

# Academic dishonesty

Why integrity is an important virtue.

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IN FIRST PERSON

Academic integrity is probably one of the lesser taught subjects in the technical education curriculum of India. I didn't even know of the word till I started my master's in the U.S., but there we go. I

often work in close relations with my university's career advising coordinator and professors enough to understand its consequences, not just for those found guilty of plagiarism but also for those of us who adhere to it.

Requesting a professor in a big university for a research position is considered not unlike a wedding proposal. The moment they realise you are Indian, the first concern in their mind is integrity. It's not a stereotype that I would think of as uncalled for, having myself witnessed cases of plagiarism on a weekly basis.

Yet, the pool of brilliant students who come to the U.S. for higher education and internships is always on the rise and so are my concerns.

## The IITian case

I have heard from a professor once about an IITian who applied for an internship. He usually doesn't even open this kind of mail unless he has a position open and once he did. The student in question said he was interested in turbine engine automation systems and was engrossed by one of the papers in the same topic that the professor has written. Unfortunately, for him, his crawling code has backfired and the professor to whom this email was sent turned out to be an expert in artificial intelligence, not really related fields. Incidents like these make the professors in the U.S. wary of students from India who are genuine. A lot of good candidates miss out on opportunities because of others who consider these internships as all expenses-paid foreign trips.

These incidents continue once the same student comes to the U.S. to pursue his master's. I was recently involved as an advisory capacity in a resume plagiarism investigation in my university. Some well-minded senior has shared his resume in the hope that it might benefit others. Unfortunately his resume was copied word-word by about 50 odd students while applying for the same part-time job within a span of two hours. Needless to say no Indian was hired for the position.

Most research students who publish their work on a regular basis are usually aware of the consequences of plagiarism and usually care about academic integrity. They know how difficult it is to bring about new ideas and thereby know the value of others' work. But it is plagiarism that arises on this small scale that creates the bigger problems. From assignments to exams we are used to or at least witness instances of academic dishonesty, but if you are aiming for an admit in a reputed international university, please practise integrity.

Integrity is much like volunteerism, not an act but a virtue. If found guilty, could lead to serious consequences including deportation and retraction of the degree. Most importantly, as men and women of science it is our duty to credit those who deserve.

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