Abstract of the Honor Council  
Case 24, Fall 2014  
February 24, 2015  

Members Present:  
Hurst Williamson (presiding), Helen Sharpless (clerk), Komal Agarwal, Jake Hassell, Julia Liu, Maria Montalvo, Natalie Swanson, Owais Syed, Shayak Sengupta  

Ombuds: Jayme Smith  

Letter of Accusation:  
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of unauthorized collaboration on a final exam for an UPPER level MGMT 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  
- Explanation of an Old Exam Question 8  
- Roommate Statement  
- Additional Materials provided by Student A and Student B  

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

Testimony:  
In their opening statement, the accused students said that they have been teammates and study mates in five finance courses. The students stressed that they will go into detail because of the extreme detail of the accusation letter. The similarities in question were a result of a similar education.  

The graph would have been extremely hard to draw without mapping out its complementary components. They pointed out that they labeled their axes differently. Additionally, there are different points marked on the graph. They stated that to consider an answer similar based on one word is unfounded. Exhibit 3a was given to them in the course and was allowed on the exam, so their similarities came from those figures. In Exhibit 3b, they wished to show how often PV is stated. Their answers to Question 3 were different enough that it would make a difference in real world application. On Question 4, the values were simply plugged into an Excel spread sheet provided in the examination. Their approaches to Question 5 were very dissimilar and their answers were not the same. For Question 6, again their answers were very different. The only similarity
was in one term. The students provided a course handout which was a solution to a problem set that was given to them by the professor that showed a similar strategy to answering a question that was used on the exam. The accuser singled out this question because of the “unusual” strategy used, a strategy that was given to the students by the professor. They stressed that a term the accuser found suspect was explicitly used in a class lecture. On question 8, they stated that they learned this concept in a previous class. For question 9, they pointed out a difference in their answers to part b, explaining that if they had collaborated, they would have all the same answers. For question 10, the similarity in their answers consisted of only a formula; however, the rest of the question was very different as one student answered the question incorrectly. They stated that their arrival at completely opposite answers in some cases does not fit the accusation.

On the bonus question, they valued each other’s contribution the most. The rest of the terms provided were completely different. They also read Student A’s roommate statement which explained that Student A was irritated while taking the exam because she was stressed by the time limit and the length. The roommate also explained that if the accused had collaborated and had the answers, Student A would not be as noticeably stressed.

Honor Council members now asked questions of Student A. She studied with the other student. She did not have the sheet of notes that she was allowed to use during the exam, and it was not required that the note sheet be turned in with the exam. Student A knew a lot of the material because of the courses she took previously.

Honor Council members now asked questions of Student B. Student B took the exam in Fondren Library in the evening. She and Student A did not do the exam together, but they planned their exam times together because they are international students and the timing of exams was very important. She made her note sheet independent of Student A. Concepts learned in previous classes were allowed to be used in studying for this exam. At no point did Student B contact anyone during her exam.

Before her closing statement, Student A said that as international students they have a limited vocabulary so the similarities might come from that. In India, they were trained to answer questions a certain way, so it would be logical that some questions have similarities. She had a previous background in the course material so it was familiar to her. She explained she turned in her exam before the deadline because she had travel plans. Student A took this course for an easy A, but she was irritated while taking this exam because her roommate was making noises and the exam was lengthy. The time allowed was very limited.

In her closing statement, Student B said they were not accusing the professor of being biased against them individually. The professor looked at the exams in a teleological fashion after finding one similarity in a question and proceeded to look for other similarities which were tenuous at best. They did not collaborate.
Verdict Deliberations:
Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence does not support that a violation has occurred because enough of the similarities can be explained by the fact that these students took many classes together and have similar knowledge and training.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Sharpless
Clerk