BINGHAMTON
UNIVERSITY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and
Applied Science

Department of Computer Science

PO Box 6000
Binghamton, New York 13902-6000
607-777-4802, Fax: 607-777-4729

CS Faculty Letter to Students Regarding Academic Honesty

Dear Computer Science Student,

We would like to briefly address the issue of academic honesty in the CS Department. We believe that the vast majority of you work hard and complete your work fairly and honestly. Unfortunately, some students may cheat. Academic dishonesty is a national and international problem, not a problem that is particular to Binghamton. Therefore, we as faculty must take steps to promote honesty and to detect and deal with cheating when necessary. We do this to protect the value of your degree and the reputation of the Department, and to encourage and reward hard work. No Binghamton CS professor relishes this task. Deterring cheating can be inconvenient, and dealing with it is always unpleasant, at least. But collectively we do feel that it is a necessary part of our jobs.

We strive to be available and helpful, and we encourage our Teaching Assistants to be the same. We hope that our assignments and assessments challenge you enough to promote learning, but are not so difficult that you feel you must resort to dishonesty to succeed. We try to be transparent about our efforts to discourage and detect cheating; we thereby hope to avoid adversarial relationships, and to instead build student-faculty relationships that maximize your learning. Please be open and honest with us if you feel that our assignments, requirements, or policies are unfair, or that instructors are not providing you the foundation, material, and help that you need to be successful. To communicate these sentiments, please talk to your individual instructors directly, visit the Department Chair or other trusted faculty member if necessary, and provide candid comments on our SOOT evaluations, which we consider carefully.

Please do not feel insulted or take it personally when we apply measures to discourage and detect cheating. We approach each individual student with the steadfast belief that you are 100% honest. We hope that students who are above reproach will share our belief that our measures help protect the value of your degree. Students who otherwise might be tempted down an imperfect path may instead remain on an honest one; those students will be better off in the long run and will feel a larger sense of pride when they do earn their degree. When students are dishonest, we hope they will recover to pass the class, earn a degree, even eventually to appreciate our coercing them back on track.

You can help us by not only doing your own work and collaborating only when appropriate and permitted, but by keeping your solutions and code—including documents on shared file systems and repositories in GitHub—protected and private. Teach and learn from one another, but please do not give or receive answers and solutions.

Students, faculty, and the Department as a whole are significantly better off when every grade and degree is earned fairly. We strive to educate and train Computer Scientists who can go on to earn advanced degrees at top universities, land the best jobs at companies that are changing the world, and otherwise make the Department proud and enhance our reputation. Making sure you earn your degree without shortcuts, learning as much as you can while you are here, advances that goal.

Sincerely,

The CS Faculty