Tucker and Professor Malone
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Abstract Released Spring 2002

Abstract Discussions:
Wednesday, April 10, 12:30 PM (sunken lounge)
Thursday, April 11, 6:30 PM (sunken lounge)

Introduction:
Tucker was a student in Professor Malone’s class. Upon reading one of Tucker’s papers for the class, Professor Malone noticed that much of the language in the paper appeared different than in his previous papers, and that his arguments did not seem to address the paper topic. Using the internet, Professor Malone found that much of Tucker’s paper was copied from a few websites. He confronted Tucker about it and they agreed to contact Honor Council. Honor Council came to consensus on a suspicion of violation.

Fact Finding:
Tucker’s Statement:
Facing a rapidly approaching deadline and lack of sleep, Tucker stated that he decided to quote passages of sources he was using for his paper in order to finish it in time. He realized that he would receive a worse grade for handing in a paper comprised of other people’s work even if he credited the sources, but at that point he was willing to accept it. He paraphrased one paragraph, citing the reference next to it to avoid plagiarizing, and typed another paragraph that he took straight from one of his sources but meant to put in quotations and cite. However, due to his sleeplessness and some personal conflicts weighing heavily upon his mind, Tucker forgot to do so. He explained that he writes papers in pieces and puts them together at the end, and while remembering to cite his paraphrased paragraph, he simply forgot to use quotations and cite the paragraph he took from the source. He also explained that he rarely proofreads his papers, and told the jury that if he had done that, he would have most likely corrected his omission. He did not, however, and submitted his paper.

Professor Malone’s Statement:
Professor Malone stated that Tucker turned in a paper for his class, and upon reading it he became suspicious that it was not the student’s original work. Using an internet search engine, he found three different sources that contributed to 70-80% of Tucker’s paper. In these sections the paper was identical to the internet sources (including grammatical and factual errors) except for a few scattered words and phrases. Tucker’s paragraphs were not bracketed by quotation marks, nor were the sources included in the references or footnotes for his paper.

After consulting another professor in the department, Professor Malone confronted Tucker about his concerns and asked Tucker to contact Honor Council. Professor Malone also made it clear that he understood the importance of confidentiality in these situations, and explained that although he unintentionally disclosed Tucker’s name to his colleague, neither of them had informed anyone else of their suspicions.
Professor Malone closed his statement by stressing that both he and the professor with whom he spoke were in complete support of the student and were willing to work with him to resolve the situation.

Jurors’ Questions:
The jury asked the two parties a number of clarifying questions to gain a better understanding of the situation. Professor Malone stated that he instructed his students to use a specific type of resource for this paper, criteria that did not encompass the internet sources that Tucker used. He also said that even with the sources Tucker used, he should have put them into his own words. Tucker responded that he was not clear on the instructions or the research methods required for the assignment.

The jury also took note of the discrepancy between the accounts of the violation by each party. Tucker said that Professor Malone had confronted him only about a couple paragraphs in the paper, while the professor told the jury that he had confronted Tucker about a much larger portion of it. Indeed, when the jurors examined the paper they found that a majority of it had been taken almost directly from the three internet sites.

When asked about the time frame in which he was working, Tucker told the jury that he took an exam from 9-11 that night, gave himself a short break, and then at midnight began work on his paper for Professor Malone’s class. He said that he expected to write it in four to five hours, but that he found the process slower than he had planned. At about 4:00 A.M., Tucker, feeling exhausted, slipped his paper into Professor Malone’s box. He said that it never occurred to him to ask for an extension.

When asked more about his paper writing methods, Tucker explained that he writes his papers in pieces, and cites by inserting citations after he finishes a paper, remembering each place that he used a source. He also stated that in writing this particular paper, he did not use the cut and paste method to transplant the words from the internet sources into his paper. Rather, he copied the texts by typing them himself.

Jury Deliberations:
The jury embarked on a discussion of plagiarism and the definition of gross plagiarism. One member asked what role a person’s intent plays in whether or not he plagiarizes, considering that Tucker said he intended to cite his sources and forgot. The jury concluded that anytime a person uses someone else’s ideas without acknowledging the source, that person plagiarizes. Due to the magnitude of Tucker’s violation in terms of the amount he plagiarized, the jury concluded that his actions constituted gross plagiarism. The jury came to consensus on the following statement of violation.

Statement of Violation:
The student violated the Honor Code by committing a gross act of plagiarism.*
*One member standing outside of consensus due to absence

Circumstantial Portion:
Professor Malone stated that he had scheduled multiple meetings for the class to discuss the paper, none of which Tucker attended. He also told the jury that earlier in the semester Tucker had participated in a group presentation of the same topic as his paper, and therefore he
should have known better than to consult the under-edited and outdated internet sites that he used. Lastly, Professor Malone mentioned that Tucker had apologized to him after the confrontation, and that Tucker’s apology made him confident that they could repair the breach of trust between them.

Tucker told the jury that he had had a very difficult semester, made all the more so by issues in his family. He said that on the night that he wrote the paper, he was experiencing great amounts of stress. It was a situation which he had never experienced. He stated that after considering what he did, he understood that it constitutes plagiarism. He added that he was also confident that the breach of trust could be repaired.

