Summary: Professor Smith confronted Edgar and Julie after noticing a similarity between their final exams. At the inquiry, the jury determined that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that an academic violation of the Code had occurred, and the matter was dropped.

I. FACT-FINDING

Confronting party: The exams in question were open book, take-home, three-hour finals. At the inquiry, Professor Smith stated, "I graded Edgar's test first...it wasn't particularly notable (except) it was quite bad." She graded three or four other exams. When she got to the third answer on Julie's exam Smith noted that "this student had chosen a way to do it that was very strange." Julie had gone off in a "side direction I (Professor Smith) knew I hadn't covered in class." Professor Smith noticed similar misconceptions in Edgar's exam. With the questions that followed, she noticed more "remarkable coincidences" between Julie's and Edgar's exams. She said, "It didn't take me long to be convinced that something had gone on here."

Professor Smith took the exams to Professor Winters, another member of her department with whom she co-taught the course. He, too "could see the great similarity Professor Smith had seen." The two took the matter to the Department Chairperson, then to the Dean of the College. As a possible violation of the Honor Code, the matter was brought to Honor Council.

Professor Winters met with Julie and Edgar. Edgar gave an explanation of how the exams could have been similar. Edgar said that both students had used his notes from the course while taking the exam, which could explain their similarity. Edgar gave his notes to the professors to prove his point. The professors "had no problem" with Edgar lending his notes to Julie, but as they examined the notebook, the "more (they became) convinced that something was wrong." The errors that appeared on the exams "did not seem to follow from the notes."

Confronted Party: Julie told the jury that since she missed a day of class, and because she knew Edgar took good notes, she borrowed Edgar's class notes to use on the final. Julie took the exam on Sunday in a room with someone else present, so it was clear to the jury that she had not collaborated with Edgar on the exam. After taking the final, Julie sealed her exam in an envelope and returned the notebook to Edgar. Julie planned to be away on Monday, the day the exam was due, so she gave Edgar her exam envelope so he could turn it in for her.

Edgar told the jury that he had not spoken to Julie about the exam. He separated the exam into two parts, and took the first part on Sunday night, and the second part on Monday morning. While taking the exam, he had referred to an article and had used his own notes from the course. He turned in both his own and Julie's exams on Monday.

The jury examined the two exams, as well as exams from other members of the class. Professor Smith believed that cheating had occurred because of the aggregate of similar misconceptions on the exams, not just one in particular. Other members of the department, specifically Professor Allen (Edgar's support person), disagreed with the confronting party's conclusion. Another professor, also a member of the department, said that there was "no way to tell."
The confronted and confronting parties left the room. Since, according to Julie's account, the only way for Edgar to have cheated was for him to have broken Julie's sealed envelope, the jury examined the envelope in which Julie had sealed her exam for signs of tampering. There was no conclusive sign of this having occurred.

II. JURY DISCUSSIONS

The jury then considered whether it thought that a violation had occurred. Rather than to believe that Edgar and Julie had cheated and then denied their actions to the professors and the jury, the jury felt inclined to accept that the answers were similar due to coincidence. The conflicting opinions of the four professors (whose deeper knowledge of the subject and their analysis of the exams led to differing conclusions) persuaded the jury that the exams which seemed similar to Professor Smith did not indicate that either Edgar or Julie had cheated.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The jury came to consensus that no violation of the Honor Code had occurred. Although the similarities between the exams were cause for suspicion, there was insufficient evidence to warrant suspension of trust in the individuals. Thus, the matter no longer warranted the involvement of the jury.