Abstract of the Honor Council  
Case 20, Fall 2013  
Monday, April 21, 2014

Members Present:  
Shayak Sengupta (presiding), Cesar Udave (clerk), Helen Sharpless, Nick Conard, Julia Liu, Mario Aragon, Destiney Randolph, Katie Stewart, Sarah Frazier, Alex Metcalf (observing)  
Ombuds: Jayme Smith

Letter of Accusation:  
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of cheating on a take home exam for an upper level humanities course.

Evidence Submitted:  
- Letter of Accusation  
- Student A’s written statement  
- Student B’s written statement  
- Course Syllabus  
- Student A Final  
- Student B Final  
- Professor Deposition  
- Letter from Student to Professor  
- Student A Typed and Hand-written notes

Plea:  
Student A pled “not in violation.”  
Student B pled “in violation,”

Testimony:  
Student A Testimony

Student A began her paper on December 12 with only her own notes. On the night of the next day, she suffered a car wreck which prevented her from adequately completing work. Therefore, she just turned in the assignment quickly. She then sent Student B her notes from the semester. She got an F in the course when grades were available because the professor believed an Honor Code violation occurred. Student A sent Student B notes which accidentally contained a rough draft of the former’s assignment. Student A also stated there was no mentioning of the Honor Council or the Honor Code during the semester. Student A said in her closing statement that her intentions were not malicious. She was not in the right state of mind
Student B Testimony

Student B requested and received student A’s notes from her. Student B looked at Student A’s paper as a reference and occasionally copied the rough draft. Student B stated that she structured her essay around Student A’s essay. She chose a topic when Student A sent her notes, not prior to that. Student B also stated that the professor did not specifically elaborate on any details surrounding the Honor Code in the course. The professor did not even give details regarding citations. Student B stated that she copied verbatim from Student A’s essay. In her closing statement, Student B pleaded in violation and stated that she did reference Student A’s paper.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because given the degree of similarity in both essays, the testimonies from the accused students, the assignment sheet, and additional evidence including the course syllabus.

Vote #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?
Yes: 9
No: 0
Abstentions: 0
Observing: 1

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. Members agreed that she was not in violation because of the following reasons: she did not intentionally give additional evidence, she was not mentally sound enough to operate a computer, the students’ testimonies are similar, and the professor did not give specific details surrounding the Honor Code.

The Council then discussed whether or not Student B committed the violation. Members agreed that Student B was in violation because she referenced Student A’s paper, plagiarized from it, and stole ideas from it.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”
Yes: 0
No: 7
Abstentions: 2
Observing: 1

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”
Yes: 9
No: 0
Abstentions: 0
Observing: 1
Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. For Student B, the Council members believe that cooperation is a mitigating circumstance. Without Student B’s testimony, the Council would have found it more difficult to reach its decision. Some Council members also mitigated for an unclear Honor Code policy for the course. Specifically, although students were required to cite secondary sources, there was not clear indication neither on the level of collaboration allowed nor the style used for citations.

The Council also saw that the assignment was worth 50% of the overall course grade, and there were few assignments in the course. While members believe that the violation itself called for an F in the course with a one-semester suspension, given the mitigating factors, the supermajority of the Council recommends a less severe penalty.

Vote #5: What is the appropriate penalty for Student B?
F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 0
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 3
F in the course: 6
3 letter grade reduction: 0
2 letter grade reduction: 0
1 letter grade reduction: 0
Letter of Reprimand: 0
Abstentions: 0
Observing: 1

Decision:
The Honor Council thus finds Student A “NOT In Violation” of the Honor Code.

The Honor Council thus finds Student B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive F in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 3 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Cesar Udave
Clerk