

Abstract of the Honor Council

Case 12-1, Fall 2020

April 15, 2021

Members Present:

Sam Holloway (presiding), Caroline Brehm (clerk), Hannah Dryer, William Wang, Rodolfo Gutierrez, and Clyde Xu

Ombuds: Eliot Behr

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of unauthorized collaboration 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 project
- Previous student's project
- Course syllabus
- Project description and bonus project description
- Random student samples
- Lecture materials
- RLA A's slides
- RLA B's statement
- RLA C's statement
- Student correspondence with Professor A
- Student correspondence with Professor B
- Professor A statement
- Professor B statement

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation".

Testimony:

Student A opened by stating that she did not violate the Honor Code. Student A said she completed the assignment on her own and with the help of professors and college advisors. Student A said she didn't know the student she is accused of cheating from, other than seeing the previous student at her residential college. Student A mentioned she struggled with significant parts of the code, so she contacted her professors and met with them. Even though the professors

submitted statements saying they did not meet with her, Student A referenced evidence where she had exchanged several emails with both professors. Student A said the professors worked with her one-on-one and helped her rewrite several sections of code. She estimated that the professors helped her write 40-50% of the code that was flagged as plagiarized.

Student A then discussed how the remainder of the flagged code was either from pseudocode provided by the professor or from information provided by RLA A. She emphasized that this project was very straightforward, and there were only a few ways to structure the code. Student A pointed out how the way she structured her code was similar to several random student samples.

Student A then referenced RLA testimony. Both RLAs stated that they believe that the similarities in the code could not have arisen without unauthorized collaboration. Student A told the Council that she did not believe this testimony was credible. She asserted that RLA B's testimony may be biased because the RLA did not point out any differences between Student A's code and the previous student's code, even though the RLA was asked to do so. RLA B said Student A missed a semicolon in a function, but Student A asserts that students did not need the semicolon for the code to be correct, which suggests RLA B's testimony was not reliable. In RLA C's testimony, they said there were some spaces where code can be different, but RLA C didn't point them out, so Student A suggested it's not fair to consider that testimony.

Student A pointed out various differences between her code and the previous student's code, such as comment structure. Also, Student A's project contained additional graphs that the previous student's code did not have. Student A concluded her testimony by stating that even though the codes have similarities, the similarities are not significant enough to suggest an honor code violation occurred.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the similarities between Student A's code and the previous student's code could only have arisen due to unauthorized collaboration.

The codes looked very similar, and there were several sections of code that were line-for-line identical. None of the random student samples showed the same structure or level of similarities, so the Council found it highly unlikely that Student A did not collaborate with the previous student. Panelists noted that it is explicitly against the course Honor Code to collaborate with previous students. Also, the Council found RLA testimony to be credible, with both RLAs having stated they don't think similarities seen could have arisen coincidentally. Thus, Council members believed a violation has occurred.

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 Student A was responsible for committing 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 and aggravating circumstances. The Council found no mitigating or aggravating factors.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a two-letter grade reduction. After finding Student A “in violation,” the Council learned that Student A had been found “in violation” for another honor code violation in the same course. Council members felt the student did not deserve credit for the class. Thus, the Council felt it was appropriate to aggravate to an F in the course.

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: 6
3 letter grade reduction: 0
2 letter grade reduction: 0
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 she receive an F in the course.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 20 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline Brehm
Clerk