements during that semester. In effect, you would be gaining an unfair academic advantage, which constitutes academic dishonesty as it is defined on this campus.

Some students, of course, do recognize one or more of these ethical issues, but still refrain from citing their authorship of prior papers to avoid earning reduced (or zero) credit for the same works in other classes. That underlying motivation further illustrates the deceptive nature of unauthorized multiple submissions.

An additional issue concerns the problematic minimal efforts involved in "recycling" papers (or other prepared assignments). Exerting minimal effort basically undercuts the curricular objectives associated with a particular assignment and the course itself. Likewise, the practice of "recycling" papers subverts important learning goals for individual degree programs and higher education in general, such as the mastery of specific skills that students should acquire and develop in preparing written assignments. This demanding but necessary process is somewhat analogous to the required regimen of athletes, like the numerous laps and other repetitive training exercises that runners must successfully complete to prepare adequately for a marathon.