

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 38-5, Spring 2020
June 13, 2020

Members Present:

Sam Holloway (presiding), Izzie Karohl (clerk), Kaitlyn Crowley, Adam Zawierucha, Rishab Ramapriyan, and Syed Shams

Ombuds: Clay Siminski, Josselyn Muñoz (observing), Andrew Graziano (observing)

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Students A, B, C, and D of unauthorized collaboration for a lower level CAAM course. Before the hearing, Students C and D had accepted the Alternative Resolution for collaborating together in an unauthorized manner. 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
- Students C and D's written statement
- Students C and D's written testimony
- RLA #1 Testimony
- RLA #1 Submitted Screenshots
- Screen Shots of MOSS Code Comparisons
- Class Slides and Class-provided pseudo code from the week
- 10 student samples
- RLA #2 Testimony
- Matlab help sheet(s) and textbook assistants
- Assignment Description
- RLA #3 session recording and slides
- Course Syllabus

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

Student B pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

Student A:

Student A emphasized that the project was unpledged and allowed students to discuss and compose code together. She emphasized that they only collaborated via Snapchat text and video. Student A said she never copied and pasted; only discussed. She had trouble with two specific variables, so Student B referred her to a function from a C++ page. Student A then researched on her own how to implement the function in MATLAB.

Student A mentioned that multiple functions she used were easily derived from the assignment description. She said the only time she checked her code with Student B was for one function's output. She explained that she and Student B chose similar inputs to see if their functions were working correctly which would be evidenced by a similar output. She said that her discussion with Student B of the function in question did not include its direct structure, hence visible differences in their codes. Student A said that each call between her and Student B were approximately 5 minutes long. She explained that neither student read out code for the other to copy down—they both did their best to avoid any type of copy and pasting, verbal or otherwise.

Student A claimed that she did not work with Students C or D on this project. She stated that she did not know why their code was so similar. Student A said she did not go to office hours and that it is plausible that Students C and D talked to the RLA she used. She then walked through the comparison between her code and Student C's and explained where the two could have sourced the code from the same place (assignment description, previous common knowledge, etc.) and where their similarities were a coincidence.

Student B:

Student B claimed that she had never worked with Students C and D on a course project but that she did work with Student A on the accused project. She discussed that Students C and D accepted the AR for their collaboration with each other, not with Students A and B.

She referenced RLA testimony as indication that there was no concrete evidence of unauthorized collaboration and said that she can explain any syntactic similarities between his code and Student A's, C's, and D's. She recalled calling Student A via Snapchat video to discuss a particular problem. She said she had learned a function that would help in high school in C++. She told Student A about this function and Student A implemented it on her own. She never shared the code or showed her the code, only talked about it via video call.

She explained that random samples show that one of the functions he and Student C used could have happened by coincidence. Student B showed the Council the random samples in the file which used a function in question. She explained that she structured the function in question by using an online resource which is submitted in the file. She said that Student C's testimony corroborates his story that they never collaborated.

Verdict Deliberations:

Ultimately, Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation did not occur.

The Council first discussed whether the collaboration between Students A and B violated the Honor Code. The Council agreed that Students A and B seem to not have collaborated beyond the bounds of the Honor Code due to the nature of collaboration (video chat with no screen sharing) and the structural and stylistic differences in their code submissions.

The Council then turned to whether or not either Student A or B collaborated in an unauthorized manner with Students C and D. The Council found it suspicious that persons from the two groups never collaborated directly due to the high similarities between the codes. The Council found both scenarios—that undisclosed collaboration occurred and that the groups had not collaborated—plausible.

The Council was divided on the outcome: some Council members believed a preponderance of the evidence suggested a violation occurred due to highly similar codes. Other Council members believed collaboration occurred, but that there was not enough evidence to determine whether or not such collaboration would have been in violation given the high level of collaboration allowed in the Course Honor Code. And lastly, a few Council members did not believe collaboration occurred between the two groups.

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

Yes: 3

No: 3

Abstentions: 0

Because the Council must reach unanimity to proceed to a penalty, the Council thus found Students A and B not in violation.

Decision:

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hr. 30 min.

Respectfully submitted,
Izzie Karohl
Clerk