HONOR COUNCIL ABSTRACT

Donald, Marla, and Ivana

Introduction: Ivana confronted two students in her astronomy class, Donald and Marla, believing she had seen them cheat on an in-class quiz; they denied her claims. She approached the Chair, and Honor Council subsequently reached consensus that a trial was necessary.

Fact-finding: Present were Ivana, Marla, and Donald. Ivana began by explaining that their astronomy class always begins with a short quiz. After taking the quiz students redistribute papers and grade them. From her seat she saw that Donald did not take a quiz to grade; she said he took out a blank quiz — or what looked like one. As the answers were called out he filled them in. During the grading she believed she saw Donald write a 4.0 at the top of the sheet; then Donald and Marla switched sheets.

Donald denied that what Ivana had described had happened, saying that he had no reason to cheat; he had gotten a total of one wrong on all the quizzes. Besides, he was allowed to drop one quiz, and he hadn't yet; he had been doing very well in the course. He said that although he was a Swarthmore student, he had great respect for the code at Haverford and had been surprised by the laid-back attitude surrounding the quiz. He had therefore not hesitated to give Marla some notes that he had during the grading of the quiz — there were lots of papers on his desk at the time. Ivana must have misperceived what she saw. In response to a question he said that he and Marla were "pretty good friends".

Marla said she had been away the week before the test and that Donald was giving her the notes she had missed. She saw Donald take a quiz to grade and hand it back in the proper way.

The jury then asked some clarifying questions. The Chair asked Marla if Donald had shown her the grade on the quiz he was grading. She said no. Ivana said, however, that she saw an exchange of papers — they switched papers. One juror asked how Donald could get a second quiz. Ivana explained that the system was take-one-pass-it-back. She said that later, when quizzes were passed back for grading, she did not see Donald take one. Marla responded that Donald easily
could have taken a quiz to grade without Ivana noticing. Ivana agreed, and added that she hadn't been paying attention to Donald and Marla until they were all grading.

The chair then asked for a description of where each of them was sitting. Ivana replied that Donald and Marla were sitting with an empty seat between them; Ivana was seated behind Marla. Ivana said she was quite close and had a good view of Donald's desk, but couldn't say definitively that the quiz Donald was supposed to be grading was blank. Donald said there were many papers on his desk at the time. In response to questioning, Donald said he didn't remember the name of the student whose quiz he was grading—there were so many quizzes. He was sitting two desks away from Marla because it was ingrained in him to do so during a quiz or test. He also said he did not write in correct answers next to any incorrect answers. It was revealed that this was a true-false quiz. A juror asked Ivana why Donald and Marla would exchange quizzes. She answered that this would make it seem that they had graded each other's papers. She stressed again that she could see what they were doing very well from her position and that, "I could see that he pulled out an 8.5x11 xeroxed sheet and wrote in the answers while they were grading it." Ivana, Donald, and Marla were dismissed at this point.

Jury Deliberation: An initial response from the jurors showed that some thought a violation had occurred, some thought there was no violation, and many thought there wasn't enough evidence to tell. The Chair said there were a few facts in Marla and Donald's account he could check on. One juror thought Donald and Marla were cooperative and that they did not try to deceive the jury. Another said Ivana had seemed pretty sure they had cheated, but Donald and Marla seemed very sure they had not. A third juror saw the case as one person's word against two people's word, and thought there was little precedent to deal with such a situation. Finding a violation based on gut instinct would set a bad precedent, a juror added. Several jurors agreed that it seemed as if Donald and Marla had coached each other's answers. One juror thought Ivana's account could be explained in other ways—that, for instance, in the notes Donald handed Marla there could have been an old quiz Donald had gotten a 4.0 for. Another juror said that, in any case, Donald would have to be an "absolute moron" to cheat on a quiz he didn't need. But what about "gut reaction"? one juror asked; she thought they seemed fidgety. After a few more minutes of discussion, jurors
agreed that suspicion alone could not be relied upon. The jury reached consensus that there was not enough evidence to find any violation of the Honor Code. Ivana, Donald, and Marla were notified of the jury's decision.

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STUDENT RESPONSE

please return to Honor Council room in the Campus Center

1) Do you think the jury made the right decision?

2) What kind/how much evidence does a jury need to find a violation?

3) Any other comments?