

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 35, Spring 2013**  
**May 7, 2013**

**Members Present:**

Adriana Bracho (presiding), John Cavallo (clerk), Seth Lauer, Michael Jin, Aubrey Sirtautas, Brooke Evans, Trey Burns, Kaleb Underwood, Ibrahim Akbar

**Ombuds:** Gabriel Breternitz

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of plagiarism for an upper level Evolutionary Biology course.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Assignment Procedures
- Student A Assignment Draft
- Student B Assignment Draft
- Student A Final Assignment
- Student B Final Assignment
- Professor Deposition
- Sample Student Assignments
- Student Depositions
- Class PowerPoints
- Email Correspondence between Student B and Professor
- Student B's Notes

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation" and Student B pled "Not in Violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A began testimony by describing how he worked on the assignment. He stated that he was allowed to work with another student, in this case Student B, with whom he collected data for their reports. Although they collected their data together, he maintained that they completed their labs separately and that there was no possible way either students saw each other's reports. Both students ran their own tests of the data separately.

When asked about the similarity of certain sentences, Student A said that perhaps they had a similar way of thinking because they worked together to collect data. He also claimed that they both decided to use a similar figure for the lab report when they were collecting data.

Student B began testimony by reading aloud a typed statement. He said that they discussed what topics they wanted to research and focused on their chosen topic after learning that there was a lack of published research for another one of their choice. After enumerating further on all apparent differences between the two lab reports, members asked to go section by section of the lab report to compare the two. The two students' introductions were based on a similar question that both students proposed after discussing together.

Members then asked how both students collected their data. After collecting data, they compiled into a spreadsheet and worked separately. Both students had a meeting with the professor in which they discussed the format of creating a graph. Student B said that he was unsure if they were not allowed to work together after collecting data but felt that the professor implicitly stated that it was ok since the two of them met in the professor's office.

**Verdict Deliberations:**

A member began deliberations by stating that the instructions for the lab report did not explicitly prohibit collaboration and was unclear about what constituted as authorized collaboration. Another member stated that there were too many similarities between the structure and content of the lab reports for it to be coincidence in some instances sentences seemed paraphrased from one another. Testimony between the accused students and council members did not give any definitive answers or clues as to how the two students completed their lab reports in similar execution. Furthermore, the two students asked for a meeting with the professor and discussed the presentation of their data without any indication that anything was wrong.

Another member brought up the fact that Student A never included the keyword "host" anywhere in his draft submission while Student B included it in his draft. However, for their final submissions, both students had the exact same title for their papers with the word "host." Members found this to be significant evidence that they may have worked on the lab report together but avoided placing substantial weight on this fact, in order to avoid speculation. The accused were given the benefit of the doubt.

Although many members were suspicious that the two students collaborated together on creating their reports, a total preponderance of the evidence did not suggest that they violated the course's Honor Code for the assignment.

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

Yes: 1  
 No: 8  
 Abstentions: 0

**Decision:**

The Honor Council thus finds Student A "Not In Violation" of the Honor Code. The Honor Council thus finds Student B "Not In Violation."

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1hour and 20 minutes

Respectfully submitted,  
John Cavallo  
Clerk