

Honor Committee Report 2019-2020

The Honor and Discipline Committee reports to the College each year about the nature of the cases it has heard, the judgments made, and the penalties it has determined. This report covers the meetings of the committee that reviewed cases during the 2019- 2020 school year. Following this report is a summary of disciplinary activity in the Dean's office.

- 1) A senior was brought to the committee when a staff member and faculty member were concerned about whether the student had reported accurately on their use of a fellowship award. The committee found the student's explanation for some discrepant information to be credible, and did not find the student responsible for any violation of the Honor Code.
- 2) Two sophomores were brought to the committee when their professor noted that multiple portions of their take home exams shared usual (and at times incorrect) similarities that were not found in any other students' work. The exam instructions stated explicitly that all work must be completed independently. During the hearing one of the students acknowledged that they had missed several class sessions in order to spend time with an ailing relative, and realized during the exam that they needed help. Rather than asking the professor for assistance, this student asked a classmate who had already submitted their exam for guidance. The second student confirmed this account, and acknowledged that they did, in fact, offer to help. While their initial intent was to explain broad concepts to the other student (similar to what they had missed in class), the conversations soon veered into problem solving around specific exam questions. Both students were found responsible for violating the honor code, and sanctioned with failure in the course.
- 3) A senior was brought to the honor committee when the professor noticed that portions of the student's response paper came directly from an online review. The professor noted in the margin of the student's paper that they had improperly used the work of others without citation, and also met with the student to discuss the issue and to highlight the severity of the problem. Approximately 2 weeks later, the professor reviewed the first 4 pages of the same student's final paper. This work raised the professor's suspicion because it covered a different topic than the one that had been initially proposed, tackled a very specialized topic that had not been covered in class, and was written with a level of organization and sophistication that seemed out of sync with the student's level of experience with the topic. Upon looking closely at the draft, the professor identified significant pieces that were lifted entirely from the work of others without citation, as well as pieces that extended the argument of others without proper citation. During the hearing, the committee found the student responsible for violating the honor code, and recommended a sanction of failure in the course, disciplinary probation until graduation, and completion of an educational tutorial about proper citation. The student subsequently requested a reconsideration of the original decision, stating that a procedural error had been made. Specifically, the student noted that the professor did not turn the initial incidence of potential plagiarism in regard to the response paper over to the Honor

Committee as dictated as college policy, but rather handled it herself. The student stated that if this had happened, it is possible that the committee would have recommended a sanction of failure in the course (without the addition of disciplinary probation). The committee deliberated and ultimately agreed with the student's argument. As a result they voted to change the sanction to failure in the course (without disciplinary probation).

- 4) A first-year student was brought to the honor committee when the professor noticed that portions of one of the student's papers contained material that appeared to be more sophisticated than what she would expect from a first semester college student. After checking online, the professor discovered that much of the student's paper was taken verbatim from an online source. After noting this, the professor looked back at one of the student's earlier papers and found a similar problem. For both assignments, students were instructed not to use any secondary sources. During the hearing, the student repeatedly told the committee that they had never seen the online papers that the professor found, and could not explain why their writing was nearly identical in parts to the online resources. The student did note that English was not their first language, and that they had little experience in writing papers of this type in English. The committee found the student responsible for violating the honor code. Rather than recommending the typical sanction of failure in the course, they recommended the lesser sanction of failure in the assignment in recognition of the fact that the student had virtually no prior experience writing papers in English. The committee also recommend some additional training on writing and citation.
- 5) A junior was brought to the committee when the professor noted that the student's login had been used to access Glow course materials in the midst of a final exam. After noting this, the professor reached out to OIT and learned that the student had also accessed the course website during an earlier midterm exam. During the hearing, the student explained that they loaned their phone to a friend during the final exam, and that the tab for the course website on *Glow* was already open on the phone. The student speculated that the when the friend opened a new tab on the phone, this action automatically activated the open tab and accessed *Glow*. The friend corroborated the fact that he had borrowed the student's phone and used it to access the internet during the time period in question. The student reported that he did, in fact, access Glow during the midterm exam. They explained that students were allowed to bring in an index card for use during the exam. One of the exam problems involved an equation that the student had not included on the index card. At that point, they decided to leave the exam room, remove their phone from their bag, and look up the instructions for an assignment via *Glow* that they thought might contain the equation. In the deliberation phase of the hearing, committee members discussed the two exams separately. For the final exam, the committee found the student's explanation for how a friend inadvertently accessed *Glow* on their phone to be credible; they did not find the student responsible for violating the Honor Code in this instance. For the midterm exam, however, the committee *did* find the student responsible for violating the Honor Code. The typical sanction in a case of improperly using outside material would typically be failure in the course. In this case, however, the committee was split. Some members felt that failure in the course was appropriate, while others believed that since the material the student was looking for was ultimately provided by

the professor as part of the exam materials, the sanction should be failure in the assignment rather than the course. Because the committee was split and could not reach a majority decision, the Dean of the College opted for the lesser sanction of failure in the assignment.

