Summary: Professor Hewson confronted Larry for a possible academic violation of the Honor Code. Larry's lab report was similar to that of his partner, Adam. Upon looking at the reports, Larry agreed this was a violation. At the inquiry, the jury determined there had been a violation. It came up with a five-part resolution:
1) Larry should fail the lab report;
2) It was not necessary for the entire course grade to be changed beyond the impact of the lab report;
3) Larry and Professor Hewson should meet to resolve their misunderstanding;
4) Larry should write a letter urging students to be careful of their actions when working on a project involving collaboration;
5) The jury also stated that it realized the difficulty involved in bringing Adam to the inquiry, as he had been a senior and had graduated, but that Adam's perspective would have been helpful in this case.

I. FACT-FINDING

Confronting Party: At the inquiry, Professor Hewson explained that her lab assistant noticed an unusual degree of similarity between Adam and Larry's lab reports. The course policy, explained at the beginning of the year, was that discussion between lab partners was encouraged before writing but there was to be no collaboration on the actual writing. The professor spoke to both students and found that Adam had loaned his report to Larry for "help and understanding". When Professor Hewson showed the report to Larry, he agreed a violation had occurred. It did not occur to Larry that he had committed a violation prior to being confronted. Honor Council was notified, but for several reasons, one of them that it was nearly finals week, a trial was not convened at that time. Instead, Professor Hewson gave Larry an incomplete. In closing, Professor Hewson asked that the jury examine copies of the two reports to see the similarities in certain sections of the work.

Confronted party: Larry said he did copy the wording of Adam's lab report, but he qualified that by saying, "I didn't mean to copy his ideas". In fact, he said they weren't solely Adam's ideas, but were based on a discussion that Larry and Adam had earlier. Larry used Adam's words because they were more convenient. In retrospect, Larry stated, "I should have been more careful about working with someone." He mentioned the difficulty of separating oneself from one's collaborator on a lab experiment. Larry said there was a great deal of spoken collaboration between himself and his partner, therefore contributing to similarities of wording.

Larry had written part of his report prior to looking at Adam's report. Furthermore, Adam had given Larry his incomplete lab report. After copying part of Adam's report, Larry gave his
finished report to Adam to turn in along with Adam's unfinished report, and heard nothing further until confronted by Professor Hewson.

The jury came to consensus that there was a violation of the Honor Code. Larry violated the professor's specific instructions regarding the active writing of lab reports.

II. CIRCUMSTANTIAL

Due to time constraints, Professor Hewson could not be present for the remainder of the trial. Before she left, she pointed out that the assignment was meant to be written up separately because it was vital to formulate the matter in one's own words. The act of producing the words on one's own was the difference between passive and active understanding of the material, said Professor Hewson.

Larry returned and explained the circumstances surrounding the problem. He and Adam came together one night to talk about the lab reports. As they discussed the lab, Adam took notes on their conversation. These notes became Adam's final lab report. Larry said it was as if Adam had made a tape recording of their discussion by taking notes of it. Larry later borrowed Adam's lab report, thinking of them as merely notes of their conversation. In response to a juror's question, Larry admitted he had been planning to borrow Adam's notes because it was a summary of their discussion, though Larry said he could have written it alone. He said he had no idea at the time what he did was wrong, yet upon looking at the reports he realized the violation. Larry stated that he had not copied the report beyond a certain point, because he insisted that he merely copied the words, not the ideas. He said, "I don't want to be accused of something I didn't do."

In response to Professor Hewson's point that writing a lab report in one's own words was a learning process in itself, Larry replied that he understood the lab because he understood the basic ideas. He noted also that had he had an intent to copy and "get away with it", he would have copied it but made changes and not have left the sentences so identical. He insisted that if he knew he was violating the Honor Code, he would not have submitted the lab report.

III. RESOLUTION

Tentative: Based on the input of both parties, the jury had five things to consider.

1. The jury had to decide whether the lab report should receive partial or no credit. No jury member felt that the lab report should receive full credit. According to Larry, the beginning of the lab report was "100% original". It was clear that Larry had copied the actual wording, but he had understood the ideas and they might have even been his own ideas since
Adam's report was a copy of their mutual discussion. The jury decided that Larry had been looking at notes when he shouldn't have been looking at them.

The jury's debate shifted from the discussion of the nature of the plagiarism to the fact that there was plagiarism. The jury decided the entire lab report should receive no credit because:
1) it represented unacceptable academic work;
2) Larry did not learn about the lab experiment by the professor's definition;
3) Larry violated the professor's specific instructions regarding the active writing of lab reports.

2. The jury then moved to the question of whether the action on Larry's lab work warranted changing the entire course grade. A jury member was concerned that although plagiarism is a serious academic crime, there was no malicious intent. After much debate, the jury came to a consensus that there would be no benefits from a grade change, because it was illogical to expect that a grade change could restore the breach of trust in this case, and that Larry's conduct on the lab was not representative of the general tenor of his work in the course as a whole.

3. The jury decided that Larry and Professor Hewson should meet along with two jury members to discuss a) Larry's initial misunderstanding of the importance Professor Hewson placed on the learning experience provided by the writing of the lab report rather than just having a good idea of the concepts involved, and b) Professor Hewson's ignorance of the specific circumstances surrounding the violation, namely that Adam had taken notes of Larry and Adam's discussion, and that Adam had given Larry an incomplete report to look at.

4. Following the discussion between Larry and Professor Hewson, Larry was to write a letter concerning two major topics. As he proposed, he was to tell people that they should be careful of their actions at "every step of the game", and that students should also be careful not to violate the intent of their professors' instructions. This letter will be given to the science departments for educational purposes.

5. Finally, the jury wished to issue a statement. Adam's absence from the inquiry complicated matters. We realized the difficulties involved with contacting Adam, but his presence would have been helpful in clarifying some points.

Final: Since Professor Hewson and Larry had positive reactions to the resolution, the tentative resolution became the final resolution.