

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 21, Fall 2012**  
**February 2, 2013**

**Members Present:**

Trey Burns (presiding), Isabelle Lelogeais (clerk), Adriana Bracho, Seth Lauer, David French, John King, Hurst Williamson, Michael Jin, Shep Patterson

**Ombuds:** Jacquelyn Pass

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism on a paper for an upper level Social Science course.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's Written Statement
- Course Syllabus
- Paper Requirements
- Student A's Paper with Professor Highlighting
- Lecture Slides from Previous Course
- Investigator's Notes
- Lecture Information Sources
- APA Citation Guidelines and Sample Paper (Purdue OWL)
- Paper Outline
- Correspondence between Student A and Professor

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A stated that because he followed the assignment's expectations to refer to previous and current class material, consult with the professor, and perform thorough research on the topic, he was doing nothing wrong in the process of his research. He said he did not provide a citation for the specific material considered plagiarized by the professor because he believed it constituted common knowledge because the professor had used it in lecture slides, and therefore did not require acknowledgement. In addition, with regards to the specific unattributed quotation, he stated he was unaware that he was required to cite lecture material. He continued to say that he never had any intent to take credit for the work or ideas of anyone else, the analysis and work on the paper were all his own, and that he never meant to violate the Honor Code.

Student A stated that he looked over the slides from the course he took in an earlier semester, which was taught by the same professor, but that he recalled most of the information from memory. Furthermore, the student asked his professor about citing lecture material, and the professor replied by suggesting he look up the information from external sources rather than citing lecture notes, which is what the student did for some portion of the information.

Student A also mentioned that he showed his paper to fellow student for general commentary and review.

Witness A, a professor in the department, began by stating that the specific material in question by the professor was an extremely common case about which many books and papers have been written. The witness continued to state that the accusation with regard to the plagiarism of structure, she does not believe that similar structure would constitute a violation in this case because of the commonality of the anecdote involved. In her opinion, what happened in this case was that the student simply omitted a reference, while still acknowledging that the words were not entirely his own through the use of quotation marks. She continued to state that he does not believe this is plagiarism.

Witness B stated that he went to the professor's office with Student A, when he asked the professor about the outline of his paper. The witness said that the professor found the outline to be acceptable.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members agreed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because this was a clear case of improper citation. Some members also believed that unauthorized collaboration could be considered an additional violation because the student showed his paper to another student.

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

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Because the Council was not entirely in agreement over which specific violations occurred, the Chair moved that a separate vote be taken on each violation that had been discussed – failure to properly cite and unauthorized collaboration.

Vote: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that the violation of failure to properly cite occurred?

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Vote: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that unauthorized collaboration occurred?

Yes: 2  
 No: 7  
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation – specifically, the violation of failing to properly cite information taken from an outside source. Because Student A was the only student involved, members unanimously agreed that Student A was in violation.

Vote: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

### **Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing mitigating factors. Most members agreed that cooperation was a relevant factor. Many students thought that the amount of the assignment in violation warranted mitigation as well.

The Council saw no reason to aggravate the penalty in this case.

Members unanimously agreed that a letter of reprimand was the appropriate penalty in this case given the minor nature of the violation itself – a mistake in citation as opposed to something more serious, like plagiarism – and the mitigating factors under consideration.

Vote: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

3 letter grade reduction: 0  
 2 letter grade reduction: 0  
 1 letter grade reduction: 0  
 Letter of Reprimand: 9  
 Abstentions: 0

### **Decision:**

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a Letter of Reprimand. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 18 minutes

Respectfully submitted,  
 Isabelle Lelogeais  
 Clerk