Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 2, Fall 2014
10/23/14

Members Present:
Hurst Williamson (presiding), Sarah Frazier (clerk), Alex Metcalf, Lynn Fahey, Katie Jensen, Kristin Sweeney, Julia Liu, Jacob Schneckloth, Josiah Grace, Amelia Duno (observing)

Ombuds: Natalie Danckers

Letter of Accusation:
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Students A and B of unauthorized collaboration on a homework assignment for a lower level chemistry course.

Evidence Submitted:
- Letter of Accusation
- Student A’s written statement
- Student B’s written statement
- Student A homework
- Student B homework
- Course syllabus
- Relevant textbook chapters

Plea:
Student A pled “Not in Violation”
Student B pled “Not in Violation”

Testimony:
In his opening statement, Student A said that only the last 2 questions of each homework assignment in question were similar. She said that the similarity was the result of collaboration, research, and notes; the answers were written independently.

Student A said that both students had written relevant sentences from the book and typed those into the dialogue box for the homework. Student A said that identical sentences were directly pulled from the textbook. Student A said that their collaboration consisted of finding passages from the textbook together, but composing answers separately.

In her opening statement, Student B said that the two students were classmates in the course in question and decided to work together after poor performance on the first exam. Student B said that only 1 or 2 of the 13-15 homework questions were conceptual, and those conceptual questions were the ones they decided to work on together. Student B said that the two students examined the questions, brought up relevant information, and began formulating an answer by writing down relevant sentences from the course textbook. Student B said that all of the homework assignments added up to 5% of the
course grade. Student B said that only 3 questions between 2 homework assignments are in question, constituting only 0.007% of the course grade.

Student B said that the identical statements are relevant sentences selected from the textbook. Student B said that both students contributed to selecting information. Student B said that they wrote down almost-complete answers on their papers as they were discussing the question. Student B said that they typed and submitted their answers later in separate rooms, and that her answer was almost exactly what she had written down while working with Student A. Student B said that both students wrote their own notes during the discussion of the question. Student B said that the conceptual questions come straight out of the course textbook, and that the students used the textbook and their memories to answer the questions. Student B said that the students made minor changes to the language from the textbook while taking notes. Student B said that the process of pulling sentences from the textbook consisted of finding relevant lines and discussing the line and what to say, then writing it down.

In her closing statement, Student A said that the resemblance of the two answers was not due to copying, but rather was due to allowed collaboration.

In her closing statement, Student B said that the similarities that arose from collaboration. She also said that the impact of these questions on the final course grade would be very minor.

**Verdict Deliberations:**
Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the answers were identical and the phrases from the answers did not appear in the textbook.

Some council members believed that a violation had occurred whether or not the answers were from the textbook. After taking a recess to look for identical phrases from the questions in the textbook, all members agreed that a violation occurred because the phrases did not appear in the textbook.

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. The Council saw no evidence to suggest that Student A was not in 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. The Council saw no evidence to suggest that Student B was not in violation.

Straw Poll #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”
Yes: 9
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

**Penalty Deliberations:**

The Council then discussed whether they believed the two students should be given the same penalty. Members believed that the students should receive the same penalty because the evidence suggested that their participation in the violation was the same. The Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. All members considered weight as a mitigating factor, and several members also considered amount of the assignment as a mitigating factor.

The Council did not see any aggravating factors.

All Council members said they would be comfortable with a letter of reprimand, though a 1-letter grade reduction and a 1/3 letter grade reduction were also brought up. Most members would not support a 1/3 letter grade reduction.

Straw Poll #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Students A and B?
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 Students A and B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive letters of reprimand. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to their records.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Frazier
Clerk