

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 45-20, Fall 2015
December 7, 2015

Members Present:

Alex Metcalf (presiding), Jake Hassell (clerk), Matthew Roorda, Elliot Baerman, Bradley Hamilton, Isabel Alison, Josiah Grace, Meghana Pannala, Nicole Thadani

Ombuds: Carey Wang

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of unauthorized collaboration on a homework assignment for a lower level COMP course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Syllabus
- Student A's code
- Student B's code
- Assignment "A9"
- Professor Statement
- Input Sheet (expert deposition)

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A stated that he did the work entirely on his own. Student A was shocked to receive the letter of accusation as he did not collaborate beyond the allowable level with Student B at all on the assignment. Student A regularly attended office hours and posted on the course piazza message board. He briefly discussed the assignment with Student B, but never showed Student B his code. Student A wrote all of his code by himself, and does not understand why his code is so similar to that of Student B (86% similarity, as reported by the MOSS analysis). Student A never put his code online and never added it to any repositories. He does not know how this happened, but he also doesn't think the similarities were coincidental.

Student A showed piazza posts to council members to demonstrate where some of his code came from and some questions he asked as he completed the assignment.

Student A reiterated that he did not have extensive contact with Student B throughout the course. He believed that Student B may have looked at his laptop, but he did not know with full certainty if this had happened.

Overall, Student A reported working independently on the assignment, he developed the project completely on his own. He did not believe that the similarities were coincidental, but he was also confident that he did not commit a violation.

Plea:

Student B pled “Not in violation.”

Testimony:

Student B began by stating that he believed this to be a completely false accusation. Student B demanded that MOSS be examined by a third party, as that it reported an unusually high false positive between the code of Student A and Student B.

Student B reported that his github repositories were unavailable, so he was unable to bring in his code from other assignments to show the similarity in structure and commenting practices between his past work and the assignment in question.

Student B asked Student A questions in passing and in class, but they never showed code to each other. Student B maintained that he had a working relationship with Student A where they interacted on a high level, but did not delve into the details or the actual code itself. Student B and Student A had separate main working groups.

Student B attended TA sessions and other review sessions where he worked on his code. Student B stated that he started the assignment the day it was released, and finished it a few days before the deadline. He does not believe that there was a way for Student A to have accessed his code.

Student B stated that he did not commit a violation, because he did not see the code of Student A at any point while he worked on the assignment.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the very high level of similarity between the code of the two students. Additionally, the professor’s testimony, the student’s testimony, and the additional expert deposition all support that a violation occurred.

Vote #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 or B committed the violation.

The Council ultimately decided that there was insufficient evidence to determine if one student was in violation, and if only one student was found in violation which one would be an entirely different question, or if both students were in violation. The Council could not speculate and could not obtain more evidence to remedy the lack of evidence.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 0

No: 9

Abstentions: 0

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”

Yes: 0

No: 9

Abstentions: 0

Decision:

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 17 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Jake Hassell

Clerk