Editorial: Academic dishonesty

One of the most common problems any school faces is plagiarism, and Rider is no exception. With computers and new sorts of gadgets being invented on a daily basis, plagiarism is becoming more sophisticated and more involved.

Because there are new ways to cheat, students believe plagiarizing is easy to get away with and are more likely to fall into bad habits. Programs that involve file sharing such as Napster and even search engines such as Google are teaching students the wrong lessons. By being able to access a ton of information so simply and without having to pay for it, users do not understand the idea of ownership and copyright. It may even become so twisted that the student may feel possession over something they found simply because they found it, even though someone else did the work.

Plagiarism can come in many forms. One look at a cell phone can reveal a text message with answers from across the room. Students have now been caught using items such as Palm Pilots or even wristwatches to program answers. Downloading papers from the internet is easy yet at the same time extremely dangerous. Some students forget that if they can find the paper, their instructor can find it just as easily.

The pressure to plagiarize is something that has been preached about since high school. Peer pressure, often the subject of jokes, plays a big part here. Since everyone else seems to be doing it and getting away with it, what’s the harm in trying? The problem with this is that teachers are learning new things as well as keep up with the students and catch them in the act. There are websites for teachers where they can put in papers and have them analyzed if they suspect plagiarism.

Although plagiarism has become easier to accomplish, it is also becoming easier to spot. Very often, when students are caught plagiarizing, the teachers will put a note in their file for future reference in addition to administering the proper punishment. If the student cheats again, the next teacher will find the note and the punishment becomes more severe since it is a repeated offense.

Teachers can try to combat the problem of plagiarism by changing their assignments each semester, requiring drafts or making the student add personal views to the work, but no matter what, somebody will always try and find a way around it. Cheating can become more work than the actual assignment is, yet students persist. The risks involved are serious and affect not only grades but the view of the student’s character as well. The student loses grades as well as respect.

Some students do not even believe that what they are doing is wrong because they do not understand what plagiarism is. Perhaps one solution would be to educate students about plagiarism and the consequences that follow. That may help prevent some plagiarism, but the problem will never go away.

This weekly editorial expresses the majority opinion of The Rider News editorial board and is written by the Opinion Editor.

Letters to the Editor: The Rider News welcomes letters on all subjects of interest to the campus community. Letters must be typed and include the name, address, phone number and signature of the author for verification. Send to The Rider News via e-mail (ridernews@rider.edu), campus mail or hand deliver to Centennial House. All letters must be received by midnight the Monday preceding publication. The Rider News reserves the right to edit all letters for space and clarity.

Quote of the Week:

“Good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment.”

— Barry LePatner

Brush Your Hair: Advice from mom

I never went through the backlash against my mother that so many other girls did in their teens, and as I’ve gotten older, I see the true beads of wisdom she was trying to instill, hidden behind what seemed like simple nagging. Maybe your own mothers have used this kind of sneak-attack advice on you.

Brush your hair! For years I ran from my mother when she came at me with a hairbrush. I convinced myself that my messy mane resembled the cool, tousled hair I saw in so many magazine ads, and I thought if I could just look like those models, I could, to a certain degree, be more readily accepted by society. But as my hair grew longer, I realized those knots were a big no-no and relented to her advice. The lesson? Don’t try to be someone you’re not. I looked more like I had stepped out of a wind tunnel than off of a runway. By pushing me to brush my hair, my mother was teaching me to accentuate the beauty I had been blessed with instead of wishing I was someone different. This is a conclusion that carries me much further than my mirror.

Eat something! By the end of my first year at Rider, the combination of myicky eating habits, college dining hall food and an innate fear of the freshman 15 had reduced my weight by 10 pounds. My mother took this as some huge undoing of 13 years of her perfectly balanced, Tupperware-packed school lunches prepared in her perfectly balanced, Tupperware-packed school lunches prepared in hopes of making me a healthy young woman. Each weekend I went home, I found more of my favorite foods placed in front of me as a temptation to eat more. In addition to that, little treats like Boston cream doughnuts mysteriously began popping up around the house for me.

I have since started eating dessert every night—after seconds at dinner. The lesson? Food is both a necessity and a luxury. I’ll admit my mother’s obsession with food is not much different than many other Italian mothers I know. She wasn’t just trying to make me gain weight. She was trying to teach me that food is a basic necessity to keep functioning healthily and help me in taking advantage of my brain and body’s full potential. Her offerings of sweet treats showed me the simple pleasure that can be found in eating a waffle ice cream sandwich—right before bedtime.

Go to bed early! In the summer-time especially, I am known for being a night owl whose late nights turn into late mornings. My mother always complained to me that my sleeping habits threw her schedule off. For me, sleeping was one of those activities that was second to very few things, and I could never see the necessity of waking up early. But as we spent more time together, I saw all of the things she does in one day and I’ve learned that 16 waking hours can hold a lot more than just 11 or 12. The lesson? Make the most of each day. By simply