Abstract of the Honor Council  
Case 52, Spring 2014  
May 5th, 2014

Members Present:  
Hurst Williamson (presiding), Claire Bonnyman (clerk), Michael Jin, Owais Syed, Josiah Grace, Katie Jensen, Katie Stewart, Sam Kwaitowski, Kristen Sweeney

Ombuds: Divya Bhat

Letter of Accusation:  
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of unauthorized collaboration for a lower level MATH course.

Evidence Submitted:  
- Letter of Accusation  
- Student A’s written statement  
- Student B’s written statement  
- Course Syllabus  
- Student A’s Exam  
- Student B’s Exam

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

Testimony:  
Student A: She said that she did the test independently and that she has worked closely with Student B outside of class on homework sets, classes, etc., which is why the exams appear so similar. To explain the similarities and errors, Student A, emphasized that she studied with Student B and she also explained her confusion about the question and why she made the errors. They sat next to each other in the exam. They did the problem sets and practice exams together before the test. In closing, she talked about how they studied together, which is why the exams are so similar.

Student B: She said she was not aware of any cheating and did not cheat off of Student A, she is a transfer student who has already taken this class and has made good grades on other tests and was focused on finishing the test while she was taking it. To explain the similarities in the answers, she explained that she did not know exactly how to answer one question but provided information that might have given partial credit. In closing, she emphasized that she was focused on finishing her test and was not looking at another person’s test and was not aware of anyone cheating off of her.

Verdict Deliberations:  
Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the exams are extremely similar, especially the similar errors that caused them to miss points. The tests have the same number of steps and the answers
are formatted identically. One council member was unsure because this type of math has pretty similar steps to reach the answers and it was hard to say whether there was collaboration or just similar errors. Each individual question had similarities that raise suspicion and, since the errors were so consistent, a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred. The same member suggested that some similarities can be explained by the time constraint. Another member found it unlikely that the 2 students would run out of time at the exact same pencil mark.

Straw Poll #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?
Yes:  7
No:  1
Abstentions:  1

The Council further discussed the similarities of the answers and whether they were suspicious because of collaboration or just speculative. The members explained why they voted the way they did, one member said they were looking for differences rather than similarities and had a very hard time finding any. One member closely analyzed all the similar errors and structural differences and continues to hold the stance that a violation did not occur.

Straw Poll #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?
Yes:  8
No:  0
Abstentions:  1

Straw Poll #3: 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 and Student B committed the violation.

The Council members had a hard time determining whether the students collaborated or if one cheated off the other. There were a few minor inconsistencies that could possibly suggest that one may have copied off the other but Council members felt uncomfortable making a decision at this point. Council members also considered the Students’ testimonies and how Student B seemed to understand the material better and she explained the errors based on the concepts of the exam. Student A explained the errors by saying that they studied together, which some members consider unsatisfactory. The Ombuds told us that if directionality cannot be proved, both students are to be found “Not in Violation”.

Straw Poll #4: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”
Yes: 3
No: 6
Abstentions: 0

Straw Poll #5: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”
Yes: 2
No: 6
Abstentions: 1

Straw Poll #6: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”
Yes: 3
No: 6
Abstentions: 0

Straw Poll #7: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”
Yes: 2
No: 6
Abstentions: 1

Straw Poll #8: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”
Yes: 3
No: 6
Abstentions: 0

Straw Poll #9: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”
Yes: 2
No: 7
Abstentions: 0

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2 hours

Respectfully submitted,
Claire Bonnyman
Clerk