

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 42, Spring 2013**  
**September 8, 2013**

**Members Present:**

Adriana Bracho (presiding), John Cavallo (clerk), Seth Lauer, Clinton Willbanks, Erin Rieger, Shantan Cheemerla, , Sam Kwiatkowski, Mitch Massey, Aaroh Parikh, Julia Liu (observing), Cesar Udave (observing)

**Ombuds:** Kristina Vu

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism on a course essay for a Graduate level Sociology course.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Assignment Instructions
- Student A's Assignment
- Alleged Source
- Expert Deposition
- Lecture Slides
- Textbook and Supplemental Textbook Pages
- Chart of similar wording using a search engine
- Student A's written opening and closing statements

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A began with an opening statement describing the reasons why she thought the accusation was unfounded. She disputed the accusation by saying that the content in question was a math definition and showed up in other sources from online searches. She brought up that her alleged plagiarism involved using a synonym for a narrowly defined mathematical operation. She further argued that searching the alleged plagiarized sentence on an online search engine would unsurprisingly show results that matched the sentence as closely as possible. The accused finished her opening statement by noting that she was accused of using language that did not match her writing style whereas she argued the language in question showed up multiple times elsewhere.

She opened questioning by responding to a question about why she did not cite her definition for some of the math concepts in her paper by saying it was presented in class numerous times in lectures. Throughout her paper she showed where different statistical analysis equations were used and defined them as needed. The accused argued that she

didn't plagiarize her definition for "residuals" by describing how the professor wanted students to analyze their data and explained the specific concept in the assignment prompt.

The accused brought up the expert depositions as supporting her position of being not in violation since one expert brought up the fact that the definitions were also used in engineering textbooks and that the phrasing of the term was used regularly in many different disciplines.

**Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because many different online search results show similar or exact wording for the alleged plagiarism. Council members also pointed out that the definition for the math term in question is a very concrete concept and that there isn't a specific single source of knowledge for that definition. Another council member said that the alleged plagiarism seemed different stylistically from the source the accuser brought forth to the council. It seemed to the council that the definition she used were in her own words and represented her own work.

Vote #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 0

No: 9

Abstentions: 0

**Decision:**

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 35 minutes

Respectfully submitted,  
John Cavallo  
Clerk