

Honor Committee Report 2017-2018

The Honor and Discipline Committee reports to the College each year about the nature of the cases it has heard, the judgments made, and the penalties it has determined. This report covers the meetings of the committee that reviewed cases during the 2017-2018 school year. Following this report is a summary of disciplinary activity in the Dean's office.

- 1) A sophomore was brought to the committee when a TA noted that portions of the student's problem set appeared to answer the questions from the previous year's assignment, rather than the current one. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by using an unauthorized outside source to complete work. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.
- 2) A first year student was brought to the committee when his professor became aware that his paper did not include any citations (unusual, given that the assignment involved interpreting a primary source). Upon further investigation, the professor noticed that multiple portions of your paper were nearly identical to sections from three online essays. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by copying material from an online source without quotation or attribution. The committee decided on a sanction of failure in the course.
- 3) Two first year students were brought to the committee when the professor noted multiple similarities between their revised exams. Nobody else in the class provided revised responses that looked like the nearly identical ones that these two students submitted. While neither student acknowledged collaborating on the revision, they were unable to explain the detailed way in which their responses (at times incorrect) perfectly matched each other. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that these students violated the honor code by collaborating on an assignment when no such collaboration was allowed. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course plus one year of disciplinary probation for both students.
- 4) A junior was brought to the committee after the professor noticed atypical language and references in a lab report. When the professor typed some of the usual phrases into Google, he became aware of the fact that portions of the paper were nearly identical to three online sources. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by copying material from an online source without citation. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.
- 5) A junior was brought to the committee after a professor noted that the student left the room midway through the exam period for an extended period, and *Glow*

records showed that the student had accessed course materials during that time. During the deliberations, the student explained that while she was online, she was not accessing course materials; because the *Glow* files had been opened previously, they re-opened automatically when she opened her computer. The student provided a detailed explanation of what she had been doing online during the exam, and why. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee did not feel that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the student had violated the honor code by deliberately accessing online information during a closed book exam.

- 6) Two first year students were brought to the honor committee when the professor noticed unusual variable names, variables that were declared and never used, redundant and ineffective lines of code, and other oddities that matched across both assignments. Both programs contained the same “buggy” features and did not work properly. Following the Honor Committee’s hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the students violated the honor code by collaborating on (and copying) an assignment when no such collaboration was permitted. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.
- 7) A first year student was brought to the committee when the professor noted that several sections of a paper seemed to be written in a different style/voice from the rest. The professor quickly discovered online sources that matched these sections of the paper. Outside sources were expressly off-limits for this assignment. The committee found the student responsible for violating the honor code, and was split in their decision about sanction. The majority of students felt that failure in the course was the appropriate sanction, while a minority felt that failure in the assignment was more appropriate. The Dean of the College concurred with the majority and decided on a sanction of failure in the course.
- 8) A sophomore was brought to the committee when the professor became aware that the student’s response to an exam question included exact language from class notes, which was not in accordance with the instructions provided in the syllabus and on the exam. In the meeting, the student explained that he meant to revisit this section of the exam in order to re-word the phrase, but forgot to do so. Following the Honor Committee’s hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that this action constituted a reasonable mistake and did not represent a violation of the honor code.
- 9) A senior was brought to the committee when a professor became aware that a second paper was written in a style and manner very different from the first. Upon further investigation, the professor noted that multiple portions of the paper were nearly identical to sections from an online paper. Following the Honor Committee’s hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by copying material from an online source without quotation or attribution. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.