- 6) Three seniors were brought to the honor committee when the professor noticed that their 3 assignment submissions looked highly similar, both in terms of textual choices and logical structure. These highly similar assignments looked quite different than the work submitted by other students in the class. One of the students explained that he did collaborate with a classmate, but believed that their actions fell within the bounds of the Honor Code. This student explained that they had missed some class material on a particular technique, and asked a classmate for assistance. The student acknowledged that the 2 of them sat together at the other student's laptop in order to work out a portion of a problem, but stated clearly that he had not seen the other student's work. This testimony was contradicted by the second student, who provided text messages he had sent to the first student at the time, including pictures of the completed work. The evidence made clear that the first student was asking questions and seeking assistance, and that the second student was providing it; it did not appear that the two students were engaged in "mutual" work. During the deliberation phase, the committee found both of students responsible for violating the honor code. The first student was sanctioned with failure in the course. The second student was sanctioned with the lesser sanction of failure in the assignment due to the fact that he attempted to provide the first student with conceptual help prior to sharing his work. The third student was not found responsible for violating the honor code because the committee did not find a preponderance of evidence that he had done so.
- 7) A senior was brought to the honor committee when the professor noticed the tone and writing style of a paper seemed disjointed, and Googled some of these sections. At that point, the professor discovered that many sections of the paper were copied directly from online sources. Some of these copied sections included citations while others did not; none of them included quotation marks around verbatim wording. During the hearing, the student noted that they vacillated between working on a google document in which they had cut and pasted some source material and a word document that included re-written versions of the raw source materials. The student reported that they mistakenly sent the professor the draft Google document rather than the final version that they had written in Word. The committee found the student's description of their work process and document creation credible, and did not find a preponderance of evidence that the student had violated the Honor Code.
- 8) A senior was brought to the honor committee when the professor noted that the first 5 pages of a paper submission were take verbatim from a master's thesis posted online. During the hearing, the student immediately acknowledged that they violated the honor code by plagiarizing from an online source. The committee found the student responsible violating the Honor Code and recommended a sanction of failure in the course.

- 9) A junior was brought to the committee when a professor opened two assignments submitted electronically and found a block of computer gibberish rather than content. The professor was concerned that these submissions could potentially represent the first step in an attempt to deceive (i.e., if the student then subsequently requested additional time to submit an “uncorrupted file”). The professor noted, however, that the student did not ask for additional time, or submit any additional files. During the hearing, the student explained that they were not functioning well at this point in the semester, and had largely given up on passing this course. They stated that instead of completing the assignment, they wrote a note to the professor indicating that they could not complete the assignment, and then sent that note on a “broken” computer that they were aware might corrupt the file. While the committee had a hard time understanding the student’s thought process, they agreed that submitting a gibberish document in and of itself did not constitute a violation of the honor code. Therefore, the student was found not responsible in this case.
- 10) Two juniors were brought to the honor committee when the professor noticed very similar answers on their problem sets (which the professor found adjacent to each other in the grading stack). The verbiage and layout of calculations for several answers were identical or nearly so for numerical answers as well as for short answer explanations. During the hearing, one of the students acknowledged that they pulled the other student’s completed problem set out of the stack on the front desk when they entered class (unbeknownst to that other student), and then copied answers from the other student’s work. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee found the student responsible for violating the Honor Code and recommended a sanction of failure in the course. The other student, who had no knowledge of what had happened, was found not responsible.
- 11) A senior was brought to the honor committee when the professor grew concerned about the student’s essay, which seemed overly long, academic, and requiring more background research than could have been reasonably accomplished in the timeframe provided. Based on these issues, the professor was concerned that the student had turned in a revision of a paper that they had previously written for another class, which is strictly forbidden in the Honor Code. The professor contacted the student by email with a reminder that this essay assignment needed to be *new* work created for this class, and offered the student an additional 48 hours to submit a new paper if the original submission was indeed a re-cycled paper. The student did not address this issue, and did not offer a re-submission. At this point, the faculty chair of the honor committee was able to determine that the student took a class last spring from a visiting faculty member that might be relevant to the essay topic submitted in this case. The visiting faculty member sent the faculty chair a copy of the paper from last spring; large portions of that paper (at least 50% of the content) were lifted verbatim and placed into the essay the student submitted in this case. During the hearing, the student acknowledged that they re-used work from a previous assignment to complete this essay. They explained that although this “violated the letter of the honor code,” they did not think it was problematic because they felt they still put in substantial work. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee found the student responsible violating the Honor Code by re-using prior work, and recommended a sanction of failure in the course.

