ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Over the last few semesters there has been a significant increase in the number of cases of academic dishonesty associated with the activities in the Introductory Astronomy courses. Reacting to this, Prof. Nancy Franklin, then Hearing Officer for the Academic Judiciary Committee, provided the following comments in an attempt to clear up any misunderstanding about what might be considered “dishonest”.

The following are examples of actions by students for Activities 2 & 3 that have led to a finding of "guilty" by the Academic Judiciary Committee (AJC). The AJC considers only the student’s action and does not attempt to determine whether or not the student deliberately intended to cheat. The AJC holds all students responsible for knowing the university’s policies concerning academic integrity and for knowing the policies of all courses in which they are enrolled.

DO NOT SUBMIT ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS COURSE UNLESS YOU’VE VERIFIED THAT YOU’VE COMPLETED THEM APPROPRIATELY. RECEIVING A 0 ON AN ACTIVITY IS FAR PREFERABLE TO BEING FOUND GUILTY OF VIOLATING THE UNIVERSITY’S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, all of the following actions involve the misrepresentation that data were personally observed when they had in fact not been. This is considered to be data fabrication. If you are found guilty of data fabrication, you will receive a notation of academic dishonesty on your transcript and a Q (F by reason of academic dishonesty) for the course.

- Falsifying data wholesale. The shapes of celestial bodies, their movement across the sky over time, and the dates when the weather does or does not allow them to be viewed are all known. Students who try to fake their assignments are generally quite easy to catch.

- Reporting any dates, times, or locations of celestial events that you had gathered from another source (internet, newspaper) rather than reporting only that which you directly observed on your own. This includes adding information beyond what you observed on your own. Even though looking up information will get you accurate information, it is considered data fabrication because the assignment calls for you to observe the events on your own.

- Reporting information that you guessed or inferred rather than reporting only information that you directly observed. This includes guesses made through sloppy record-keeping. Do not, for example, retroactively guess the dates of your observations or fill in additional "observations" between two dates for which you did collect legitimate data. The reason for this is to train you in one of the most basic rules of science: Report only data that you observe; don’t guess or make assumptions.
• Submitting observations made by another student rather than observations you made on your own. Such copying is considered to be academically dishonest in most courses.

REMEMBER, THE LIST GIVEN ABOVE IS NOT MEANT TO BE EXHAUSTIVE. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER YOU’RE DOING THE ASSIGNMENT APPROPRIATELY, ASK BEFORE TURNING IT IN. NOT UNDERSTANDING COURSE POLICIES IS NO EXCUSE FOR VIOLATING THEM AND WILL NOT PROTECT YOU FROM BEING REPORTED TO THE ACADEMIC JUDICIARY.

August 14, 2005