- 10) A sophomore was brought to the committee when the professor noted that one of the paragraphs in a paper included unusual language. Upon further investigation, the professor noticed that phrases in the paragraph were nearly identical to sections from an online source. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by copying material from an online source without quotation or attribution. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.
- 11) A senior was brought to the Honor Committee when a professor noted that that several of the images in a poster were not cited, and that one image included an improper citation. In the meeting, that student explained that he was not aware of the need to cite images such as a company logo or a generic picture, and that he had no intention of passing the images off as his own. He also acknowledged that in one case he mistakenly included a citation for one governmental report when he should have cited a different document. Once again, he explained that this was an error, and not a deliberate attempt to take credit for the images or mislead the reader in any way. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student's actions constituted a reasonable mistake and did not represent a violation of the honor code.
- 12) A senior was brought to the Honor Committee when another student reported potential plagiarism on a peer review project to the professor. The student noted that her peer review partner submitted work that included a section nearly identical to hers. In the meeting, the accused student explained the manner in which she and other students discussed their work during an in-person meeting. She told the panel that she did not look at the other student's paper, but that all of the students shared notes. Upon hearing this explanation, the professor noted that he did not view the student's actions as a violation of the Honor Code. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student was not responsible for violating the honor code.
- 13) A first year student was brought to the committee when the professor noticed an unusual pattern of responses on a multiple choice quiz. In this course, quizzes are presented in three different formats; all students answer the same questions, but the multiple choice responses are randomly ordered. The 3 different versions are collated and handed out to the class such that students who are sitting next to each other do not share the same answer format. The student in question earned a 0/17 on his version of the quiz. Notably, however, his pattern of responding was a very close match to those for one of the alternate formats of the quiz. When the student's multiple choice responses were scored using that alternative template, the score increased to 73% (as opposed to 0%). In the hearing deliberations, the committee noted that the likelihood of scoring a zero out of 17 questions was highly unlikely (typically some answers would be correct based on chance alone). They agreed that the likelihood that the student's responses could so closely resemble the correct answers for an alternative template based on chance alone also defied probability. Given these two facts, the Committee found that there was a

preponderance of evidence to suggest that the student violated the honor code by referring to someone else's answer sheet during the quiz. As a result of this violation, the committee voted and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.

- 14) Two first year students were brought to the committee when a professor noted that they were talking with each other and appeared to be looking at each others' quiz papers at multiple points during the exam. In the meeting, the students reported that they did not recall speaking during the quiz, although they acknowledged that they may have made eye contact a few times and exchanged looks to convey "*This is not going well.*" When the Committee looked at the quizzes, they did not find any concrete evidence that the students shared answers. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that there was not enough evidence to suggest that they collaborated on the quiz.
- 15) A senior was brought to the committee when the professor noticed that portions of the student's exam were identical to those found on an online source designed to solve a problem very similar to the one the professor had assigned. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by taking material directly from an outside source when such sources were not allowed. The committee recommended a sanction of failure in the course.
- 16) A sophomore and a junior were brought to the committee due to concerns about a lab report. While grading, the professor noticed that the two lab reports used very similar language. When he compared them side-by-side, he became aware of several highly similar passages. In the meeting, the junior explained that she was having difficulty writing the lab report, and asked the sophomore for advice. The sophomore agreed to meet with her in order to provide her with information about what kind of information should be included in the abstract, introduction, and materials/method sections of the report. The sophomore read portions of the report aloud to the junior in order to provide a sense of the key content, which the junior then typed into her computer, and then submitted as her own work. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the junior's actions (using verbatim language from another student's lab report when collaborative writing is expressly forbidden) represented a violation of the honor code. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course. The committee determined that the sophomore's behavior (reading portions of the lab report in order to aid another student in understanding the content and structure of the assignment) did not violate the honor code, because the sophomore was not aware (and did not intend) that the sophomore would reproduce the work verbatim.
- 17) A senior was brought to the committee when a professor found numerous similarities between the student's paper and an online source written by a professor at another institution designed to solve a problem very similar to the one he had assigned. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the

committee determined that the student violated the honor code by using an online answer to complete his take home exam when using such a source was expressly forbidden by the professor. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.

18) A senior was brought to the committee when the professor noted that portions of a take home exam included language from an online paper. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by copying material from an online answer to complete a take home exam when using such a source was expressly forbidden by the professor. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.

19) A sophomore was brought to the committee when the professor noted a citation to a source that interested him. When he Googled that reference, he found a student's honors thesis that also included the play as a citation. When the professor read the online honors thesis, he realized that several large chunks of the student's text were identical to those of the online source. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by submitting someone else's work as his own. The committee voted, and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.

