Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 31, Spring 2015
3/11/15

Members Present:
Hurst Williamson (presiding), Anika Zaman (clerk), Billy Rothwell, Michael Jin, Isabel Alison, Shayak Sengupta, Julia Liu, Clark Zha, Nicholas Shaver

Ombuds: Sophie Schnietz

Letter of Accusation:
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A, B, and C of unauthorized aid for an upper level engineering course.

Evidence Submitted:
- Letter of Accusation
- Student A’s written statement
- Student B’s written statement
- Student C’s written statement
- Student A additional evidence
- Student B additional evidence
- Student C additional evidence
- Student A’s Assignment
- Student A’s Assignment
- Student A’s Assignment
- Additional Student’s Assignment
- Course Syllabus
- Exam Instructions Statement
- How OST (online testing system) Works
- Letter of Accusation
- TA Deposition

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

Testimony:
Student A said that he opened the test but was too distracted to take the test. He later asked for an extension because he was focused on other things and nowhere on the exam did it mention that the exam must be completed in one sitting. He therefore worked on
the exam over multiple days and submitted the exam after the due date. The total amount of time he took was 2 hours. He started February 11th and ended the exam on February 13th. He did not take advantage of unauthorized aid during the exam.

Student B divided the test into times that amounted to 2 hours. He recorded his time during each work session to ensure that he did not pass 2 hours. He said that the professor did not specify that the test should be taken in one setting, only that students are responsible for timing themselves. He was not told that his exam answers have to be uploaded all together and unaware of the requirements of the exam. It was also his, the professor’s, and the TA’s first time using the new system for the exam.

Student C timed himself and took less than 2 hours to take the exam. The problem arose because the professor never mentioned that the test should be taken in one sitting. He often had trouble listening and understanding in class, and the professor did not mention test timing requirements in the introduction of the exam. He first logged in on February 11th and looked at the first problem without thought and closed it. He then logged out and later logged in to take the exam in parts. He took pictures of his work for each problem and spent several minutes taking and cropping pictures in between. He took a break for thirty minutes and continued working again. His friend, after taking a quick look at the exam, told him that the test is like assignments in class.

**Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because students took multiple sessions to finish the exam even though the professor’s exam instruction statement stated that he mentioned in class that the test was to be done in one sitting.

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

The Council then discussed whether Student A, B and C committed the violation. The Council members did not see evidence to the contrary.

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
Vote #4: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student C is “In Violation?”
Yes:  9
No:   0
Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:
The Council agreed that all three students should receive the same punishment.

A majority of members mitigated for unclear course Honor Code policy due to the professor not stating in written form in the test instructions that the test is required to be done in one sitting.

The Council agreed that there are no aggravating circumstances.

Members of the council discussed the ambiguities in the case including the online system on which the exam was taken and the exam instructions. Some members believed that the ambiguities led the students to misunderstand the exam rules and did not give them an unfair advantage.

Vote #5: What is the appropriate penalty for Students A, B, and C?
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: 6
2/3 letter grade reduction: 1
1/3 letter grade reduction: 0
Letter of Reprimand: 2
Abstentions: 0

Decision:
The Honor Council thus finds Student A, B, and C “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive 1 letter grade reduction. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to their record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 45 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Anika Zaman
Clerk