

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 11, Fall 2020**  
**March 31, 2021**

**Members Present:**

Sam Holloway (presiding), William Wang (clerk), Rodolfo Gutierrez-Garcia, Max Slotnik, Kamal Tijani, and Andrew Barber

**Ombuds:** Pierson Lund

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of collaborating on the second midterm for an upper level MECH course. The similarities in two answers were deemed too much to be coincidental, thus the instructor suspected collaboration on the exam which was not permitted. 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
- Canvas instructions
- Exam questions
- Exam solutions
- Course syllabus
- Course textbook
- Student A's exam (annotated)
- Student B's exam (annotated)
- 4 random samples
- Text messages between the two accused students
- Evidence of location by Student B
- Breakdown and textbook source for a problem

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

Student B pled "Not in Violation."

**Testimony:**

*Student A*

Student A said he took the exam in his own room at his residential college, starting at 1 AM. Student A claimed that the similar mistake of forgetting to add a constant to an indefinite integral in the problem 2b was due to coincidental carelessness. Student A also showed that he got the seemingly unexplained values from the textbook and simply forgot to cite where he got it. He also said that he used a similar example from the textbook to complete problem 3, thus skipping some of the steps that would usually be

shown for credit. Student A claimed not to have understood the material completely, resulting in the mistake of not evaluating the answer to problem 3 completely that the instructor took to be suspicious. Student A claimed to have finished the exam at around 9 AM when he left his room to print a cover page for the examination. He said that he only left the room and test unattended to print and to eat lunch, meaning that it was unlikely that Student B, who lived in the same suite, would have copied his work. This is further evidenced by texts the two students shared later as they seem to be talking about the test for the first time after the testing window expired.

### *Student B*

Student B claimed that he got the needed values for problem 3 from the textbook appendices as well, meaning he just forgot to cite the location as well. He also used the same example from the textbook as Student A for problem 3, which explained the missing steps. He explained the entirety of his work for problem 3, noting that since the example in the textbook was not a numerical one, he did not evaluate his final expression fully. Student B also claimed to rely on the textbook heavily for problem 2b. He explained that he was under immense time pressure, evidenced by a picture of a failed submission screen due to submitting the exam too late. The picture also appeared to show that he was not on campus, but rather in the residence of some other friends' place. Student B said he started the exam around 8 PM, where he then stayed the night at his friends' residence. He also claimed to have done homework with Student A from time to time and studied with him for the first exam.

Student B then called witnesses who lived at the house that he stayed at that night. All three witnesses were in the house that evening. They all corroborated that Student B was physically at the house that night and did not hear or see him on the phone. They also confirmed that the photo that Student B took was indeed taken at their house as they recognized the background features.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation had not occurred because most of the similarities in the work problem 3 were more likely to have come from using the steps laid out in the textbook example. The panel noted that their solutions for other questions were quite different. Council members saw some shared errors, such as forgetting to add a constant to the integral and forgetting to cite the appendix they used (which was not explicitly required), but ultimately, these mistakes were viewed as too common to lead to any substantive conclusion. The panel deliberated about the fact that both students did not fully evaluate their answer for problem 3 and left it as an algebraic expression instead. However, this piece of evidence alone was unable to turn the panel completely one way or another, resulting in a non-unanimous vote and a "not in violation" finding.

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

Yes: 2

No: 3

Abstentions: 1

**Decision:**

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 3 hours and 7 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

William Wang  
Clerk