Abstract of the Honor Council
Case #35, Spring 2015
April 19th

Members Present:
Emilia Duno (presiding), Isaac Schultz (clerk), Claire Bonnyman, Destiney Randolph,
Bradley Hamilton, Cara Rogers, Maria Montalvo, Billy Rothwell, Elliot Baerman, Isaac
Batt

Ombuds: Sophie Schneitz

Letter of Accusation:
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of attempting to gain an unfair
advantage in a lower level CHEM course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud
in full.

Evidence Submitted:
▪ Letter of Accusation
▪ Student A’s written statement
▪ Comparative DA Notes
▪ Accused student’s DA Notes
▪ TA statement
▪ Course syllabus

Plea:
Student A pled “not in violation.”

Testimony:
Student A admitted that he was working off a fellow student’s TLC plate, but refuted that
he was taking said student’s analysis, and did not explicitly copy his data. Student A
further stated that he confirmed with the TA during the lab session that his actions were
acceptable for all intents and purposes of the course. While Student A admitted that the
TA said he should work off another TLC plate, from what he recalls he was granted
permission to do otherwise later when he asked the TA a second time. He asserts that he
used another student’s crystals and TLC plate, but the data collection was his own. Upon
examining the data, the two students’ numbers don’t match exactly, and are very similar
only due to the use of the same TLC plate according to the accused. The student states he
motioned to the TA as to whether or not he could use another student’s TLC plate. As an
appendage to the aforesaid statement, student A added that he did explicitly ask the TA
for permission. Permission was allegedly granted from the TA as the student was
performing the data collection. The accused claimed he chose not to run his own TLC
plate due to time constraints; he also did not have his own crystals so figured that this
methodology would be simpler. The student added that he did not look at any other
students’ work while filling out his own data. While all the students were completing the
same task, the student suggests the possibility that all groups were working at different
paces, hence his particular concern about time. In closing, Student A maintains his
innocence. He believes that the TA and Dr. McNeil’s argument is partially true; while he
made use of another student’s crystals and TLC plate he was not directly copying said
student’s analysis.

**Verdict Deliberations:**

While the vagueness of the accused’s testimony made finding a violation more difficult,
the council agreed that a violation occurred. Despite the lack of clarity in testimony, the
course syllabus along with the professor and TA’s statements all clearly noted the need to
use one’s own TLC plate. The council also agreed that the violation in question was
minor; however, a disregard for instruction occurred nonetheless.

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.

The council agreed that the professor defined the Honor Code, and discussion revolved
around whether a violation was warranted in the light of the altered rules. The
complication was that the student was already utilizing the other student’s TLC plate and
crystals, only asking the TA for permission midway through the lab itself. The fact that
the instructor and TA’s statements do not deviate made the decision fairly clear.

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

**Penalty Deliberations:**
Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances.

Three council members agreed to mitigate for weight of the assignment, because the
entire project was 10 points, and the TLC plate only accounted for two points of that. In
the context of the course, the violation in terms of points was miniscule. Two other
council members agreed to mitigate for both the weight and amount of the assignment.
The council considered no aggravating factors.
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: 0
2/3 letter grade reduction: 0
1/3 letter grade reduction: 3
Letter of Reprimand: 6
Abstentions: 0

Due to the weight of the assignment and the amount in violation, council members varied between a letter of reprimand and a 1/3 letter grade reduction. One member mentioned that due to the small size of the violation, it seems rather unfair to place a “flag” on the student’s transcript as a whole. Another stated that considering the student fully disregarded the instructors’ rules, a 1/3 letter grade reduction would be in order. In discussion following the first straw poll, the council deliberated the significance of internal/external flags on a student’s transcript.

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: one hour.

Respectfully submitted,
Isaac Schultz
Clerk