

## **Abstract of the Honor Council**

**Case #34, Spring 2021**

**May 7, 2021**

### **Members Present:**

Matey Yanakiev (presiding), Caroline Brehm (clerk), Max Slotnik, Rodolfo Gutierrez, Rapha Onyeka, Isabelle Reynolds, and Izzie Karohl (observing)

**Ombuds:** Neil Chopra

### **Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of receiving unauthorized aid on a homework assignment for an upper-level MATH course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

### **Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Course Honor Code
- Student A's homework submission
- Homework solutions manual
- Random student sample
- Professor clarification on Accusation

### **Plea:**

Student A pled "In Violation."

### **Testimony:**

Student A opened by admitting to violating the Honor Code by turning in a homework assignment where she had referenced the solutions manual and used some of its work as her own. The student said she turned in the assignment two days after it was due and had not done any other assignments in the course since turning it in. Student A concluded by saying she took responsibility for the accusation against her and said she will make sure it never happens again.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because Student A admitted to copying her homework and violating the course Honor Code. Additionally, Student A's homework assignment was extremely similar to the homework solutions manual.

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. Since Student A admitted to copying, the Council found no reason that she would not be 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 any mitigating or aggravating circumstances. The Council briefly discussed mitigating to a Letter of Reprimand because the violation only directly involved one question on a homework assignment. After reviewing the content of the assignment and the solution manual more carefully, however, the Council concluded it could not affirmatively show unauthorized aid was not used on the rest of the assignment, which is the standard for mitigation. Ultimately, the Council decided not to mitigate or aggravate.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 1 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: 0

1 letter grade reduction: 6

Letter of Reprimand 0

Abstentions: 0

After finding Student A “in violation”, the Council learned she had a previous in the same course in the same semester. For that previous violation, the student took the Alternative Resolution and received an F in the course. The Chair explained that Student A submitted the accused homework assignment after she had received an email informing her of the first accusation but

before the Investigative Meeting for the first accusation had taken place. The Chair also informed the Council that by taking the Alternative Resolution and by pleading “in violation” at this hearing, Student A admitted to violating the Honor Code on assignments worth more than half of the course grade in total.

Council members discussed if when combining Student A’s penalty from the previous case with the penalty from the present case the overall penalty should be aggravated to an F in the course and 1 semester of suspension due to the previous violation. Since the violations occurred in the same class, the Council decided to consider all course assignments that were found to be “in violation” when deciding the total penalty. Many Council members believed that the penalty should be aggravated for committing an additional violation and for violating the Honor Code on over half of the coursework. One Council member pointed out how the Consensus Penalty Structure assigns an F in the course for assignment weights of 20–30% of the course grade, so it would not be appropriate to assign that penalty for Student A as the assignment weight of her violations was nearly double the upper CPS bound for an F in the course. Furthermore, because the student had already received an F in the course for the assignments in the previous case alone, without any aggravation, the student would receive no marginal penalty for the additional assignment submitted after the first accusation.

Two Council members disagreed and felt it was not appropriate to add a semester of suspension for a violation on a homework assignment. Other members argued that Student A committed the violation after being informed of the Honor Council proceedings against her, which warranted aggravating beyond the initial penalty of F in the course. Ultimately, two-thirds of Council members agreed that Student A’s actions were especially damaging to the academic atmosphere of Rice University and felt it was appropriate to aggravate to an F in the course with 1 semester of suspension.

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:	4
F in the course:	2
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 and 1 semester of suspension.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 16 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Brehm

Clerk