Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 48, Spring 2014
April 11, 2014

Members Present:
Hurst Williamson (presiding), Shayak Sengupta (clerk), Adriana Bracho, Cesar Udave, Destiney Randolph, Claire Bonnyman, Luke Van Der Spoel, Shantan Cheemerla, Isaac Batt, Helen Sharpless (observing), Katie Jensen (observing)

Ombuds: Kristina Vu

Letter of Accusation:
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism on a take-home exam for a graduate level natural sciences course.

Evidence Submitted:
- Letter of Accusation
- Student A’s Written Statement
- Course Syllabus
- Student A’s Exam
- Online Source

Plea:
Student A pled not in violation.

Testimony:
The student insisted that he did not plagiarize, and he asserted that the professor is taking advantage of the Honor System to punish him. When taking the exam, the student had the online source open, and his process of taking the exam involved having websites open to answer questions. The student also stated that the Honor Code policy regarding online sources and citations was not clearly stated by the instructor.

Verdict Deliberations:
Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the take-home exam instructions stated to not plagiarize, but Student A’s exam showed clearly that plagiarism that occurred. All Council members expressed that the evidence showed a clear violation of the Honor Code.

Vote #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?
Yes: 9 + 2 observing
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

The Council unanimously agreed that Student A was in violation of the Honor Code.
Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”
Yes: 9 +2 observing
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:
Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Mitigating circumstances expressed widely Council members include the weight and amount of the assignment in question (one question on an assignment worth 15% of the total course grade). Some Council members expressed mitigating for an unclear Honor Code policy, but despite the course syllabus not having an Honor Code Policy, there was agreement that the general University policy regarding plagiarism applied.

Council members did not see any aggravating circumstances.

Council members discussed possible penalties that included letter grade reductions as well as a failure in the course. The majority of members expressed that a one letter grade reduction would be appropriate, but some other members also wanted to look at the possibility of a 2-3 letter grade reduction and furthermore, failure in the course. Members supporting a one letter grade reduction said that given mitigating circumstances and the nature of the assignment, this penalty would be the most appropriate.

Vote #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?
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: 0
F in the course: 0
3 letter grade reduction: 0
2 letter grade reduction: 0
1 letter grade reduction: 9 +2 observing
Letter of Reprimand: 0
Abstentions: 0

Decision:
The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a one letter grade reduction. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 35 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Shayak Sengupta
Clerk