

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 20, Spring 2014
2/5/14

Members Present:

Adriana Bracho (presiding), Hurst Williamson (clerk), Seth Lauer, Isabella Lelogeais, Avani Shah, Michael Farner, John Cavallo, Tanvi Nagpal, Shantan Cheemerla, Liisa Price (observing)

Ombuds: Aubrey Sirtautas

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of unauthorized collaboration on a final essay for an upper level German course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Final Prompt
- Student A Final
- Student B Final
- Professor Deposition
- Letter from Student to Professor
- Student A Typed and Hand Written-Notes

Plea:

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

Student B pled "In Violation."

Testimony:

In her opening statement Student A referred to the comments she made in her opening statement, saying that she did not feel that she was in violation. Student A said that her professor never mentioned that sharing notes would be considered a violation, and that when Student A discovered that she had accidentally sent Student B her paper instead of her notes, she was appalled and wished that she had not had a concussion during finals period. Student A said that she had previously written a rough draft, but was unable to edit her paper due to her concussion, which she had received in an accident a few days prior to submitting the final.

Student A was asked if she had typed notes in addition to the hand-written notes that she had submitted to the Council for evidence. Student A replied that she did, stating that she always typed her notes up before she wrote her final paper, and that the "typed notes file" was the file she had meant to send to Student B instead of her final paper.

Student A then said that she did not know that she had sent the wrong file to Student B until after Student A was contacted by the professor. Student A was asked if the ideas in her paper were more her own conclusions or more ideas covered by the professor in class, to which Student A replied that she considered her essay to be her own ideas, based off the notes she had taken.

In her opening statement Student B said that she did not think to tell Student A of her mistake, and that while Student B only intended to use Student A's paper as a reference, Student B then ended up taking a large amount of ideas from Student A's paper.

When asked, Student B said that she believed that roughly 60% of the paper was her own work, while the rest was directly copied from Student A's paper. Student B said that she did not have any notes of her own and that that was why she had decided to reach out to Student A for her notes.

In her closing statement Student A restated that she in no way meant to violate the Honor Code and that she was saddened to discover that she had been accused. She stated that she had worked hard in the class and that everything that she had done had been her own work. Student A then apologized for having gaps in the events that occurred due to her concussion.

Student B declined to make a closing statement.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the near exact paraphrasing of Student A and Student B's papers and Student B's plea of "In Violation."

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

Yes: 9
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. The Council decided that the sending of the final essay, regardless of intent or circumstances, was a violation. The majority of the Council believed that while Student A's circumstances were unfortunate, the sending of her final to Student B still constituted a violation.

Straw Poll #4: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 9
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student B committed the violation. No one saw anything to the contrary.

Straw Poll #5: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances for Student A. The Council all believed that Student A’s intent in committing the violation warranted heavy mitigation. There were no aggravating factors.

Straw Poll #6: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course: 0
 3 letter grade reduction: 0
 2 letter grade reduction: 0
 1 letter grade reduction: 0
 Letter of Reprimand 9
 Abstentions: 0

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances for Student B. The Council did not believe that there were any mitigating or aggravating factors. The Council then discussed whether suspension would be warranted in this case. All of the Council believed that given the weight of the final assignment and the vast extent of the plagiarism by Student B on her final exam, suspension was warranted in this case.

Straw Poll #8: What is the appropriate penalty for Student B?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 0
 F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 9
 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 she receive a letter of reprimand. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

The Honor Council thus finds Student B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive F in the course and two semesters of suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 01:40:00

Respectfully submitted,
Hurst Williamson
Clerk