



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now](#).

UF professor who plagiarized retires

By [Cindy Swirko](#)

Staff writer

Published: Friday, January 16, 2009 at 6:01 a.m.

A University of Florida professor who was suspended Dec. 31 for acknowledging last year that he plagiarized the work of others has retired after a 35-year career at UF.

James Twitchell, a professor of English and advertising, has more than a dozen books to his credit. Several dealt with popular culture, and Twitchell was often called on by reporters for perspective on society's events and trends.

But Twitchell admitted in April 2008 to plagiarism in several books and came under an investigation that resulted in a suspension that would have lasted five years had he not retired.

Paul D'Anieri, dean of UF's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, said the suspension should send a message that plagiarism will be not be tolerated at UF.

"When situations come up, we treat them very seriously, as we did in this case. That is the best way to head it off - to make sure everyone understands it's something they need be vigilant about," D'Anieri said.

"I ended up feeling bad about the whole thing," D'Anieri continued. "I got to know Jim Twitchell and discovered that I like him. This is a tragedy. I don't think he meant to do anything awful, but it's a tragedy in that it's a warning to the rest of us."

Twitchell could not be reached for comment.

The Sun reported last year that Twitchell lifted words verbatim from multiple authors in at least three books published between 2002 and 2007.

Twitchell's plagiarism surfaced when Roy Rivenburg, a freelance writer and former Los Angeles Times reporter, performed a Web search to find a story he'd written 10 years earlier. When he plugged in key words from the story, Twitchell's work started popping up.

For instance, Rivenburg wrote: "Indeed, with the exception of furniture and major appliances, it is possible to outfit an entire home in Christian products - bird feeders to body lotions, luggage to lamps."

Twitchell in "Shopping for God" wrote: "Indeed, with the exception of furniture and major appliances, it is possible to outfit your entire self and home in Christian products - bird feeders to body lotions, luggage to lamps."

Twitchell eventually admitted he had lifted material from others.

"It's my responsibility to make sure that the words and ideas are my own and, if not, that they are properly credited. In many cases, I have not done this," Twitchell wrote to The Sun in April. "I have used the words of others and not properly attributed them. I am always in a hurry to get past descriptions to make my points, a hurry that has now rightly resulted in much shame and embarrassment. I have cheated by using pieces of descriptions written by others."

D'Anieri said Thursday that the time lag between Twitchell's acknowledgement in April and the Dec. 31 suspension was due to the length of the investigation. D'Anieri added that he does not believe UF will be tainted by the incident.

"My sense is that while a lot of excuses are made by a lot of people for things that happen, there were no excuses made in this case and there were none accepted," D'Anieri said. "That was a pretty stiff sanction. It sends a clear message that this university and college are doing what they need to do to maintain academic integrity."

Contact Cindy Swirko at 374-5024.

Copyright © 2014 Gainesville.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.