

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 30, Spring 2010
April 28, 2010

Members Present:

Lindsay Kirton (presiding), Jackie Ammons (clerk), Trey Burns, Gabriela Lopez, Austin Edwards, Adam Hartman, Kaleb Underwood, James Hannah, Chris Koops

Ombuds: Lila Kerr

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of collaborating on an assignment for an upper-level science course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Assignment prompt and professor's notes given to the class
- Solution to assignment
- Student A's assignment
- Student B's assignment
- Witness depositions
- Principle Investigator deposition for Student A
- Principle Investigator deposition for Student B
- Professor deposition
- Lecture notes and study questions provided by the TA
- Notes and scratch work from Student A and Student B
- Samples of Other Students' Assignments

Plea:

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

Student B pled "Not In Violation."

Testimony:

Student B stated that her model was different from that of the professor and Student A, which are the same.

Student B stated that even though the professor saw a similarity between the wording of a certain part of their assignment, the answer to the problem was correct.

Student A referenced an expert deposition which suggested that a certain phrase that both Student A and Student B used in their assignment was a common phrase. Student B said that her lab supervisor often used this phrase during their lab time. In her notes, Student B writes about this phrase being used in a lecture from the professor.

Student A and Student B showed the Council their textbooks which contained some of their similar phrasing used in their assignments.

Student A pointed out that the example assignments from other students showed that the professor's claim that Student A and Student B's incorrect answers were unique was incorrect because these example assignments contained some of these similarly incorrect solutions.

Witness 1 stated that Student B participated in his lab and that her work in his lab would give her knowledge of topics on the assignment. Witness 1 said that the phrase questioned by the professor was a common phrase within the field.

Student A said she created her original model—which was the same as the professors—and the rest of her answers followed from this model. Student A said she studied for this class and shared notes with Student B. Student A stated that Student B did not have access to her assignment and that they only discussed the study questions together.

Student A worked out her model two days before it was due and completed the assignment the night before it was due.

Student B claimed she created her original model—which was different from Student A's and that of the professor—and that the rest of her answers followed from this model. Student B said the similarities between her answers and Student A's answers was because of the similar wording that they both used as a result of their shared notes, textbooks, and experiences in labs. Student B said that she did not work with Student A on this problem but that they had gone over the study questions together, which were similar to the actual assignment. Student B stated that Student A did not have access to her assignment before it was due.

Student B said she started the assignment the day before it was due and completed it the morning that it was due.

Student B said that the reason the assignments were together in the stack of assignments was because she and Student A were sitting next to each other when they passed in their assignments during class. Student A verified this testimony.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that there was not clear and convincing evidence that a violation occurred. Both students explained their processes in solving the problems; expert depositions verified the use of their language; witness testimony confirmed that they worked separately; and examples of other students' work contained these same similarities. Other Council members felt that the similarities in the problems were more similarity in thought rather than identical answers or wording.

Straw Poll #1: Is there clear and convincing evidence that a violation occurred?

Yes: 0

No: 9

Abstentions: 0

Straw Poll #1 made binding.

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 13 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Jackie Ammons
Clerk