

Abstract of the Honor Council

Case 13-3, Fall 2020

February 9, 2021

Members Present:

Kaitlyn Crowley (presiding), Caroline Brehm (clerk), Hannah Dryer, Andrew Barber, William Wang, Matey Yanakiev, Sam Holloway (observing)

Ombuds: Jean Choi

Letter of Accusation:

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

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A and B's written statements
- Course syllabus
- Project description
- Student A's code
- Student B's code
- Lecture slides
- Class MATLAB files
- RLA written statement
- Professor testimony
- Random student samples

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Student B pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A opened by stating that all of his work was his own, and he completed the project after rigorously attending RLA sessions and TA and professor office hours. Student A mentioned that he and Student B collaborated on assignments in the course, but all similarities in their codes arose because of the way they were taught to code. The student mentioned how the project had a simple structure where a function was used multiple times, so there was only one way to complete the project. Student A referenced the RLA statement, where the RLA said that Student A was taught variable names and basic code structure in RLA sessions. The student said that when Student B was confused about part of the project, he told Student B about what his RLA

said. Additionally, Student A referenced an email exchange between him and the professor, and he stated that the similar areas of code were provided by the professor. Student A ended by stating that he never shared his code or his laptop with Student B, but it is possible that he left his laptop unattended.

Student B stated that he did not violate the Honor Code. He said that he and Student A collaborated on their code, but this was not a violation because the project was unpledged. Student B then said the project description was very comprehensive and provided a lot of the code. Additionally, the professor provided a lot of code via email, which is why the code is similar. Student B said that Student A helped him with the structure of his code, but this structure was essentially provided by the course. Student B concluded by saying that he never shared code with Student A, and the code was similar because the project had to be done a certain way.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the identical elements in Student A’s and Student B’s code could only have arisen through unauthorized collaboration.

Council members discussed how the code appears to be exactly the same down to variable names and comments. One member pointed out that even though the project description and the RLA gave a lot of information, that information could not have accounted for the identical lines of code in Student A’s and B’s projects. Additionally, the RLA and professor only provided a few lines of code, and large sections of the students’ code were identical in structure and function. Ultimately, the Council concluded that a Honor Code violation must have occurred for Student A’s and B’s code to contain the amount of similarities seen in the evidence.

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. Members believed Student A was in violation.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student B committed the violation. Members believed Student B was in violation.

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. The Council found no mitigating or aggravating factors.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 2 letter grade reduction.

Vote #4: 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

Vote #5: What is the appropriate penalty for Student B?

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

Decision:

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

The Honor Council thus finds Student B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a 2 letter grade reduction.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 4 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline Brehm
Clerk