Plagiarism and fabrication are serious offenses both in academia and in the professions of journalism and strategic communication. The School of Journalism and Mass Communication will not tolerate any forms of these transgressions.

The SJMC’s position on plagiarism and fabrication complies with the Student Conduct Code adopted and amended by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, which lists those as scholastic dishonesty offenses subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Sanctions at the university level might involve a written reprimand for first-time offenders or, if repeated, more serious consequences, including removal from the major or expulsion from the university. Because plagiarism and fabrication destroy the trust – and ruin the careers – of journalists, strategic communication professional and scholars, the SJMC takes a particularly strong position on these offenses.

We are resolved, therefore, to impose the following consequences in all SJMC courses, other for-credit works (e.g., theses and dissertations) and exams regarding any instance of unambiguous and documented plagiarism or fabrication, including a first-time offense:

- The student will receive a grade of “F” on the assignment, or the course, at the discretion of the instructor.
- The instructor will file a report on the incident with the university’s Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. For more information on OSCAI’s handling of such reports, visit [http://www.oscai.umn.edu/integrity/student/index.html](http://www.oscai.umn.edu/integrity/student/index.html)

Furthermore, instances of unambiguous and documented plagiarism or fabrication in SJMC classes or enterprises following the first incident are considered multiple or “persistent” and may result in the student’s removal from the SJMC major and/or other serious university consequences.
Appendix

What is plagiarism?
Plagiarism is the stealing of content – writing, reporting photography, graphics, editorial cartoons, creative ideas, scholarly work -- without proper citation or attribution. In other words, it is passing off someone else’s work as your own. This does not simply mean a violation of copyright. It is an act of theft and betrayal toward the audience as well as the original source. Any material used in a student paper, ad campaign, story or research report must be properly credited if it is not the student’s own work. This includes material developed through collaborative work with other students, where one student’s work should not simply be copied and represented as another’s.

You have plagiarized if you do (including but not limited to) the following:
- Copy content -- text, images or designs-- from the Web and paste it into your own work without quotation marks or proper attribution or other sourcing.
- Present previously reported information published online or in print as your own without proper attribution or credit (subject to the exceptions listed below).
- Present someone else’s unique phrases or images as your own.
- Paraphrase someone else’s ideas or statements as your own.
- Borrow words, original concepts, phrases or data from original sources and blend them with one’s own without acknowledging the sources.
- Submit an assignment you completed for another class (self-plagiarism)

Exceptions: In general, one does not need to provide explicit attribution if the information falls in one of three categories:

- Common knowledge: When information is commonly known to a majority of people, you don’t have to attribute it. Examples include: The World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked on Sept. 11, 2001. Mark Dayton is the governor of Minnesota.

- Background information: When information is undisputed factually and is available from a wide variety of reliable sources, you don’t have to attribute it. For example: Jerry Kill served as the head coach at Saginaw Valley State University and Emporia State University, and also played college football at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas.

- Observation: When you witness something first hand, you don’t have to attribute the information. For example if you are covering a protest and you see that passing motorists are honking and waving in support of the protesters, you can report that without quoting anyone or attributing the information to another source.
What is fabrication?
Fabrication is inventing something and representing it as true in a work product (story, research paper, etc.) where truthfulness is the expectation. This includes purported facts, characters, quotes, anecdotes, places, passages or other details presented as real and researched. All such details in an assignment must be true and reported, not imagined, unless the instructor has provided invented material for the purposes of a class exercise. Fabrication also includes altering photographs to distort the reality of the scene.

You have fabricated if you do the following:
- Invent any information, person, quote, detail or situation that does not exist in the world. This includes inventing information about people you have interviewed.
- Represent that you have spoken to someone who is real in the world but with whom you did not speak.
- Alter photographs so they distort reality, including staging, posting, rearranging, reversing or removing items from a scene. (Traditional adjustments such as cropping, dodging or burning are not fabrications unless those acts distort the reality of the photograph.)
- Fail to label photo illustrations clearly as illustrations.

Fabrication for strategic communication messages is acceptable when it is clear that the situations are not intended to represent reality (e.g. singing cows in an ice cream commercial, claims about “the world’s best…” [acceptable puffery]).

Responsibility for avoiding plagiarism and fabrication
As the University's Student Conduct Code stipulates: “It is the responsibility of all students to understand the standards and methods of proper attribution and to clarify with each instructor the standards, expectations, and reference techniques appropriate to the subject area and class requirements, including group work and internet use. Students are encouraged to seek out information about these methods from instructors and other resources and to apply this information in all submissions of academic work.”

Detecting and documenting plagiarism and fabrication
Just as the Web has made it easier to plagiarize, it also allows instructors to more easily identify instances of plagiarism and fabrication. Instructors may use any means to detect scholastic dishonesty, including anti-plagiarism software, Google searches and contacts with listed sources to verify the student has done original work.

When confronted with an instance of unambiguous plagiarism or fabrication, SJMC instructors must do the following:
- Document clearly the source of the plagiarism or fabrication.
- Discuss the transgression with the student.
- Be sure the student understands the nature of the incident and the seriousness of it.
- Consult with and inform the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Director of Graduate Studies about the matter.
- File a report, with documentation, to the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.
Students can avoid plagiarism or fabrication by doing the following:

- Always creating source lists for assignments that include phone and e-mail contacts for personal sources and full citation information for other reference sources.
- Keeping your own notes separate from any source material.
- Avoiding any “cut and paste” note taking.
- Attributing anything that even comes close to the phrasing or ideas of source material.
- Asking your instructor if you are uncertain. It is your responsibility to clarify any murky issues that may confuse you.
- Always being able to explain how you got your information.
- Learning more about how to cite sources and avoid plagiarism by visiting the online tutorials on the university’s libraries website: [http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/](http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/).

Faculty members can reduce the instances of plagiarism or fabrication by the following strategies:

- Clearly explaining the SJMC’s policy to students.
- Requiring students to list sources with contact numbers or full reference information as warranted.
- Requiring students to attach all source material to an assignment with a written pledge that the assignment itself is the student’s own work.
- Checking listed sources to verify them.
- Creating original assignments that are difficult for students to plagiarize.
- Following through on the SJMC policy with students who do plagiarize or fabricate.

This document has been created from and influenced by a number of sources, including the University of Minnesota Board of Regent’s Student Conduct Code (Adopted July 10, 1970, with amendments effective Jan. 1, 2013), the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University at [http://cronkite.asu.edu/about/plagiarism.php](http://cronkite.asu.edu/about/plagiarism.php) and the Carnegie Media Law for Journalism Schools Task Force, which also cites its many sources at [http://jschoollegal.org/plagiarism-and-fabrication-policy/](http://jschoollegal.org/plagiarism-and-fabrication-policy/)

Nothing in this document is intended to minimize the seriousness of other forms of academic dishonesty as described in the relevant University of Minnesota policies. **Any** form of unambiguous, documented academic dishonesty in SJMC classes will result in consequences that may include a course grade of “F.”