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Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Situations

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A Case of Plagiarizing

You have been the chair of a department of twenty full-time faculty members for the past seven years. In this time, you have devoted a great deal of time and energy in helping each of your faculty to develop an individual research agenda. For the most part this has been a noteworthy and exciting accomplishment. The university as a whole has deemed scholarship to be equally as important as quality teaching.

One of the most outstanding faculty members in your department, Dr. Smith, was recently tenured and promoted to the rank of associate professor. This accomplishment was supported and endorsed by all the faculty members in the department. Dr. Smith is an accomplished teacher, works tirelessly in providing service to the department and university, and is a very pleasant and collegial person.

While reading her last article that was published in a referred journal you found entire sentences plagiarized from another publication. She took passages taken verbatim from another person's published article without giving credit to the person who wrote them. The university has a strict policy concerning plagiarizing that could result in termination. You would not like to have this person fired, as she is a real asset to the department as well as a nice person. On the other hand, is it your responsibility to tell the proper authorities in the university what you have found out? What would you do?