

Campus - Letter to the Editor

# Letter to the Editor

I will start with a true story.

Two years ago, a student I will call Graduate X, graduated from NJIT with a degree in Computer Science. He apparently had a decent looking resume and was interviewed by a company interested in having him on its staff. He was hired as a programmer. Instead of being elated at his "good fortune," he became panicked. He knew he was in trouble.

Graduate X realized that he now had to actually put to use what he had learned. What he had not learned was how to write programs, one of the basic expectations of a computer science graduate. He immediately began contacting current and former CS majors for help, since his job was to start in two weeks.

One of those current students that he contacted was both surprised and angry at him. She told him, "You took the same classes that I am taking. You had the opportunity to learn this stuff just like me. I hope I'm fortunate enough to get such an opportunity in my field. I am not teaching you anything that you should know by now."

The graduate was fired two weeks after his start date. His last known employment was working the register at his local supermarket. True story.

This graduate readily admitted that he cheated his way through most of his courses and always found someone to do most of his important work for him. That part was easy, as he said.

So, one would quickly say that he deserves what he got and he only hurt himself with his cheating. That is not so. Let's start with his fellow classmates. Students who cheat on tests and major exams tend to affect the grading for all students enrolled in the course.

The honest students lose respect for the cheater and also for the instructor for "allowing an atmosphere where it is so easy to cheat." That is what I hear over and over. But I also hear from faculty who wonder why, if students see cheating going on all the time, don't they report it to them or to the Dean of Students.

This issue has probably existed throughout the history of classroom testing and is not unique to NJIT. That will be the subject of a future article.

But what about the reputation of the university, especially in the eyes of the employers who spend time and money recruiting and processing a new employee, only to find out that he or she is not prepared for the challenges ahead?

For instance, future graduates may lose out on an opportunity with the above mentioned company because of the failure of just one NJIT applicant. They may be reluctant to take such a chance again, although NJIT graduates some very talented students.

And back to the university's reputation. Just like our county colleges are not all equal, we know that similar degree programs are not equal to each other at all baccalaureate degree granting colleges.

An engineering degree from university X may not equal that of an engineering degree at NJIT. However, if word gets out that we are graduating students who are "unprepared" for the workforce the obvious question will be: "How can someone graduate with a degree in a particular discipline yet not have basic knowledge that is expected of him or her?" "Is it the faculty that is giving these students a pass?" "Are the standards low?"

All it will take is for just a few such graduates as Graduate X and the damage is

done. Human nature being what it is, people tend to remember the few negative stories more than the many successes.

And the damage to the individual does not stop with one job loss. The graduate may not even get hired if he or she has a disciplinary record with the university. The Dean of Students Office gets approximately 150-200 inquiries a year from employers doing background checks on job applicants. We receive signed waivers via fax, mail, and often by investigators coming in person. Most students are not aware of this until they apply for a job.

So, having a record of cheating can haunt a graduate for years to come. For instance, a graduate may be working at a company for awhile and think all is fine. However, if the company ever gets a government contract, the employer is obligated to go back and conduct background checks on everyone working on that contract. And the checks are done for everyone starting out working for any government entity.

The same goes for those seeking to go to law schools, med schools, graduate programs, or any type of law enforcement. If we have a record of a current or former student cheating on any assignment or exam, it has to be reported.

Now, for Graduate X the embarrassment and humiliation of having a college degree but having to work with high school kids to make ends meet is only part of the continuing price he is paying. He will have to go back and take key courses all over again in order to learn the material he had a chance to learn the first time.

Therefore, the consequences of cheating are far-reaching, whether a student "gets away with it" or not. Graduate X thought he was taking the "easy way" out, but in hindsight he now knows that he only cheated himself.

# NJIT Police Blotter

For 02/23/2012 through 02/29/2012  
Times Shown are Times of Occurrence

02/23/2012

8:30AM - A staff member reported a burglary occurred overnight in the basement of Eberhart Hall. Two laptops were reported missing.  
5:30PM - A student reported the theft of his laptop from the second floor of Tiernan Hall.

02/24/2012

2:45AM - Unknown person(s) broke the passenger side mirror of a parked car at Bleeker Street and MLK Blvd.  
9:30PM - A student reported that he was slapped in the face during the judging of a cricket game on the field at 80 Lock Street. He declined to press charges.

02/26/2012

2:30AM - A resident of 321 MLK Blvd. reported that sometime early Friday morning someone attempted to kick in the basement door.

02/27/2012

4:30PM - A student reported the theft of his laptop from Kupfrian Hall.

02/28/2012

12:05AM - Officers arrested a non-affiliate outside of 155 University Ave. for aggravated assault against a civilian and a police officer.  
6:25AM - Physical Plant reported someone had broken a stall in a bathroom in Faculty Hall.  
11:27PM - Officers responded to the roof of the Parking Deck on a report of people spray painting the wall.

PHOTO VECTOR

## NJIT TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY FORUM

### THE STORY THAT'S UNDER YOUR NOSE: PERFORMANCE, POETRY AND THE DIALOGUE ARTS PROJECT

**SPEAKER ADAM FALKNER**

Executive Director, Dialogue Arts Project

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21 2:30 - 4:00 P.M. CAMPUS CENTER BALLROOM**



Poetry and other forms of creative expression have the power to motivate thinking that addresses critical social issues such as race and identity in new and positive ways. In his Technology and Society Forum presentation, Adam Falkner invites joint exploration of this transformative potential for better understanding and appreciation of our increasingly diverse culture.

Falkner is a poet, performer, English teacher and the founder and executive director of the Dialogue Arts Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to incorporating creative writing, the performing arts, and intergroup dialogue into teaching and training processes. His work has appeared in numerous publications, including *decomp magazine*, *The Other Journal* and *Literary Bohemian*, and has been featured in curricula at Columbia University, the University of Michigan, the University of Washington and other schools. He regularly teaches and performs at colleges and universities across the country and has appeared on HBO, BET, and Michigan and New York Public Radio.

Falkner is also a national associate for the Prison Creative Arts Project, Ginsberg scholar and recipient of the Martin Luther King Jr. Spirit Award in Higher Education. He currently teaches 10th grade creative writing at the Academy for Young Writers in Brooklyn, New York.

**For More Information:** Contact Jay Kappraff, [kappraff@adm.njit.edu](mailto:kappraff@adm.njit.edu) or 973-596-3490

Co-sponsors: NJIT Technology and Society Forum Committee, Albert Dorman Honors College, Sigma Xi. NJIT welcomes attendees from Essex County College, Rutgers-Newark, and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Visit the NJIT Technology and Society Forum on the Web at <http://tsf.njit.edu>.

Previous Forum presentations are available at <http://itunes.njit.edu>; search for "Technology and Society Forum."