Carla and Professor Kelso
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Abstract Released Spring 2003
Abstract Discussions: Monday, March 31, 12:30 PM and 7:00 PM
in the Sunken Lounge

Introduction:

Carla, a student in Professor Kelso’s class, was confronted by the professor regarding a paper that she had turned in. Professor Kelso had found that a substantial part of the work was plagiarized and falsely cited, to which Carla admitted. Both parties agreed to contact Honor Council. Honor Council then came to consensus on a suspicion of violation and sent the case to an academic trial.

Fact Finding:

Professor Kelso’s Statement:

While reading Carla’s paper, Professor Kelso found a large section of the text to be copied verbatim from an online source. The website was cited in Carla’s bibliography; however, in the paper direct quotations were not. When citations were used, they were used inaccurately, falsely identifying the source and page numbers. Professor Kelso then contacted Carla and both agreed that Carla should contact Honor Council.

Carla’s Statement:

Carla said she was contacted by Professor Kelso about plagiarism in her paper. He believed she had plagiarized a substantial part of her paper. Upon looking over her paper, Carla agreed with Professor Kelso and the two decided she should contact Honor Council.

Jury Questions:

Professor Kelso could not attend the fact-finding portion, so questions could only be asked of Carla. The jury asked Carla to describe further the nature of her plagiarism. Carla explained that she “copy-and-pasted” information from the online source into her document with the intention of incorporating it into her paper and citing the relevant material as she went on. She also explained that she was pressed for time, so she only skimmed her paper before handing it in. While skimming, she found the portion she had “copy-and-pasted” and recognized it as an outside source. Rather than look up the actual source, she assumed it
was from another she had used, and deliberately added in false page numbers in an attempt to match them with other cited sections.

**Jury Deliberations:**

The jury agreed that there was a violation of the Code and that Carla had plagiarized. There was a lot of discussion as to the definition of gross plagiarism and whether or not Carla’s action fell into that category. Some members had reservations about the use of “gross” in the statement of violation, since they felt Carla did not write the paper with the full intention of plagiarizing. There was also concern about the use of false citations and whether or not they were meant to purposefully deceive the professor. After a great deal of discussion, the jury came to the following statement of violation.

**Statement of Violation:**

By failing to properly cite sources and by representing someone else’s work as her own, the student committed an act that falls within the spectrum of gross plagiarism, though not in its most severe form.

**Circumstantial:**

Carla explained that she had had a horrible semester. She was in danger of failing another course so she was under a great deal of stress. Carla accepted the jury’s findings and explained that she and Professor Kelso had already discussed possible resolutions and had begun repairing the breach of trust between them.

**Jury Deliberations:**

The jury agreed that Carla should receive a grade of 0.0 on the paper and for the class. Although most cases involving gross plagiarism result in separation from the community, the jury agreed that such a resolution was not necessary given the degree of seriousness of the violation. With regard to breaches of trust, the jury felt that the relationship between Carla and Professor Kelso was already being repaired and required no further suggestion. The jury believed a letter to the community would sufficiently address the breach of trust between Carla and the community. Some members felt that Carla’s plagiarism was partly a result of her approach to writing papers and wished to address that concern in a resolution.
Resolutions:

1) The student will receive a 0.0 on the paper and a 0.0 for the class.

2) The student will write a letter to the community addressing:
   - The breach of trust with the community and the professor
   - How her approach to writing the paper contributed to her action
   - Why plagiarism constitutes a withdrawal from academic honesty

   This letter will be released with the abstract.

3) The student is urged to seek out the services of the writing center to learn
   better paper writing strategies.

4) The jury believes that the student remains a valuable member of the
   community as she completes her resolutions.

Presentation of Resolutions:

Both parties were unable to meet with the jury for the presentation of resolutions so they
were contacted by email about the resolutions. The jury discussed the resolutions again and
came to final consensus on the resolutions above.

Questions:

When writing a paper, is it worse to falsely cite a source than not cite it at all?

How does intent contribute to the gravity of an act of plagiarism? How does quantity
contribute? Does the amount of material plagiarized matter, or is it simply a question of
intent?

Are all acts of “gross” plagiarism equal in their degree of seriousness?
Dear Haverford Community

I have breached the trust of the community and my professor by turning in work that was falsely of my own merit. Due to dire circumstances and poor proofreading, large sections of otherwise cited work was incorporated into my paper, with the prior intention of paraphrasing and citing the works. Through much fault of my own, this incorrect work was turned in to my professor as my own, and thus breached his and the communities trust in me to properly credit my work. Plagiarism constitutes a withdrawal of academic honesty because it harms the rights of others to present their ideas to the public without fear of discredit. It cheats a professor into being able to fully assess your academic credibility. It is an inherently dishonest and unfair way to present your abilities as a student.

Sincerely,

Carla