Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 7-1, Fall 2020
December 1, 2020

Members Present:
Izzie Karohl (presiding), Matey Yanakiev (clerk), Sriya Kakarla, Rodolfo Gutierrez, Andrew Barber, Kamal Tijani, Zac Zalles (observing), Adam Zawierucha (observing)

Ombuds: Jean Choi

Letter of Accusation:
The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of copying code on a pledged 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 A's code
- Two former students' codes
- Course syllabus
- Project description
- RLA Statements (x3)
- Random class samples (x10)
- Relevant lecture materials

Plea:
Student A pled "Not In Violation."

Testimony:
Student A stated that he did not know either of the former students whose code he was accused of copying. He said that the project instructions were to structure the code in a very particular way, so student submissions would naturally have a similar outline. Furthermore, because some methods were very straightforward, he said similar solutions were to be expected. While completing the project, Student A mainly relied on rewatching lectures and revisiting the project instructions. The student may have used MathWorks as well but does not remember for certain.

In response to an RLA pointing out a similar comment between Student A and one of the former students, he explained his comment emerged organically at that point in his code. Furthermore, some of his variable names were the same because of convention—i, j, and k are standard loop variable names, for example—while the rest of the names emerged from the role each variable played in the code.

Similarly, one of the RLA experts found the main decoding function suspicious for its unusual loop structure and variable names; the student, however, believed these

peculiarities arose because he soft coded the function. The Student referenced other student samples that also used for loops and soft code; therefore, while not precisely identical, the functions were very similar to the accused student's own, demonstrating this common structure could have emerged without any collaboration.

In summary, Student A stated that the similarities between the accused student's code and the two former students were a result of trying to accomplish the same task, so their codes would logically be similar. With the limited ways to complete the assignment and so many submissions over the years, he said it would be entirely plausible for similar solutions to materialize.

Verdict Deliberations:
Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of substantial similarities in the codes—both in the broad structure and in the details.

Initially, the Council felt uncertain in what direction the evidence pointed. On the one hand, some Council members did not find sufficient similarity between the structure of Student A and the two former students, nor did they believe the superficial similarity in one comment constituted sufficient evidence of a violation. Furthermore, the presence of *different* errors in each of the three codes called into question the likelihood of copying.

Upon closer inspection, however, the Council agreed that the structural similarities between the three codes were overwhelming. The Council believed the only differences were cosmetic and that minimal functional alterations would account for the different errors an RLA had addressed. Even small details added to the suspicion of the Council, such as a peculiar misspelling shared by none of the random samples but by Student A and one of the former students.

Finally, even seemingly innocuous sections of Student A's code bore inexplicable similarity to the work of the former two students' while being decidedly distinct from the student samples. For instance, the opening few lines of the project code were given in the project instructions. All 10 of the student random samples implemented this code in one form or another, but Student A and the two former students' codes did not. The Council found the obscure implementation shared exclusively by Student A and the former two students as a highly probable sign of collaboration.

Ultimately, the Council concluded that the substantial similarities in both structure and detail between Student A's code and the code of the two former students met the preponderance standard for 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 preponderance of the evidence suggested Student A was responsible for 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.
Ultimately, the Council concluded there were neither mitigating nor aggravating factors present.

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:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	6
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

In the absence of mitigation or aggravation, the Council felt comfortable with the CPS-assigned penalty for this case.

Decision:
The Honor Council thus finds Student A "In Violation" of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a 3-letter-grade reduction.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 40 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Matey Yanakiev
Clerk