

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 13-3, Fall 2016
April 24, 2017

Members Present:

Katie Jensen (presiding), Stefano Romano (clerk), James Suffoletta, Mustafa El-Gamal, Grace Coleman, Sean Olsen

Ombuds: Natalie Danckers

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Students A and B of unauthorized aid on an assignment for a lower level computer science 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
- Addendum to Student A's written statement
- Student A's full code
- Student B's full code
- Wikipedia definition of plagiarism
- Description of MOSS algorithm
- Analysis of MOSS algorithm
- Expert deposition on similarity of Student A and B's codes
- Assignment instructions

Plea:

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

Student B pled "Not In Violation."

Testimony:

Student A started by stating that he did not copy any code from Student B, and that any accusations from the Letter of Accusation are false. Student A then stated that Student B tutored him in the class, and that any similarity between the codes of the two students is a result of this tutoring. Student A then went on to say that the strength of the MOSS algorithm plagiarism score is fairly low, such that it is not enough to denote plagiarism. Student A additionally stated that MOSS cannot be solely used to determine cases of plagiarism, as it is merely an algorithm. The student then stated that high-level similarities between his code and Student B's work are merely the result of working towards similar goals, not the result of unauthorized collaboration or plagiarism. Student A stated that the Letter of Accusation is biased, and is not a completely objective source of information for the Council. Student A also stated that the expert deposition only confirms the sentiment of the Letter of Accusation, and that the similarities mentioned by

it are too small to constitute an Honor Code Violation. Student A then stated that any similarities between his work and Student B's are small, and that the inadequate evidence presented is not enough to conclude that an Honor Code Violation occurred.

Student A stated that he committed a large portion of the assignment at one time because he worked on the code all at the same time, and as he did not submit a complete version of the code, he simply committed the last, large portion of the code he had completed all at once. Student A also stated that his tutoring with Student B was fully within the limits of the Honor Code policies outlined by the professor.

Student B opened by stating that he did not violate the Honor Code, because he did not provide Student A with any code, and that he did not specifically discuss any assignments from the class with Student A. Student B stated that he believes there is no way that Student A could access his code without his knowledge. Student B also stated that any similarities between his code and Student A's code were merely the result of his tutoring of Student A.

Student A closed by stating that there is no evidence that is certain that he cheated on this assignment. Student A also stated that the Letter of Accusation does not have sufficient evidence to indicate that a violation occurred, but merely consists of subjective opinion. Student A stated that he did not violate the Honor Code, and that the work he submitted in the course is his own, and only his own.

Student B closed by stating that he did not violate the Honor Code, and that he did not provide any code to Student A.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the similarities between the two students' code, and that these similarities could not have occurred as a result of allowed collaboration abiding by the course's Honor Code policy.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Students A and B committed the violation. The Council saw no reason why either one did not commit a violation.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

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

Yes: 6
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Some council members decided to mitigate for the amount of the assignment demonstrably not in violation, while others did not. The Council saw no aggravating factors.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 2 letter grade reduction, as the assignment was worth 7.7% of the course grade.

Vote #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Students A and B?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	4
1 letter grade reduction:	2
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Students A and B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive a 2 letter grade reduction in the course.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
 Stefano Romano
 Clerk