

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 15, Spring 2019
3/6/19

Members Present:

Matt Nobles (presiding), Sam Holloway (clerk), Virginia Xie, Caroline Brehm, Allie Rozich, Riya Mehta

Ombuds: Pierson Lund

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of unauthorized copying of an online source for an upper level SOSC course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Assignment description
- Student's submitted assignment
- Online source
- Course syllabus

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A explained that this assignment was worth a very small portion of the grade. He used some ideas from the alleged online source, but he cited his use of this source and of others. He had no intent to plagiarize anything, and the similar structure of his homework assignment to the online source was from his cited usage of its ideas. He never copied and pasted from any online source, and his citation of the online source was intended to cover the entire antecedent paragraph of his homework assignment. He researched the subject of his homework assignment extensively in order to present a cohesive argument.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the highly substantial similarity between the student's arguments and the arguments presented in the online source, above and beyond what might be reasonably expected when paraphrasing a source.

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

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. Council members saw no reason why Student A did not commit this violation.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Council members observed that the student did parenthetically cite the online source each time he used its ideas, even though his citations did not adequately convey the extent to which the ideas were derived from the online source. Additionally, the assignment was worth a fraction of a percentage point in the overall course grade, so Council members believed a 1 letter grade reduction would be too harsh of a punishment.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 1 letter grade reduction.

Vote #3: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

2 letter grade reduction: 0

1 letter grade reduction: 0

Letter of Reprimand 6

Abstentions: 0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a letter of reprimand.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 30 minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Holloway

Clerk