

Ad Hoc Committee to study Turnitin Software

Los Angeles Harbor College

May 17, 2012

Attendees: Mark Wood (presiding), Leige Doffoney, Son Nguyen, David Humphreys, Lauren McKenzie, Sandra Sanchez, Susan McMurray, Abbie Patterson

A small group of committed faculty and administrators from Harbor College gathered on May 17 at 9:15 AM to discuss the use of Turnitin software the college purchased in September of 2011.

History:

Late in the spring of 2011 some faculty at Harbor College were given a sample of Turnitin software, a "plagiarism" detecting software system. It was decided by the college to purchase a one year license which the college would evaluate in one year to determine if the use justified the expense. On Thursday, May 17 at 9:15 that group met. Below is a summary of the committee's findings.

Meeting Notes:

Mr. Wood called the meeting to order and gave a brief history of the program's usage on Harbor's campus (see above). It was reported that the software had been used extensively in assessing ISLO#1 essays during this reporting period. Unfortunately Ms. Lane was unable to attend but Dr. Humphreys stated that it was quite beneficial (I will later discuss the data report which Mr. Nguyen distributed). The program is also used quite extensively in the Social Science Division and in distance learning classes.

Mr. Nguyen distributed a spreadsheet accounting Turnitin usage results. Before reviewing the results, Mr. Nguyen gave a small personal assessment of the software explaining to the committee that it was not merely plagiarism check software. In addition it is useful in identifying students as to their personal writing errors as well as informing students, preemptively, of their plagiarism and a tool for students which do not understand what plagiarism is. Finally the program offers the student an opportunity for self correction.

In 2011-12 the college purchased 3,500 seat licenses for the software, of which only a little over 1,000 students participated in. Since the college pays by the license, we will try to get a credit for unused licenses for next year. Also the committee recommended that next semester we purchase 2,500 seats.

Other data distributed by Mr. Nguyen was assessed and as a result the college identified some other features worth reporting. The software saves instructors time on identifying and communicating grammar, punctuation and spelling errors. Mr. Wood assessed that this also fills in many of the non-English instructor weaknesses in identifying these problems as well. Dr. Humphreys stated that all software grammar check programs require a bit of oversight due to the inability of the software to catch syntax.

23% of the programs using Turnitin were identified by Dean Sanchez as being CTE programs. Dr. Humphreys pointed out that many GE course supported CTE students. This observation was acknowledged and CTE is willing to pay its fair share...which last semester was 100% ☺.

It was agreed upon by the committee that the college should extend our contract for the next academic year with a cap of 2,500 students. In addition the committee recommended that the college market the use of this software to the faculty and offer Turnitin training at all staff development workshop periods.

Summary of data:

35 instructors use Turnitin

These instructors represent 16 departments

4625 papers submitted

Of those papers

93 were between 75 & 100% plagiarized

96 papers 50 – 74% plagiarized

445 papers 25 – 49% plagiarized (this is about an acceptable level since many phrases a common when writing on a give subject

2224 papers 0 – 24%

And 1752 contained no plagiarism at all.

After submitting the summary report, Lora Lane submitted her input from published report. (see Below)

I use the grammar check and pre-grading features of Turnitin in my classes. My students submit their papers for a pre-screening where they get the originality report and grammar check from Turnitin. I add my comments and a preliminary score. They can then correct the paper and turn in their "real" paper. This semester students asked me to create dummy assignments so they could submit papers they had to write for other classes. I don't believe that instructors at LAHC realize that Turnitin does so much more than plagiarism checking. I have yet to use the peer review and rubric features.

An online instructor wrote the following feedback.

I would be my pleasure to join this group if you meet again in the future. I am one of the professors using turnitin for my courses and would be glad to share or support it's advancement at LAHC. My students are finding it to be very helpful.

Best,

JoNeen Ohlaker

