Elf: An Honor Council Academic Case Released Spring 2021

This abstract was released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party consented to the release of the abstract.

Key:

Confronted Party: Jovie
Confronting Party: Professor Buddy
Class: Christmas 217

Summary:

This case involved a student, Jovie, who plagiarized multiple sections of published works in an essay for her Christmas 217 class. Jovie gave general citations for each of the works she copied from, but the majority of her essay consisted of either verbatim or slightly modified wording from the other works. Professor Buddy, who had taught Jovie in previous classes and was fairly familiar with her writing style, noticed that the wording of her essay seemed odd. He searched some of her wording online and found the sources from which they were taken. In this search, he also found that Jovie had copied from outside sources on a previous version of the essay.

When Professor Buddy confronted Jovie, Jovie immediately admitted to plagiarizing and apologized for what she had done. Professor Buddy and Jovie then had a conversation about the circumstances of the plagiarism, during which Jovie revealed that she was under much emotional stress due to traumatic personal and family matters that had been present throughout the semester. Jovie, eager to make up for her mistake, discussed with Professor Buddy ways that she could restore her trust with him and offered to report herself to Honor Council.

In their statements, both Jovie and Professor Buddy seemed to be very much on the same page, and before sending their statements in they had agreed that Jovie would receive an Incomplete for the course while she rewrote her essay for a lower grade. Professor Buddy stressed in his statement that because restoration and accountability had been met through their conversation and future plan, he didn’t believe an Honor Council trial was necessary, especially considering the extent of Jovie’s personal matters.
Council Deliberations:

Honor Council began by discussing whether or not they believed the trial goals of Education, Accountability, and Restoration had been met. The opinion of the group was that the goals had been met. Honor Council members referenced the fact that no issue of this nature had ever happened with Jovie before in any of her previous classes with Buddy. Also, both Professor Buddy and Jovie expressed being on the same page about what had occurred and the steps necessary to address what had happened. Lastly, Honor Council members recognized that Jovie plagiarized due to extenuating and stressful personal circumstances as opposed to lack of education about plagiarism. All members indicated that they were leaning towards dropping the case.

Members then began discussing whether or not Honor Council should consent to optional recommendations for Jovie and Professor Buddy, (which is possible for Honor Council to do for dropped cases). One member suggested a recommendation encouraging Jovie to reach out to her professors if she was ever experiencing issues in the future. Honor Council discussed this briefly, but the majority of members agreed that given the steps Jovie and Professor Buddy had already taken to rectify the situation and Jovie’s circumstances, the recommendation would not be helpful. 14 Council members consented to dropping the case, with two members standing outside in absentia.

Discussion Questions:

1. Would it have been better for Jovie and Professor Buddy for Honor Council to have not gotten involved? Where is the line between the ability of a Professor and student to resolve an issue on their own and the need for Honor Council to intervene?