

Abstract of the Honor Council**Case 41, Spring 2021****May 31, 2021****Members Present:**

Matey Yanakiev (presiding), Caroline Brehm (clerk), Isabelle Reynolds, Adam Zawierucha, Syed Shams, William Wang, and Sahana Prasanna (observing)

Ombuds: Thelo Lewis

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarizing several assignments for an upper level BIOE course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Student A's project submission
- Student A's question set submission
- Previous student's project submission
- Previous student's question set submission
- Email exchange between professor and Student A
- Poster assignment description
- Student A's original project
- Student A's original question set
- Assignment metadata
- Text messages between Student A and previous student
- Google Drive sharing notification

Plea:

Student A pled "Not In Violation".

Testimony:

Student A opened his testimony by clarifying he was conceding one of the accusations brought up against him and disputing the other. He sought help from a student who took the class in the previous semester and that student shared their files for all course assignments. Having revisited the syllabus, which prohibited referencing the work of students from previous semesters, Student A admitted he unconsciously violated the Honor Code by receiving aid from his friend. The

student maintained, however, that he was not guilty of plagiarizing the materials of the previous student.

The student said he had largely completed the accused assignments before asking the previous student for help. Student A said that when he was compiling his work into the two final documents to submit to the professors he had accidentally copied over the work from the previous student's files rather than his own. Because he did not revise after compiling, Student A said did not notice he was turning in the wrong work. Student A referenced his original work that he had done before the submission to demonstrate he had not intended to plagiarize and had simply made a mistake.

Student A then explained that the differences between the previous students' submission and the ones he submitted were because he had accessed prior versions of the student's work on Google Drive. He claimed that these prior versions were slightly different than the submitted ones in the evidence folder because the student had revised them before submitting them to the professor, not because he had edited them himself.

Lastly, Student A explained that the reason the poster submission had his name on it was because he had pasted in the previous student's slides into his own poster in order to imitate the proper formatting. Student A said he had intended to replace the information with his own work but had ultimately made a mistake during the submission process. To support his claims, Student A referenced the metadata for his files, which showed he completed his own version of the poster 30 minutes before downloading the other poster and submitting it on Canvas. The student maintained that he made a mistake downloading the poster with the previous student's work because the file names were so similar.

Student A concluded his testimony by emphasizing that he never meant to plagiarize, and he put his own name on the poster by accident when submitting his work.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because Student A accessed unauthorized materials when completing his assignment.

The course Honor Code contained in the syllabus states that accessing class materials from previous semesters was prohibited. Student A disclosed that he accessed materials given to him by a student who had previously taken the class, which violated the course Honor Code. Additionally, Council members believed Student A's submissions amounted to plagiarism because he had submitted the uncredited work of another student under his own name. Thus, Student A had violated the Honor Code both by accessing unauthorized materials and plagiarizing another student's work.

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 the student admitted to receiving and consulting a previous student's work, the student 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 any mitigating or aggravating circumstances.

The Council found no mitigating circumstances.

Because the text message correspondence between Student A and the former student indicated Student A had only asked to reference the previous student's materials for general guidance, the Council discussed whether the subsequent exhaustive copying of all the relevant material from the student—highly disproportionate to the original request—constituted grounds for aggravation. Ultimately, however, the Council concluded there was not enough evidence to aggravate.

Since Council members had determined the student violated the Honor Code for almost half of the course grade and no mitigating or aggravating factors could be identified, the Council felt the CPS-recommended penalty was appropriate.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is an F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension.

Vote #3: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 6

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: 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 an F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 9 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline Brehm
Clerk