Background

While correcting the final exams in his Introduction to Psychology class, Professor Marcellus found great similarities in the answer to the same question on Vincent’s and Jules’ exams. At this point, Professor Marcellus notified the other professor in the class, Professor Mia, who agreed with the similarities. Professor Marcellus sent a letter to both students asking each of them to come and discuss the exam with him individually. Vincent and Jules both maintained their innocence in their separate meetings with Professor Marcellus, but he was not satisfied with their argument and suggested that they contact the Honor Council Chair. Honor Council reached consensus on a suspicion of violation, and the matter was sent to an Honor Code jury.

Fact-Finding I

Professors Marcellus and Mia began the fact finding by explaining how they graded the exams. The exam was a take-home: open book and open notes. The exam consisted of ten problems, from which students were instructed to choose five. Each professor graded half of the exam and in that process, Professor Marcellus noticed a similar unusual error on one question of Vincent’s and Jules’ exams. Both students had left the same step out of the computation. He looked for further similarities in the answer, became more suspicious, and then he looked at the entire exam. Upon further inspection, Professor Marcellus found a distinct parallel between the two exams; they were almost identical with a few word changes here and there. In consultation with Professor Mia, they came to the conclusion that collaboration had occurred on the exam. After looking through other students’ examinations, they saw that none were as closely worded as Vincent and Jules’ were. Professor Mia mentioned that she knew Vincent and Jules worked closely with other students in the class, but the other students’ exams did not display the same similarity. Professor Marcellus wrote a letter to both Vincent and Jules, asking them to come meet with him as soon as possible. Professor Marcellus met with both students separately, and was not satisfied with their explanations. Both Professors Marcellus and Mia felt that the similarities were too great to have been coincidence.

Next, Vincent and Jules addressed the jury. Both students admitted that they did not care very much about their Psychology class from the beginning, and that they had done all of their studying and note-taking together and were, therefore, not surprised if any similarities existed in their answers. Then, Vincent and Jules told the jury details of the events of the day they took the exam. They said they had spent three or four hours studying together before they took the exam. Their studying consisted of going through the chapters of the book they were being tested on, as well as reviewing handouts they had received during class. They both said that they had taken notes during the review.

While maintaining their innocence, Vincent and Jules also brought up their frustration with the entire confrontation process. They said that until Fact-Finding they were not aware that they were being confronted on more than just the one question that Professor Marcellus had initially addressed them about. Also, they claimed that when they had their initial (and separate) meeting with Professor Marcellus, he had told Jules to contact Honor Council before he had even met with Vincent. In conclusion, they did not feel that they had adequate opportunity to explain their side of the story to Professor Marcellus before he suggested they contact Honor Council.

When the jury had asked all of the clarifying questions they felt necessary, Vincent, Jules, Professor Marcellus and Professor Mia left for the evening and the jury began its deliberations.

Deliberation I

After closer examination of the individual exams, the jury noticed not only the incredibly similar, almost identical, answers of the two exams, but also the similarities between the exams and the book and notes. The jury felt torn because they thought that if they could easily find the answers in the course material then Vincent and Jules could have also. At the same time, though, the jury wondered if Vincent and Jules would copy the exact same information from their own individual books while taking the exam separately. At this point the jury closely examined the sources of all of the answers, attempting to determine if all of the answers had come directly from either the book or handouts from class.
Juror One noticed that some pages had been torn out of Jules’ notebook (the perforated edges were still there) before the review notes and also that the review notes were only pertaining to the question upon which the students had been confronted. Juror Two found identical handwritten typos in the students’ answers. At this point, the jury had many more questions for Vincent and Jules and decided to schedule another fact-finding session.

**Fact-Finding II**

Before this meeting, Juror Three highlighted the parts of the exams that contained identical wording in green and the parts that were different in pink. With the exception of differences in verb tense and transition words, the exams were identical. At the meeting, the jury questioned Vincent and Jules about the missing notes in the notebook, specific answers on the exam and asked them if they could explain the overwhelming “greenness” (i.e. similarity). Jules explained that the missing pages in his notebook were from a Psychology lab assignment he had turned in before the exam. Neither Jules nor Vincent could provide an explanation as to how they both managed to start and stop all their answers with the same sentences, while taking the exam in separate rooms (as they maintained they had done). Vincent and Jules had no explanation for the preponderance of green. They both said that since they were not particularly interested in or concerned about this class, neither had put a great deal of effort into the exam. Vincent and Jules left for the evening.