20) A first year and a sophomore were brought to the committee when the professor noticed striking similarities between their submissions to an exam revision. Given the number of unlikely similarities, the professor was concerned about the extent to which the students worked independently, as was explicitly instructed in the guidelines for the assignment. In the hearing, the first year student noted that the sophomore did ask for a general sense of how to start the assignment (i.e., which labs to look at as a starting point), but that they did not collaborate in any way on the writing of the assignment. The first year student provided a detailed explanation for how he produced his work, and also submitted some hand-written notes that he made while planning out his solution to the assignment. When asked about the high level of similarity between his work and the other student's, he repeated that he did not collaborate, but did note that he left his computer unattended for some period of time when he left the room to take a break, and that his work was likely visible on the screen while he was gone. When the junior was asked to explain the high level of similarity between the two exam revisions, he could not provide a credible explanation. During deliberations, the committee concluded that the likelihood that the two responses could so closely resemble each other based on chance alone (and without collaboration) defied probability. Ultimately, the committee found that there was a preponderance of evidence to suggest that the junior had violated the honor code by using material that was not wholly his own for a project that required independent work. As a result of this violation, the committee voted and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course, and disciplinary probation for one year. The committee did not find a preponderance of evidence that the first year student violated the honor code, because it was not clear that he knowingly shared his work with the other student

- 21) A sophomore was brought to the committee a paper when the professor noted that a portion of his paper was copied verbatim from an online source, without any citation. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student did in fact violate the honor code. This was a second honor code violation by this student. Ordinarily, a second violation results in a separation from the college in addition to failure in the course. In this case, however, the committee recognized that some mitigating factors may have contributed to the student's behavior. After careful deliberation, the committee decided to fail the student in the course.
- 22) A senior was brought to the committee when the professor became aware that he included several direct quotes from primary sources in the reading packet without using quotation marks, and without citing the source material in the proper manner. In the hearing, the student explained that he was not attempting to present the source material as his own (he did cite the source materials elsewhere in the paper and knew the professor was aware of the origin of the work). Instead, he expressed confusion about how to cite secondary material that was summarized and cited by the primary source. He also acknowledged that he forgot to include quotation marks due to sloppiness. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student's actions constituted lack of familiarity with citation of primary vs. secondary source material, as well as sloppiness around proper quotation. They did *not* determine, however, that he violated the honor code by intentionally presenting someone else's intellectual work as his own.
- 23) A first year student was brought to the committee when the professor noticed that her responses to parts of her problem looked nearly identical to the answer keys he had posted on *Glow*. Since the student had extensions on two of those problem sets, the professor was concerned that she may have violated the honor code by accessing the answer keys posted online as she did her work. During the hearing, the student explained that she did not access the course answer key while producing your work, and provided several pieces of information to help the committee understand why her answers looked so similar to the key. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee did not feel that there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the student violated the honor code.
- 24) A junior was brought to the committee when the professor became concerned that the language, tone, and ideas presented in a paper seemed markedly more sophisticated than the work this student had submitted for an earlier paper. The professor then became aware that several portions of the text were very similar to an online source material included in the course packet, without any citation or quotation marks. In the meeting, the student explained that he was not attempting to present the source material as his own (he did cite the source material at the beginning of the paper and knew the professor was aware of the origin of the work). Instead, the student admitted that he made an error by not properly citing the

source later in the paper, and failing to use quotation marks. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student's actions constituted sloppiness around proper quotation. They did *not* determine, however, that there was a preponderance of evidence to suggest that the student violated the honor code by intentionally presenting someone else's intellectual work as his own.

- 25) A sophomore was brought to the committee when a professor reported that the student pretended to turn in a paper on time without actually submitting the work, and then later attempted to turn in the paper in way that would make it seem like it had been completed on time. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by misrepresenting the submission of work. This was a second violation of the honor code for this student. Ordinarily, a second violation of the Honor Code results in a separation from the college, in addition to failure in the course. In this case, however, the committee recognized that nature of the violation was very different from the first, and that there were some significant mitigating factors contributing to the student's actions. After careful deliberation, the committee decided to fail the student from course and to issue two semesters of disciplinary probation.
- 26) A junior was brought to the committee when the professor noticed what he initially viewed as an instance of careless paraphrasing in an essay. When he looked back at the student's previous essays, he realized that the problem was much more pervasive. He discovered many instances across four essays in which the student directly copied phrases from another source. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code on multiple occasions by using direct quotations from other sources without quotation marks. The committee voted, after careful deliberation, to fail the student in the course.
- 27) A junior was brought to the committee when the professor noted that the student's assignment (a set of article summaries) diverged markedly from his usual writing style. Upon closer inspection, the professor noticed that all of the article summaries were comprised of material directly lifted from the abstract or body of the papers that the student was annotating. There were no quotations marks indicating that the summaries were direct copies of others' work. In the meeting, the student explained that he was not attempting to present the summarized material as his own (he cited the source of the summaries above each entry, and knew the professor was aware of the origin of the work). Instead, the student reported that he did not understand the meaning of "*annotated*," and thought his task was to summarize each work in the *author's* words rather than his own. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that it was possible that the student did not understand the assignment, and thus made an error due to lack of knowledge. They did not find that there was a

