Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 18, Fall 2014
January 25, 2015

Members Present:
Hurst Williamson (presiding), Helen Sharpless (clerk), Billy Rothwell, Isaac Batt, Isabel Alison, Maria Montalvo, Mario Aragon, Shayak Sengupta, Michael Jin

Ombuds: Divya Bhat

Letter of Accusation:
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of unauthorized collaboration in an upper-level PHIL course.

Evidence Submitted:
- Letter of Accusation
- Student A’s written statement
- Student B’s written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Student A’s Exam 4 and 5
- Student B’s Exam 4 and 5
- Exam 4 and 5 Scores of All the Students in the Class

Plea:
Student A pled “In Violation.”
Student B pled “In Violation.”

Testimony:
Student A said in her opening statement that she violated the Honor Code on Exams 4 and 5 by allowing Student B to look at her exams. Student A was present at the time of the violation but does not know to what degree her exams were copied. Student B texted Student A asking to check answers, and Student A provided Student B with her completed exams in both instances. Student A also explained how a problem worked on Exam 4. Student A said in her closing statement that she really regretted sharing her answers, and she recognized that her actions were wrong.

Student B said in her opening statement that during Exam 4 and 5, she asked Student A for her exams to check answers. When Student B would find that Student A’s answers were more correct, she would change it. Student B was aware of the violation at the time. Student A and B are not in the same study group and do not work on homework assignments together. Homeworks were optional, so Student B did not complete the optional assignments.

When Student B asked for Student A’s exams, Student A said yes with no hesitations. After Student B used Student A’s exam to check her answers, Student B would ask her to
explain questions. Student B did not take more than the time allotted for the exam. Student A was not present when Student B was taking the exam, but was present when Student B copied her exam.

Student B said in her closing statement that she did realize that she committed an Honor Code violation. Student A did all the work on the exams on her own and would not have offered her exam if Student B had not asked for her exam.

**Verdict Deliberations:**
Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of Student A and B’s testimony and the supporting evidence.

Vote #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. There was unanimous agreement that Student A and Student B both committed a violation.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”
Yes: 9
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

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

**Penalty Deliberations:**
Council members agreed that both Students should receive the same penalty because there was equal contribution to the violation and the Honor Code does not distinguish between giving and receiving unauthorized aid.

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Several Council members mitigated for cooperation because Student A and Student B were very honest in their statements. Member did not see any aggravating factors for Student A or Student B.

Because of the weight of the assignments, Council members all considered at least an F in the course with 1 semester of suspension. The two exams constituted 40% of the course grade. The students knew that they were committing a violation and proceeded to collaborate on their exams regardless. Several members were hesitant to support more than a semester of suspension because they felt it was overly punitive to the students.
Others disagreed with the mitigation factor and believed an F and 2 semesters of suspension was warranted because of Student A’s almost flippant handing over of her exam which provided no benefit to her course performance and because of the weight of the assignments. They cited that Student A had nothing to gain from providing her exam to Student B and that both students knew that they were violating the Honor Code. Student A should have reported Student B when she asked for unauthorized aid on an exam.

The Council ultimately determined that mitigation for cooperation was not enough to warrant a reduction in the length of the suspension.

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: 8
- F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 1
- F in the course: 0
- Abstentions: 0

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: 9
- F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 0
- F in the course: 0
- Abstentions: 0

Decision:
The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive an F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

The Honor Council thus finds Student B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive an F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 70 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Sharpless
Clerk