

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 4-4, Fall 2017**  
**4/9/18**

**Members Present:**

Reese Rosenthal (presiding), Amy Lin (clerk), Isabelle Bunten, Grace Coleman, Riya Mehta, James Suffoletta

**Ombuds:** Laura Li, Zac Zalles (observing)

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A, Student B, and Student C of collaborating on a project for a lower level COMP 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
- Student C's written statement
- Full reference code
- Selected references
- Sample code
- Provided code
- Class presentation slides
- Full code links
- Supplemental evidence
- Project description
- Course syllabus

**Plea:**

Student A pled "not in violation."

Student B pled "not in violation."

Student C pled "not in violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A began by explaining the collaboration and Honor Code policy for the course, and she pointed out that according to other universities, the plagiarism checker only has significant results when the percent overlap is greater than 25%, proving that their overlap was insignificant. She emphasized that her laptop and code were not shared with any other students. Student A provided evidence showing that the accused sections were provided in the class Powerpoint and reference code, and that this method was also present in her previous projects. She explained how her logic very closely matched that of the professor's provided code. She also pointed out that her work was similar to both of the random sample codes in code and logic, and that even the two sample codes provided were similar. The only difference between the student's code and the first

sample code was the placement of one function. She said that she went to the TA office hours, and she asked the TA where to place the function. Where she ended up placing the function matched the second sample code. The two other accused students attended the same TA office hours session, which is why they may have similar logic in their code. Because they submitted after the TA session was over, the commit time is very similar. She never collaborated or talked with the other students outside of the TA office hours. She brought in a witness, the TA who ran the office hours session. The witness explained that all three students were present and that she did give them help on the function in question. She said that it was reasonable for the students to commit at the same time, at the end of the TA session, when they had completed the project. She explained that the projects did not have a lot of leeway because they are highly structured, and that it is expected to have some overlap between the students. While the function the students used was common among the assignments she graded, their specific use of the function was rarer. She stated that given the logical guidance she provided, it would not be unexpected that there are some syntactic similarities between the students' code.

Student B stated that the similar commit time was due to attending the same TA office hours session and submitting the assignment after the session. They all received the same guidance from the TA at the session, which explains why their logic is so similar. She had overlapping code with Student C specifically because they both used the logic of a previously completed function (which they had completed with the same TA) to implement the function at hand. Another accused function was used previously in her other assignments, and she stated that the professor encouraged the use of this function. Her code was not sent or shown to any other students in the course. The only collaboration was a discussion with Student A, Student C, and the TA at office hours, which was allowed according to the course syllabus.

Student C provided evidence showing that the accused function was provided in the class Powerpoint and reference code. She attended the same TA office hours session as the other two accused students, which is why their logic is so similar. She had overlapping code with Student B specifically because they both used the logic of a previously completed function (which they had completed with the same TA) to implement the function at hand. She points out that both sample codes are identical, if not syntactically then in logic, showing that the assignment did not provide much leeway for different solutions. She emphasized that nobody else saw her laptop or code, and that the only individual who had seen her code was the TA.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Some Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the code was identical between all three students. All three students had many lines of identical code that only matched the logic of a few lines of the reference code, so the reference code did not provide enough to explain their similarities. Moreover, the sample codes were not similar enough to the students' codes to warrant an identical solution. Other Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence did not support that a violation occurred because they all attended the same TA session.

In addition, their code had some similarities with the professor's reference code and the sample code.

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

Yes: 5

No: 1

Abstentions: 0

**Decision:**

The Honor Council thus finds Student A, Student B, and Student C "Not In Violation" of the Honor Code.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2 hours, 40 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Lin

Clerk