

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 27-1, Spring 2020
May 6, 2020

Members Present:

Sam Holloway (presiding), James Suffoletta (clerk), Sean Olsen, Sree Yeluri, Rohit Chouhan, Kaitlyn Crowley, and William Wang (observing)

Ombuds: Clay Siminski

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and B of copying code for a lower level CAAM course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Course syllabus
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Assignment description
- Student A and B code
- Random student sample codes
- RLA testimony
- Additional witness testimony
- Relevant lecture slides
- Additional written testimony from Students A and B

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation." Student B pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A stated that this was an unpledged project and that collaboration was highly encouraged. He cited RLA testimony that showed that both accused students attended RLA sessions and that it was possible for similar code to be submitted if collaboration occurred as per the syllabus. He reiterated that he collaborated within the bounds of the Honor Code, and that there was no copy-pasting of code whatsoever for this assignment. He stated that having code that was very similar to Student B was not against the Honor Code, and that having identical variables and functions is also not against the Honor Code since they wrote their own code. Student A said that some of the variables and formulas were taken from the lecture slides, assignment PDF, and RLA sessions. He stated that the similar order of the functions in the code was due to the order of the assignment PDF. He reiterated that he only worked with Student B through discussions where they composed and troubleshooted code; he said that they never dictated code to each other. He pointed to witness testimony and timestamps that corroborated this. Student A reiterated that both he and Student B had different codes, and that he fully understood the code that he had independently written. Student A also mentioned that his

commenting frequency was different from Student B as well. He stated that he worked on the entire project with Student B.

Student B emphasized that having similar code to Student A is not a violation of the Honor Code according to the course syllabus. He said that he worked with Student A on this project and talked through the code with him. He stated that they worked through the assignment instructions from the description PDF and never dictated specific lines of code. This collaboration including talking about logic, composing code, and troubleshooting code, and that both he and Student B contributed equally to this collaboration. He worked on all parts of the project with Student A, which could have resulted in the similarities. He said that the variables had similar names due to this collaboration, and that the functions were similar due to the lecture slides. Student B emphasized that there was no copy-pasting in their code and pointed to documents that he submitted that showed the process behind his code. He pointed out that the labels for his graphs were an important difference between his and Student A's code. Finally, he said that similarities in comments likely arose when talking through the code while working through it.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation did not occur. The Council believed it was more likely than not that the similarities in code and comments in this project arose through the extensive discussion-based collaboration described by Students A and B. Council members believed this kind of collaboration on an unpledged assignment was permitted under the course Honor Code.

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

Yes: 0

No: 6

Abstentions: 0

Decision:

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour, 32 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
James Suffoletta
Clerk