

Abstract of the Honor Council

Case #3, Fall 2020

November 16, 2020

Members Present:

Sam Holloway (presiding), Joy Wang (clerk), William Wang, Rodolfo Gutierrez, Mark Cantu, William Wang, and Izzi Reynolds

Ombuds: Clayton Siminski

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing students A, B, of collaborating an unauthorized manner with each other and a former student on an unpledged project for a lower level CAAM 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
- Course Lecture materials, including MATLAB files
- Student sample submissions from other students in the class
- RLA testimony
- Comparison files for the project of each student
- Course syllabus
- Files of each student's project
- Pdf of Project instructions
- Student submitted evidence: screen shot confirming office hour appt form student A, links to resources used by student A for project

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in Violation".

Student B pled "Not in Violation"

Testimony:

Student A stated that he does not know Student B or the former student and said that similarities in the code arose from similar ways of thinking. He walked the Council through code, showing bare bones code first and then highlighted portions where he said the professor had input code during an office hours appointment. He said that accused portions were written with help from the professor. Student A testified that similar code was from skeleton code given to all students

and drew on principles from MathWorks discussion threads. He said that the order and structure of code followed logical order of plotting figures. He then demonstrated how information on MathWorks influenced his decisions for coding. Student A emphasized that he used different variables and had different comments and that many of structure of comments are prompted by project description and the RLA. In summary, Student A argued that code similarities came from how he personally understood code, how MathWorks was utilized, and with help from the professor.

Student B said that it was common for certain aspects of project code to be similar. However, he said that their comments and variables were not similar to Student A's and pointed out that elements of Student A's code were not included in his. Furthermore, Student B said he does not know Student A. Student B attributed similarities in code to personal choice, guidance from shared MathWorks references, and information given to all students for the project. He highlighted differences between the structure of his comments and variable names. Student B also asserted that he did not know Student A or the former student whose code Student A and B were accused of referencing in an unauthorized manner. He said he arrived at his code's overall structure based on how he initially set up the project and said that this was the only way the end product would result correctly given the initial structure he chose. Student B closed by emphasizing the limited ways of achieving product, but reiterated that he had different way of formatting and structuring comments than Student A and the former student.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation did occur. The codes for both student A and B were not only similar to that of a former student's code and each other, but they are identical in terms of the core code used. This degree of similarity did not exist in any of the other random sample codes. Thus, the similarity in large blocks of codes were not trivial although some differences existed for some comments and variables.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council reached a split decision on whether Student A had committed a violation. Some members believed that his explanation for the similarities, particularly the part of the testimony about how the professor had written large portions of the code for him, contribute to the preponderance of evidence that a violation did not occur. Furthermore, the skeletal code Student A presented and the subtle differences between Student A's code and Student B's and between Student A's and the former student's also support this conclusion. For the other half of the

Council, the lines of identical codes between student A, B, and the former student were more substantive and indicated that Student A had committed a violation.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred for Student A?

Yes: 3

No: 3

Abstentions: 0

The Council reached a split decision on whether Student B had committed a violation. The majority of the Council believed a preponderance of the evidence supported that Student B had committed a violation. However, one member believed that since the written evidence and documentation submitted for both students was similar and the Council did not find Student A in violation, Student B should receive the same verdict.

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred for student B?

Yes: 5

No: 1

Abstentions: 0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A and B “Not In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive no penalty.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 53 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Joy Wang

Clerk