

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 12A, Fall 2012
January 19, 2013

Members Present:

Trey Burns (presiding), Isabelle Lelogeais (clerk), David French, John King, Mick Pryor, Sam Kwiatkowski, John Cavallo, Seth Lauer, Adriana Bracho

Ombuds: Aubrey Sirtautas

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of cheating on a final exam for a lower level Natural Sciences course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Follow-up to Letter of Accusation
- Student A's Self-Accusation
- Student B's Self-Accusation
- Student A's Written Statement
- Student B's Written Statement
- Student C's Written Statement
- Course Syllabus
- Final Exam Prompt
- Accuser Deposition
- Witness Depositions
- Accused Students' Exam

Plea:

Student A pled "In Violation."

Student B pled "In Violation."

Student C pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

Student A gave her testimony first, and stated that she was aware of having committed a violation of the Rice Honor Code, but that it was a small-scale, impromptu incident that would never happen again. Student A also said that after talking to various members of the community, and reflecting on her actions, she reported herself, unprompted and in good faith to the Honor Code. The seating arrangements in the testing room were such that the accused were students sitting in close proximity, one behind another, and that this was not planned upon ahead of time. Student A stated that Student C was not aware that she and Student B had been looking at her paper. In response to a witness state that the unauthorized collaboration took the form of an organized ring of sharing answers, Student A responded that she did not know what would give a witness that impression and that it was entirely false. Student A suggested that she completed no

work independently on this exam. Student A emphasizes that she did not have any communication with Student B after she accused herself. In closing, Student A said that she felt remorse about her actions, but asked for a second chance to prove herself as a Rice student.

Student B testified that she cheated off of Student C. Immediately after the exam, she realized that she had violated the Honor Code and felt bad about it. After discussing the incident with her academic advisor and hearing a presentation on the Honor Code, she realized that the right course of action was to turn herself in. She stated that she had no contact with any accuser, and that the accusation was entirely unprompted. She was not sure if Student A was looking at her paper, but had suspicions. In addition, most of the answers in his test were arrived at by looking at Student C's paper. She maintained that she had no plans to cheat, but that the testing arrangement was very compact and the temptation was too great. Student B testified that Student C did not appear to know that she had been looking at her paper, and only learned of the incident when she told Student C at some point before the investigative meeting. In response to the allegations that this was a pre-meditated cheating "ring," Student B maintained that this was in no way the case. In closing, Student B summarized again what had happened, and expressed her remorse for her actions.

Student C began her testimony by saying that she had been completing her exam honestly, and within the bounds of the Honor Code. In addition, she stated that she was entirely unaware of the fact that Student B was cheating off of her, and that Student A was in turn cheating off of Student B. In response to the allegation that the incident was a pronounced, organized cheating "ring," she said that she had not knowingly or actively provided unauthorized aid to anyone. In closing, Student C recapitulated that he did not cheat and had no knowledge of anyone else cheating.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because

Straw Poll #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation.

Straw Poll #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student B committed the violation.

Straw Poll #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student C committed the violation.

Straw Poll #4: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student C is “In Violation?”

Yes: 0
 No: 9
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances for Student A. The penalty deliberations focused on whether or not the self-accusation of Student A was “unprompted” and “in good faith.” The role and involvement of her academic advisors in the case was questionable to a lot of members of the Honor Council. Members discussed whether or not decided proof was necessary to consider this accusation unprompted and in good faith. Most members ultimately agreed that although suspicions were present, the evidence suggests that the self-report was “unprompted and in good faith prior to any confrontation.”

Straw Poll #5: Does the Council believe that Student A’s self-accusation was “unprompted and in good faith prior to any confrontation?”

Yes: 7
 No: 2
 Abstentions: 0

Council members then turned to a discussion of mitigating and aggravating factors. No mitigating or aggravating factors were observed.

Straw Poll #6: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course: 9
 3 letter grade reduction: 0
 2 letter grade reduction: 0
 1 letter grade reduction: 0
 Letter of Reprimand: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Council members again discussed whether or not Student B’s self-accusation was “unprompted and in good faith prior to any confrontation.” Ultimately, Student B was not

confronted prior to accusing himself, and no evidence existed to suggest that the accusation was not made in good faith.

Straw Poll #7: Does the Council believe that Student B's self-accusation was "unprompted and in good faith prior to any confrontation?"

Yes: 7
 No: 2
 Abstentions: 0

The Council discussed mitigating and aggravating factors. No mitigating or aggravating factors were observed.

Straw Poll #8: What is the appropriate penalty for Student B?

F in the course:	9
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A and B "In Violation" of the Honor Code, and recommends that they each receive an F in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to their records. The Honor Council also finds Student C "Not in Violation."

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 46 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
 Isabelle Lelogeais
 Clerk