

## **Abstract of the Honor Council**

**Case #34-1, Spring 2020**

**May 29, 2020**

### **Members Present:**

Sam Holloway (presiding), Ricky Robinson (clerk), Saniya Gayake, Adam Zawierucha, Nicole Lhuillier, and Caroline Brehm

**Ombuds:** Clay Siminski

### **Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A, B, and C of having very similar code for a lower level CAAM course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

### **Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- All Students' Written Statements
- Project Assignment Description
- Project Bonus Description
- Course Syllabus
- Ten random student sample codes
- Lecture Slides
- Project example code
- Screenshots of MOSS comparison
- Each Student's Code Submission
- RLA Clarification
- Witness Curriculum Vitae

### **Plea:**

Student A pled "not in violation."

Student B pled "not in violation."

Student C pled "not in violation."

### **Testimony:**

Student A began by saying that they are not in violation as evidenced by both the expert testimony and the RLA clarification. She then explained that the project was rigid in structure and did not allow for much variation in code which would explain the similarities that exist. She stated that she collaborated with the other two students but not in a way that violated the Honor Code. The student emphasized the rigidity of the code before concluding that she is not in

violation of the Honor Code as evidenced by the RLA clarification, witness testimony, and the permitted collaboration with the other students.

Student B began by saying that she collaborated with the other students, but the collaboration was entirely permissible under the Honor Code. She said the similarities in the code arose from code provided in the project description and pseudo code given out at an RLA help session which all students attended. The student then explained the nature of the collaboration, noting that it was entirely allowed under the Honor Code. She concluded that the collaboration on this project was permissible and that similarities exist because of this collaboration.

Student C began by stating that while she did collaborate with the other students, the collaboration was permissible under the Honor Code. She added that the syllabus encourages collaboration and that the similarities in the code likely arose from their permissible collaboration, code provided in the project assignment description, and attendance at the same RLA sessions. The student then added clarification that they may have seen each other's code while they were working together, but at no point did any copying and pasting occur. She said that the collaboration of the students was permissible under the Honor Code and that the similarities come from this collaboration, the RLA sessions, and the code provided for the project.

The witness was sworn in to provide testimony. The witness stated her credentials as an expert and then claimed that she did not see any evidence of copying and pasting given the differences between the student's codes. The witness outlined several examples of these differences before stating that this is evidence of collaboration but not copying and pasting. She also added that the MOSS program used by the professor is not in itself evidence of cheating and merely notes the amount of similarity that exists between codes. Furthermore, the witness stated that the RLA clarification should be taken as further evidence that there may have been collaboration, but there was not copying and pasting. She also stated that this was an introductory coding class, so the similarities could easily arise from the limited knowledge of coding that the students have. The witness explained that MOSS was subjective in this case and without the actual result it can hardly be used as evidence. She then added what she believed would constitute evidence of copying and pasting and stated that the highly collaborative nature of this class makes any accusation of copying and pasting difficult to prove. The witness concluded by reviewing the differences in the students' codes to show that the codes do not constitute evidence of copying and pasting and explained that they are similar because they have the same functionality.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation did not occur. The Council believed that the evidence, in corroboration with the RLA clarification and witness testimony, did not suggest that copying and pasting occurred. The Council discussed

how the rigidity of the code would explain some of the similarities which is corroborated by the RLA clarification. The Council also discussed that there was no evidence in the student codes that would constitute copying and pasting. The lecture slides and code provided for the project provided further evidence that the similarities do not suggest copying and pasting occurred. Since the only violation explicitly outlined in the syllabus is copying and pasting, and the evidence at hand did not meet the preponderance of evidence standard for demonstrating copying and pasting, the Council concluded that a violation did not occur.

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

Yes: 0

No: 6

Abstentions: 0

**Decision:**

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hr. 10 min.

Respectfully submitted,

Ricky Robinson

Clerk