WHITTIER LAW SCHOOL
POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND MISUSE OF SOURCES
(Effective Fall 1994)

1. Plagiarism as an Academic Offense

Plagiarism may take the form of repeating another's sentences, adopting a particularly apt phrase, or paraphrasing someone else's words as though they were your own. To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from another.

Whittier Law School considers plagiarism to be one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community because it falsifies the creative and evaluative processes of learning. A finding that a student has engaged in plagiarism raises serious questions about the student's fitness to remain in law school.

2. Definition of Plagiarism

a. Plagiarism is the knowing use of another's language without citation to the precise source of that language. It is a violation of the School's plagiarism policy if the student commits plagiarism in any written work submitted or presented for any law school credit or benefit in any situation where the student is expected to do his or her own work.

b. By "another's language" we mean:

   (1) the use of someone else's exact words. The use of someone else's exact words requires both the use of quotation marks and a citation to the source. Obviously, this rule applies to the use of a paragraph or even a sentence from another's work. It may also apply to the use of only a few words. Because every word you use will have been used by someone else before, the test for the quotation-and-citation rule is a common sense one. If you are using the essence of someone else's expression, the rule applies no matter how few words are involved. If you are unsure whether the rule applies, it is better to use quotation marks as well as a citation.

When you merely substitute a few of your own words in an otherwise verbatim passage, you should place the passage in quotation marks and place brackets around the words you have inserted. For example: "Four score and seven years ago our [foremothers] brought forth on this continent a new nation..." Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address.
(2) Substitution of one's own words for selected words in a copied passage, while retaining the order or syntax of the original, without clear attribution to the original source or sources. (This may also be known as "paraphrasing.")

(a) Rearrangement and/or paraphrase of paragraphs, sentences or portions of sentences does not suffice to avoid plagiarism. If a source is used in this manner, the student's work must clearly acknowledge its usage.

c. Misuse of Sources

Misuse of sources, such as knowingly distorting or misstating quoted or cited material, knowingly attributing quotations to a source that does not contain them or knowingly citing a source to support material it does not support, does not constitute plagiarism but may be subject to sanctions as academic misconduct.

3. Disciplinary Sanctions

a. If the law school Hearing Board, acting pursuant to the Whittier Law School Code of Student Conduct, determines that a student has committed an act of plagiarism as defined in this policy, or has misused research sources as defined above, the student shall be subject to disciplinary action including expulsion or suspension, notification to state bar examiners and other penalties authorized by the Code of Student Conduct.

b. Regardless of disciplinary action by the law school, if an instructor determines that a student has copied or paraphrased the work of another without sufficient attribution, has failed to submit sufficient original work of his or her own or has misused research sources, the instructor may lower the student's grade or impose a failing grade and deny course credit.

c. Any proceedings against a student for a violation of this policy must be brought within two years of the date at which the student turned in the offending material. Even if a student has received course credit or has graduated from law school before discovery of plagiarism or misuse of sources, the law school may impose disciplinary sanctions including substitution of a lower or failing grade for a course, revocation of the student's law degree, and notification of state bar examiners, and the instructor may withdraw the existing grade and substitute a lower or failing grade for the course. This rule shall operate as an explicit exception to the rule that restricts grade changes to clerical errors.