Academic Honesty Statement of Understanding
(Adapted from document developed by Claudia Lampman, Ph.D.)

INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this document is to educate students about what qualifies as academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and research fraud and prevent them from suffering the consequences. First, terms are defined, and then discuss the most common forms of academic dishonesty are discussed and illustrated with examples. Finally, each student is required to sign a statement indicating that he/she has read the document and understands its content.

APA ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND CODE OF CONDUCT
In 2002, the American Psychological Association (APA) created a document called the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*. Several parts of the APA Code address ethics in scientific writing and reporting of research findings:

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<th>APA Code Section 8.10: Reporting of Research Results</th>
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<td>(a) Psychologists do not fabricate data.</td>
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<td>(b) If psychologists discover significant errors in their published data, they take reasonable steps to correct such errors in a correction, retraction, erratum, or other appropriate publication means.</td>
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<th>APA Code Section 8.11: Plagiarism</th>
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<td>Psychologists do not present substantial portions or elements of another’s work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally.</td>
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Although the APA Code refers to “psychologists,” it really represents the psychological community’s views on what is considered acceptable professional practice for individuals engaging in research, scholarship, and practice in the discipline. Therefore, students of psychology who are taught about these guidelines should consider themselves bound by the code when engaging in scholarship and research. I would also note that the APA is not the only organization that defines academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and research fraud. I am merely using these definitions because they are the ones followed in the psychological community.

COMMON FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY and PLAGIARISM in UNIVERSITY SETTINGS
The most common forms of plagiarism or academic dishonesty include:

1. Turning in the same paper or portions of the same paper that another student submits for a given assignment. Although it might be acceptable for students to discuss papers and assignments prior to turning them in (you should check with your professors about this), the actual writing of all assignments is expected to be done individually unless expressly labeled as a ‘group’ assignment.

2. Copying text from a paper, book, or website, and including it in your paper with a word or two changed in each sentence. Even if you include a citation at the end of such a passage or paragraph, including text that is nearly identical or very close to the original is considered plagiarism. The remedy for this is paraphrasing and giving proper citation immediately following each idea that is being cited.

3. Making up data or fabricating experiences for assignments or papers.

4. Cheating on exams by looking at another student’s paper or their own notes during an exam.
When confronted with suspected plagiarism, the most common ‘reasons’ or ‘explanations’ given are: “I thought it was OK to include a paragraph as long as I changed a few words,” or “I thought that I could use a passage without quotation marks as long as I put a citation somewhere in the paper,” or “I thought that we could work on this assignment together.”

If you are suspected to have engaged in any type of academic dishonesty (including types not covered here), your work in question will be submitted to the Dean of Students for investigation, along with your original signed copy of this agreement. The Dean of Students will follow the student disciplinary process to determine responsibility and assign sanctions, which may include suspension or expulsion from the University. Regardless of other actions, you will fail any assignment in which academic dishonesty has been substantiated, and might fail the class, regardless of grades earned on other assignments.

**Statement of Understanding:**

If you have any questions about this document, you may ask them now or at any time prior to signing and submitting the following statement of understanding:

*My signature below indicates that I have read this paper, I understand its contents, and I have had all of my questions about this document answered. Furthermore, my signature serves as my oath that I will be honest in all of my academic endeavors and demonstrate high integrity in my words and actions.*

____________________________________________________________________________________

Student Name (Please Print)

____________________________________________________________________________________

Student Signature

____________________________________________________________________________________

Faculty Name (Please Print)

____________________________________________________________________________________

Faculty Signature

____________________________________________________________________________________

Today’s Date

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Case Studies for Discussion on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

When asked for a definition, most students might believe plagiarism is “taking a lot of words in order from another author without proper citation.” This definition, while not wrong, is incomplete and can lead to misinterpretation about what is meant by ‘a lot of words,’ what is meant by ‘another author,’ and what is meant by ‘proper citation.’ Many students may believe that by changing a word or two per sentence, taking words from a website that lists no author, or citing an author somewhere in a paper or paragraph they are avoiding plagiarism. However, these mistaken beliefs have led to failing grades, academic probation, and other serious academic penalties. Here are some examples for discussion:

**Example #1:** Students in a research methods class were told prior to a lab assignment that they could ask questions of the instructor during the lab, and that they could confer with one another when completing their assignments. Students were not told that this was a group assignment. Two students in the class turn in the same assignment through Blackboard. The words are identical and all answers to questions are identical. Is this academic dishonesty or plagiarism?

**Example #2:** A homework assignment in a psychology of women class asked students to discuss a film that they had seen in class on advertising’s image of women. The assignment asked them to look through magazines and see if they found evidence of sexist practices that had been discussed in the film. After conducting their review of ads, they were asked to describe/explain the sexist practices that were discussed in the film, and indicate whether or not they found evidence of such practices in their review of ads. One student’s paper contains word-for-word passages from the film (taken from a website about the film) with no quotation marks and no citation. The student used these passages as the description/explanation part of the assignment. Is this academic dishonesty or plagiarism?

**Example #3:** In an upper level psychology class, students are asked to write a literature review for a research project they will be conducting that semester. The literature review must cite a minimum of five journal articles, and should conform to APA style. The paper can be between 5-7 pages in length. One student in the class turns in a paper which is a total of 6 pages in length, containing a total of 20 paragraphs. In each of the 20 paragraphs, there are several passages with quotation marks around them, and a citation that follows. There is almost no original writing in the paper at all. All of the citations indicate the last names of the author(s) and the year of publication, but no page numbers are included. Is this academic dishonesty or plagiarism?

**Example #4:** A student in a social science class is asked to complete an assignment on the five most common health problems among adolescent males and females in the U.S. The assignment indicates that students should consult government or health websites such as the National Center for Health Statistics and the Kaiser Family Foundation when looking for statistics on the prevalence of various diseases and conditions. Then they should write a short, 2-3 page paper on the topic, being sure to provide evidence for the top five health problems they list. The paper is also supposed to include the student’s own ideas about how these five problems could be prevented or lessened. One student’s paper presents data from the Kaiser Family Foundation website. Then the student writes five paragraphs about what schools, parents, and state and federal governments should be doing to prevent these problems. Although the student indicates at the beginning of the paper that the statistics on the prevalence of these health problems came from the KFF website, none of the paragraphs has any citations or quotation marks. All five of the paragraphs contained sentences that were almost identical to those from an article that was on the KFF website (meaning that a few words were changed in each sentence). Some of the sentences in the five paragraphs were not similar to the KFF website. Is this plagiarism or academic dishonesty?

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