

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 33, Spring 2017
9/21/2017

Members Present:

Reece Rosenthal (presiding), Ike Arjmand (clerk), Sofia Yi, Sean Olson, Ricky Robinson, Grant Wilkinson, and Talia Kramer (observing)

Ombuds: Matt Nobles

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Students A and B of plagiarism on a project for a lower level music course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- The course syllabus
- Student A's project
- Student B's project
- A clarification from the professor
- Example projects from other students
- Examples of the project from the professor

Plea:

Student A pled not in violation.

Student B pled not in violation.

Testimony:

Student A said that he did not provide or receive any aid on this draft of the project and that he was capable of doing it himself. He said that one night, while working on his rough draft at the same table as (but independently from) a different student, Student B joined their table. He said that it is possible that Student B could have copied his work while he and the other student were away from the table. He said that he did not speak with Student B about the project, and that Student B did not ask him any questions about the project. Student A said that while sitting at the table with the third student, he did not ask the third student any questions. He says that in his opinion it is inevitable for some student to have the same work because at that point in the semester they had very limited knowledge regarding the writing of a Bach chorale. Student B said that he and Student A had not worked together on the bass line, and that the bass lines did not have to be identical.

Student B said that he at no point intended to violate the Honor Code. He said that when working with Student A and the aforementioned other student, he asked only general questions, and primarily from the other student (not Student A). Student B affirmed that

he did not ask Student A any questions, that he had asked only conceptual questions of the other student, and that he never saw Student A's work or the other student's work. In comparing both students' projects, Student B said that similarities arose due to common progressions. The student said that it is much more likely for similarities to occur than the professor said, due to the rules of writing musical pieces. The student said that the same errors could have occurred in his piece and Student A's because they may each have been asking the third, aforementioned, student questions, so their information may have had a common source. Student B said that he and Student A worked together on the bass line.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the closeness of the similarities between the two assignments. The Council focused especially on the similarity of errors between the two projects, and how low the likelihood was of this occurring.

Vote #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 6 + 1 observing

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. Some members believed that he had committed a violation because of the similarities between the two. Some believed that a violation had occurred because the likelihood that he had collaborated is greater than the likelihood that they had not collaborated, and that the evidence against each of the accused students is the same. However, some students believed that the evidence only affirms that one student had received unauthorized aid, and not that another student had aided them.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 0

No: 6 + 1 observing

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student B committed the violation. One councilmember believed that if Student B had only been asking Student A questions, the two assignments could not have been as similar as they were. Additionally, members of the Council noted that Student B had admitted to a violation by saying that she had asked other students questions about the assignment, regardless of the similarities between the two papers.

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is "In Violation?"

Yes: 6 + 1 observing

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Some members chose to mitigate the penalty based on the amount of the assignment in violation: only an early draft portion of a larger project.

Some councilmembers believed that it was more likely than not that Student B had copied Student A's work, and that there should be aggravation of the penalty based on theft of work. However, other members believed that such aggravation would be based on speculation as to how the violation had occurred.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a three letter grade reduction in the course.

Vote #4: 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:	0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	6 + 1 observing
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student B "In Violation" of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a three letter grade reduction in the course. The Honor Council finds Student A "Not In Violation" of the Honor Code.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 88 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Ike Arjmand
Clerk