Academic Integrity

In the university, ideas are kind of a big deal. There's even a collection of rules that govern how ideas have to be handled, which you agreed to follow when you accepted admission to the University of West Florida. Playing by these rules is called "academic integrity," and it's part of the UWF Honor Code. Violating them is called "academic misconduct," and it's taken seriously because it undermines everything we stand for.

The rules of academic integrity are kind of like laws, except they carry a moral judgment. In the American legal system, you can break some laws, like jaywalking, and no one's going to wonder about your moral character. Academic misconduct, however, is less like jaywalking, and more like cheating on your sweetie. Gather ‘round kids, Uncle Joshy’s got a little story for you. There once was a boy named Jack. He cheated on his girlfriend, Jill. Jill went on Facebook and told all 6,000 of her friends about his (ahem) indiscretion. And then Jack had to move to North Dakota, which didn’t even work because they have Facebook there, too. So not only did he get dumped, but nobody ever trusted him again. And he had to eat worms. Because cheating on your sweetie makes you the kind of person other people don't trust. And that's how academic misconduct works. It sticks with you, even if you transfer to another school.

Here are some of the highlights. Plagiarism is the big one. This means using other people's ideas, creations, or language without giving proper credit where credit is due. Some examples: turning in a paper someone else wrote, even if you significantly altered it; failing to cite a source; or improperly citing a source. There's one more that might surprise you: re-submission of work. You may not turn in a paper written for another class. I know it might sound weird, but let me explain. The more papers you write, the more you learn. You don’t learn anything from turning in an old paper, and your professors sort of want proof that you’ve learned something in their classes. The kind of proof that can only be found in a brand new paper about the stuff they’ve been teaching.

Here are some other less surprising violations. Academic theft, such as stealing the answers to a test. Fabrication, which is making up fake ideas, like when you need one last source for your big paper and decide to invent something that sounds plausible. Bribery, which is offering your professors or classmates money, goods, or services in exchange for academic favors. I once had a student offer to do my laundry, which was also just weird (and tempting). Misrepresentation, which is lying. Like saying your grandma died so you can get an extension on a paper. Facilitating academic dishonesty. For example, helping someone cheat. Or not reporting someone who's cheating. Either way, you'd be helping a cheater, and as Argonauts, we act with integrity. We do not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do. All of the instances I just described, as well as the University process for handling these offences, can be found in your Student Handbook, under the UWF Academic Misconduct Code.

Now, if you're accused of academic misconduct, there is a process. If you're found guilty, you'll be sanctioned, ranging from a warning all the way up to expulsion or even revocation of your academic degree. Additionally, the incident will be recorded in your file, and if it happens again, the process goes faster, with harsher consequences. That file stays with you wherever you go, even if you transfer to another school. And yes, this is some scary stuff. But the good news is,
these rules help you be a better student, which will help you learn more, and be more employable after graduation.