**Deliberations II**

Despite the further fact-finding, the jury was not satisfied with Vincent’s and Jules’ explanations. At this point, Juror Four pointed out that the exact same marks had been made on their two exam question sheets and that even though Jules had used only pencil on his exam, his question sheet had black pen on it, just like the pen used on Vincent’s test. A question was raised: even if they were copying off of the same sources why would they begin and end at exactly the same locations? Furthermore, when they were not copying out of the book, their paraphrasing was still identical.

Jules had explained during further fact-finding that the missing pages in his notebook were a result of a laboratory experiment they had had to hand in a few days before the exam. On closer examination of Jules’s actual exam, Juror Five found the imprints of the lab on the exam (written on notebook paper), which meant that the study notes must have been written on pages that came after the ones on which Jules took the exam. The jury agreed that the order of Jules’ notebook must have been seven pages for the lab and the exam, then the one page of notes on the question about which Jules and Vincent were originally confronted. The fact that the review notes were taken on pages of the notebook that came after the exam led the jury to believe that Jules had written down the notes after he had been confronted by Professor Marcellus.

Overwhelmed by the amount of evidence against Vincent and Jules, the jury reached consensus on the following statements of violation:

**Statement of Violation:**

1. Vincent and Jules violated the Honor Code by collaborating on an exam which they were supposed to take individually.

2. Vincent and Jules violated the Honor Code by lying to the jury.

**Circumstantial**

At this meeting, Vincent and Jules questioned the jury’s decision and still maintained their innocence. They proposed the question: “Why would we cheat on the exam?” and came up with a resolution in which they would retake it. Vincent and Jules were then dismissed and the jury began deciding on tentative resolutions.

The jury began their discussion by reading Professor Marcellus’ and Professor Mia’s suggested resolutions, as well as resolutions from past trials. Both Professors Marcellus and Mia suggested that Vincent and Jules fail the class. Professor Marcellus raised the question of separation. The jury first addressed Vincent and Jules’s breach of trust. The jury was primarily concerned with education and with the violation of the Code. The jury was not able to come to a conclusion regarding the severity of the resolutions during this meeting, so another meeting was set.
The jury realized that the conflict lay in deciding whether or not Vincent and Jules should fail the exam only, or the course as a whole. The argument in favor of only failing the exam consisted of the fact that the rest of the course work had been honest, as well as the fact that they were only first semester freshmen and may not have known the full implications of their actions. On the other hand, the argument in favor of failing the course was based on analyzing past trials and comparing Vincent and Jules to other students in the course who might have failed the exam without having broken the Honor Code. Having laid out the conflicting points of view, the jury broke for the evening.

The following meeting consisted of just eleven members of the jury because one member of the jury could not participate in the trial any further due to personal reasons not connected to the trial. After some discussion the jury reached consensus on the following tentative resolutions, and adjourned for the 24-48 hour period of rest and reflection.

Resolutions:
1) The jury recommends that Vincent and Jules fail the course.
2) Vincent and Jules will do Honor Code related community service for one hour a week, for a semester.

Presentation of Resolutions
After the 24-48 period, the jury reconvened and presented the resolutions to Jules and Vincent. At this time, Vincent and Jules still maintained their innocence. The chair of the trial made them aware of the appeal process and whom they should contact in the event that they wanted to appeal. Vincent and Jules were dismissed and the jury reached final consensus on the resolutions as listed above. After a moment of silence, the trial ended.

Appeal
Vincent and Jules appealed the jury’s decision to the President of the College. The jury’s decision was upheld in its entirety.

Discussion Questions:
1. Do you agree with the jury’s decision and/or resolutions?
2. Other comments?

Note: If you have further comments or questions about this abstract, Honor Council offers the opportunity for you to discuss this abstract with an actual juror from the trial. Please contact the Honor Council Chair for more information. If you have general comments about this or any other abstract, please contact your Honor Council Representative.