

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case #6-1, Fall 2020
November 29, 2020

Members Present:

Izzie Karohl (presiding), Hannah Dryer (clerk), Adam Zawierucha, Rishab Ramapriyan, Zac Zalles, Max Slotnik, Izzi Reynolds (observing clerk), and Andrew Barber (observing clerk)

Ombuds: Clay Siminski

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of copying code from a previous student 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
- Course syllabus
- Assignment description
- Additional project description
- Code comparisons between the student and the alleged source
- Relevant lecture material
- Student A's original code prior to office hours
- Student A's office hour schedule
- Student A's email with RLA
- Online references used by the student
- Random student samples

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

Student A began by explaining that her code could only be written a few different ways, so similarities in the code were because of the nature of the assignment. She said that her code and the alleged source code had a similar structure because of the ordering taught in class and because she had a bug in her code that required a specific set up for it to be able to run properly, so the professor advised her on how to structure it to solve the issue.

Student A mentioned she went to office hours and the professor helped her by physically writing some of the code in question on the assignment. She said that an RLA also helped her by explaining what the graders were looking for, and her comments were based on how the RLA explained course concepts. Student A said she used additional, authorized online references to help on the assignment. She also spoke with another student who had

coding experience about general errors she received and got generalized help (ie. make sure you include semicolons, etc.).

Student A mentioned that the comments she used were very different from the comments from the alleged source code. Student A said she has not spoken to the former student since they met briefly last year, and that she had no contact information for the student. Student A turned in the project late and lost a lot of points on the assignment, so she said it did not make sense for her to have committed a violation. Student A also was taking this course as a major requirement, so she said she would not have committed a violation and risked having to retake the course.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because a comparison of Student A's submission with the alleged source revealed a high degree of similarity that was not found in most of the student samples.

The Council first discussed the similar order and the structure of the code. When looking at Student A's assignment compared to the alleged source, the structure was almost exactly the same. Although a portion of the code structure was explained by the student, the entirety of the structure was extremely similar, and student sample codes illustrate a variety of different code structures. The Council members believed that it was unlikely the codes would share that many similarities compared to the random samples without a violation having occurred.

Code comments were also extremely similar. Several of the comments followed the exact same order and had the same meanings, with the only difference being an inverted sentence structure. Student sample codes did not show these same syntactical similarities, so the similarities were not from class notes nor from the RLA. Given that Student A had so many similarities in structure and comments, the Council believed that a preponderance of the evidence suggested that unauthorized collaboration had occurred.

The Council also noted that consulting a student from outside the course without instructor permission may have constituted a violation.

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. The Council believed that she committed the 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 did not find any mitigating or aggravating circumstances.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 2-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:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	6
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Since the percentage of the assignment in violation corresponded to a 2-letter grade reduction and there were no mitigating or aggravating circumstances, the Council decided that a 2-letter grade reduction was appropriate.

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive a 2-letter grade reduction in the course.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 3 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
 Hannah Dryer
 Clerk