**Jury Deliberations:**

Having concluded that Tucker committed a gross act of plagiarism, the jury began discussing separation from the community. The jurors examined the goals of separation and what it would accomplish in Tucker’s case. Several felt that separation would both hold Tucker accountable for his actions and educate him so that he would not make the same mistake again. A few felt that separation would be too harsh in Tucker’s situation and would, instead of giving him time to reflect on his actions, make him resentful of Haverford. The overall sentiment of the jury, however, was that separation would be appropriate in this situation.

One juror suggested that Tucker write an 8-10 page research paper on plagiarism to be written under the guidance of Professor Malone. This would allow the student to educate himself about both plagiarism and proper citation techniques. Other resolution suggestions included a letter to the community, an unmediated dialogue between the parties, a 0.0 grade for the paper (the grade originally given by Professor Malone), and a 0.0 grade for the course. The jury discussed the last suggestion, a 0.0 for the course, a great deal; they were concerned with whether or not that grade meant that he would have to retake the same course to get credit. Also, the jurors considered the fact that Professor Malone did not fail Tucker immediately. They discovered that he would not have to retake the same course, and that he was already enrolled in a course that fulfilled the same requirement. Thus, the 0.0 for the course would not affect his chances of graduating on time, and the idea became more appealing to the jury.

**Tentative Resolutions:**
The jury came to consensus on the following resolutions, with one juror standing outside the resolutions as a whole:

1) The student will be separated for one semester. *
   *One juror standing outside of consensus
2) The jury recommends that the student receives a 0.0 for the assignment and a 0.0 for the course.
3) The student will write an eight to ten page research paper on the repercussions of plagiarism in the professional world. This paper will be written under the guidance of the professor and will be due by the end of the semester.
4) The student will meet with the Dean of the College to facilitate re-entry into the community after the period of separation.
5) The parties will engage in an unmediated dialogue.
6) The student will write a letter to the community including but not limited to the impact of plagiarism on the Haverford community.
Presentation of Resolutions:

Tucker informed the jury of the possible effects that separation could have on his future. Professor Malone also expressed reluctance about separation, saying that he thought it would be too punitive. The professor added that even though he had not failed Tucker for the course, he would accept the jury's recommendation for a 0.0 course grade.

Jury Deliberations:

The jurors proceeded to discuss the responses they heard from the parties and reevaluate the tentative resolutions they had drafted. Those who had been ambivalent about separation before were now opposed to it, and there was doubt among the whole jury as to whether or not the goals of separation would be achieved under the extenuating circumstances that Tucker had explained. They began discussing other ways they could hold the student accountable for his actions. After much deliberation, the jury consented to strike separation from the resolutions, and to add what they concluded was a more appropriate, proactive measure of accountability.

Resolutions:

The jury consented on the following resolutions:

1) The jury recommends that the student receives a 0.0 for the assignment and a 0.0 for the course.
2) Drawing from experience, the student will design a presentation defining plagiarism and its effects on the Haverford community. The student, at a time specified by the jury, will give the presentation to a panel consisting of the Dean of the College, the professor and the chair of the trial.
3) The student will write an eight page research paper on the repercussions of plagiarism in the professional world. This paper will be written under the guidance of the professor and submitted before the end of the semester.
4) The parties will engage in an unmediated dialogue.
5) The student will write a letter to the community including but not limited to the impact of plagiarism on the Haverford community.
6) Upon completion of resolutions 1-5, the student will meet with the Dean of the College.

Note: The jury came to a seventh resolution that is being withheld from the abstract due to confidentiality reasons.

Questions:

1. What is gross plagiarism?

2. How much of a role should one’s intent play when considering whether or not that person plagiarized?

3. What are the goals of separation?

4. How much should the confronted party’s circumstances factor into the decision regarding separation?
Tucker’s Letter to the Community: Plagiarism at Haverford

The honor code is an integral part of students’ lives here at Haverford, and with it comes great benefits and responsibilities as well. It’s a bond of trust that every student is a part of as he/she enters this college, and this is one of the aspects of being at Haverford that creates such a meaningful and unique experience. However, despite this trust that exists in the community, students are brought forth on to the honor council to deal with charges ranging from the moderately serious to the extremely worrisome. Thankfully, I believe that these only constitute a small percentage of the Haverford population, and I’d like to focus on one particular aspect that constitutes an infringement upon the honor code: plagiarism. First off, it’s necessary to reiterate what plagiarism is exactly. There are a few variations, but for the most the definition remains constant: the incorporation or use of another person’s ideas without proper credit or acknowledgment being given to the authors in question. It’s an important topic to discuss, for we as students are continually confronted with author’s ideas and theories that are presented to us either under textual format or in lecture halls. Moreover, it is these concepts that we often have to integrate into the many papers that we all have written and will compose at one point or another. This becomes tricky in terms of what exactly needs to be cited and in what way. I believe that a certain number of students fall into this trap either by forgetting to properly quote the necessary passages, graphs, or by not realizing that paraphrasing must also be followed with the proper citation. In this sense, it would be interesting for the entering freshmen class to take a required short and succinct first-semester course that deals with the reality and gravity of plagiarism, and how to recognize and avoid it. This approach would contribute to helping students spot the signs of plagiarism in themselves and others and confront it.