preponderance of evidence to suggest that he violated the honor code by intentionally presenting someone else's intellectual work as his own.

- 28) A first year student was brought to the committee after the professor's attention was drawn to several sections of the student's paper that seemed unusual in language and style. When the professor Googled the sections, she discovered they were copied from another source. The student acknowledged that he did not cite the work used in those sections of your paper. He also shared his lack of understanding on how to properly cite work and explained that this was his first Williams course involving essay writing. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee determined that the student violated the honor code by presenting another individual's work as his own. Ordinarily, a violation of the Honor Code results in failure in the course. In this case, however, the committee was split in their decision. Some students felt that failure in the course was the appropriate sanction, while others felt that failure in the assignment was more appropriate. The Dean of the College decided on the lesser sanction of failure in the assignment.
- 29) A senior was brought to the committee when the professor discovered that portions of the student's paper were lifted verbatim from a master's thesis and another website available online. Neither of these sources were cited in the paper. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee found that the student was guilty of violating the Honor Code by using materials from an external source, without quotation or proper citation, in a paper. This was the student's second instance of coming before the Honor Committee for plagiarism. The committee voted to recommend a sanction of failure in the course and 1 year of disciplinary suspension.
- 30) A first year student was brought to the committee when the professor discovered several sections that stood out to her as not fitting with the rest of the paper in voice or argument. After checking, the professor found multiple sentences that were taken verbatim from two primary sources, but which were not demarcated with quotation marks or properly cited with corresponding page numbers. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee found that the student was guilty of violating the Honor Code by using materials from an external source, without quotation or proper citation. The committee voted to recommend an action of failure in the assignment.
- 31) A sophomore student was brought to the committee when the professor identified numerous instances of verbatim text in a final paper that did not include any quotation marks. Some of these instances included a citation and some did not; none were quoted. Following the Honor Committee's hearing and deliberations, the committee voted to fail the student in the course.
- 32) A junior was brought to the committee when the professor discovered repeated sections of verbatim text from the professor's own book embedded in the student's

final paper without the use of any quotation marks,. During the hearing, the student reported that they accidentally submitted an earlier draft of the paper, rather than a final version that had addressed some of the quotation problems in the rough draft. The committee found this explanation to be credible after noting the date/time stamp on the two versions of the paper. However, the intended “final version” still included a number of verbatim sections without including any quotations to indicate that the wording was not the student’s own. The primary source was cited, but quotation marks were absent. The committee deliberated and agreed upon a sanction of failure in the assignment.

In addition to these hearings, several cases were brought to the attention of the Faculty and Student chair that did not, ultimately, go to a hearing. Typically in these cases either someone had been heard talking about cheating but that person could not be identified, or there was a concern regarding student work that turned out to be a problem with the work that was not covered by the honor code.

DISCIPLINARY CASES HEARD BY THE COMMITTEE

The committee heard no disciplinary cases for the 2017-2018 academic year.

DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS ASSIGNED BY THE DEAN’S OFFICE

For the 2017-2018 academic year, two students were suspended for one semester for violations of the College's Code of Conduct with regard to illegal drug possession, distribution, and property damage. Eight students were placed on disciplinary probation due to violations involving disruption, property damage, and minor altercations. An additional 137 students received warnings about minor violations related to unregistered parties, underage drinking, marijuana possession/use, disruption, copyright infringements, and property damage.