

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 17, Fall 2013
February 23, 2014

Members Present:

John Cavallo (presiding), Shantan Cheemerla (clerk), Seth Lauer, Brooke Evans, Avni Shah, Julia Liu, Aaroh Parikh, Jake Hassell, Komal Agarwal

Ombuds: Divya Bhat

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism for an UPPER level ENGLISH course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Professor Deposition
- Email Correspondence between Student A and Professor
- Time Stamps
- Annotated Version of intended final from Student A
- Annotated version of submitted paper from Student A
- Student A's intended final copy
- Student A's sources
- Professor's annotated version of Student A's submitted paper.

Plea:

Student A pled "NOT IN VIOLATION."

Testimony:

Student A says that she turned in her rough draft in lieu of her final version of her paper. Student A clarified that the annotated version of her essay included her highlighting of citations she used in the paper. Student A was traveling when she received professor's email, but as soon as she could she responded to the professor with the correct version of her final paper. Student A said she believed that adding a footnote was an acceptable form of citing her sources, regardless of whether she included quotes or paraphrased. Student A's annotated version was the final paper she had intended to submit. She included the source material in the rough draft without citing them, so that she could outline her paper. Her intended final paper removed these unquoted materials, so cited them properly. Student A had the final draft and the rough draft completed at the same time, but just turned in the rough draft by mistake. The professor's annotations noted that one of the plagiarized paragraphs came from a source not included in the works cited; Student A responded that she didn't use that source in her final copy.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the submitted paper included plagiarized parts. This constitutes a violation. Members noted that although it could have been an honest mistake, this does not affect whether or not a violation has occurred. It is not the Honor Council's responsibility to consider how a violation occurred. Based on the evidence, which shows unattributed sections of the text, and the testimony, council members agreed that a violation has occurred.

Vote: 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. Members found no reason why Student A would not be in violation.

Vote: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Council members noted that students are usually taken at their word, and so members said that they might mitigate for intentionality. Members noted that the student provided almost all of the evidence, including time stamps and highlighted sections on the 20 page paper. Members thus suggested mitigation for cooperation. Members were reminded again not to consider remorse or signs of remorse. Members suggested a possibly unclear Honor Code policy since the course had no syllabus. However, citations and plagiarism are covered under the Rice Honor Code and other members said that they would not be mitigating for an unclear Honor Code Policy.

Council members saw no signs of aggravating factors.

Council members started penalty deliberations ranging from a letter of reprimand to a 3-letter grade reduction. Council members noted that Student A noted that she had no intention of gaining an unfair advantage.

Vote: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course: 0

3 letter grade reduction: 0

2 letter grade reduction: 0

1 letter grade reduction: 0

Letter of Reprimand 9

Abstentions: 0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive a LETTER OF REPRIMAND. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 53 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Shantan Cheemerla
Clerk