

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 5-2, Fall 2019
11/19/2019

Members Present:

Virginia Xie (presiding), Matey Yanakiev (clerk), Sanat Mehta, Kaitlyn Crowley, Diego Casanova, Syed Shams

Ombuds: Clay Siminski

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarizing two assignments for a lower level CAAM course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letters of Accusation for both assignments
- Student A's written statement
- Student A's code for both assignments (with a comparison to the alleged source)
- Random student sample for both assignments
- Provided class code for both assignments
- Course syllabus
- Relevant class slides for both assignments
- Assignment description for both assignments

Plea:

Student A pled "in violation."

Testimony:

Student A admitted to receiving unauthorized aid from another student in the class on the pledged project. He also admitted that he referenced code from another student on the unpledged project, although he thought that this constituted allowed collaboration. He only referenced the other student's code for a select few sections where he was having difficulties. He later realized that this type of copying on an unpledged project still constituted a violation of the Honor Code.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because there were substantial similarities between Student A's code and the alleged sources, and because he admitted in his testimony that he had violated the Honor Code.

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. Because the material evidence presented before the Council showed that copying had occurred and because he verbally admitted to copying it himself, the Council decided that the student was the one who committed the Honor Council 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. The Council considered whether the student’s plea of “in violation” in the written and verbal statements constituted substantial closure. However, because the Council could have reached the same conclusion based on apparent similarities in the code itself, the Council decided that his plea did not constitute substantial disclosure and found no reason to mitigate.

The Council found no aggravating factors.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 3 letter grade reduction.

Vote #3: 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: 5

F in the course: 1

3 letter grade reduction: 0

2 letter grade reduction: 0

1 letter grade reduction: 0

Letter of Reprimand 0

Abstentions: 0

Because the student had a prior Honor Code violation, which also had a penalty of a 3 letter grade reduction, the Council aggravated the CPS-suggested penalty of a 3 letter grade reduction to an F in the course and 1 semester of suspension. The Council found that a semester of suspension would be the most appropriate to allow for a time of reflection on the severity of violating Rice’s academic environment, especially since the student had already received this same penalty previously.

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course and 1 semester of suspension.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 45 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Matey Yanakiev
Clerk