- 12) A senior was brought to the honor committee when the professor grew concerned about an essay that was considerably more detailed and research-based than the assignment required, and included references to illustrations and figures that were not included in the text. Based on these issues, the professor was concerned that the student had turned in a paper that they had previously written for another class, which is strictly forbidden in the Honor Code. When the professor reviewed the student's transcript, he identified a course the student took in the prior semester as a likely fit for the paper, and contacted the professor. The previous professor immediately recognized the paper, and sent the current professor the version that the student had submitted in the prior semester. The two papers were virtually identical. During the hearing, the student acknowledged that they re-used work from a previous assignment, but reported that they thought this was acceptable because they had an "informal" conversation with the professor in which the professor understood their intention to submit a previously written essay as a first draft that they would subsequently edit and re-write. The professor did not recall a conversation that could have been construed in this way. During the hearing, it became clear that the student was dealing with a significant number of major stressors during the period in question. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee found the student responsible for violating the Honor Code by re-using prior work. The committee struggled to reach a decision on sanction. The majority of members voted to recommend a sanction of failure in the assignment (a lighter sanction than the standard response of failure in the course); a minority recommended a sanction of letter of warning. Because the committee could not come to an agreement on a sanction, the Dean of the College ultimately decided on the sanction recommended by the majority of student members – failure in the assignment.
- 13) A junior was brought to the honor committee when the professor noted that the student had submitted a surprising solution to a problem set. While the solution was solid, the professor noted that it was not at all what he expected given the course content to date. He also noted that the student's solution did not include the "hint" that he had provided to students online. The professor googled a main concept from the assignment along with an unusual notation that the student included in their work, and immediately found a link to a faculty website that included a solution to the homework question that was highly similar to the work the student had submitted. During the meeting with the hearing panel, the student stated unequivocally that they did not access the faculty web-page or use any material that was outside proper bounds for completion of the assignment; rather, the student argued that some of the logic and language they used in their solution came from previous assignments and other allowable material. In the deliberation phase of the hearing, committee members found the student responsible for violating the Honor Code. This decision was made because the committee did not feel the student's solution could possibly match the faculty website so closely without the student having reviewed it. The committee recommended a sanction of failure in the course. The student subsequently requested a reconsideration of the case due to procedural errors and the availability of new information. Specifically, the student noted that the professor had to leave the original hearing early (before answering all questions) and the student had identified a new witness who could corroborate his version of events. During the re-hearing, a

second professor with expertise in the subject matter reported that he did not find it suspicious that the student's solution looked similar to the online assignment, because the problem was a "low variance" one in which those kinds of similarities could be somewhat expected. The voting members were divided in their opinion. Ultimately, less than three-quarters of the students believed there was a preponderance of evidence that the student had violated the honor code, so the student was not found responsible.

- 14) A first-year student was brought to the honor committee when the professor noticed that in 12 of 21 reading assignments, the student submitted duplicate reading notes that had already been submitted on a previous date. The student appeared to have erased the original date in these duplicate notes and wrote a new date (and sometimes a new subject line), and then resubmitted them as new work. During the hearing, the student explained that they did re-submit previous work as though it was new work. In the deliberation phase of the hearing, committee members found the student responsible for violating the Honor Code and agreed on a sanction of failure in the course.

- 15) A sophomore was brought to the honor committee when the professor noted multiple concerns. First, the student contacted the professor to say that they completed an assignment late (after the answer key was posted), and asked whether they could still submit the problem set for credit since they had not looked at the answer key. The professor gave the student permission to do so. When the grading TA reviewed the assignment, however, a significant portion of the form/content looked highly similar to the posted key. After consulting the GLOW access report, the professor learned that the student's login had been used to assess the answer key just hours before they contacted the professor to ask permission for the late submission. Second, the professor noted that the student did not submit the midterm exam by the deadline. When the professor contacted the student, they stated that they had, in fact, submitted the exam electronically. There were a few back and forth messages between the student and professor (asking the student to resubmit), but the student never did so. Finally, the professor reported that there was an earlier incident in which the student stated that they turned in an assignment by leaving it in a box outside the professor's office door. The professor never received the problem set. During the hearing, the student acknowledged that they never completed the midterm, and were dishonest with the professor when they claimed that they had completed it and submitted it electronically. The student also acknowledged that they did access the answer key to an assignment while working on it, and then lied about this to the professor. While admitting these 2 behaviors, the student stated that they did in fact turn in the other assignment as described. Following the hearing and deliberations, the committee found the student responsible for violating the Honor Code for the first 2 instances, and recommended a sanction of failure in the course.

Part II: Summary of Honor Case Data

Figure 1: Findings of Responsibility

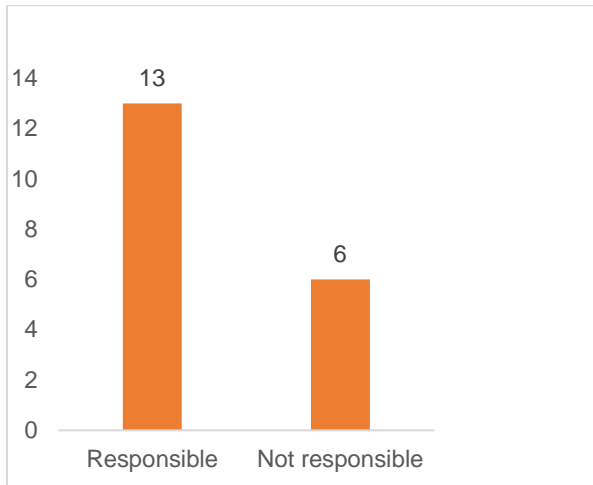


Figure 2: Involved Students by Course Level

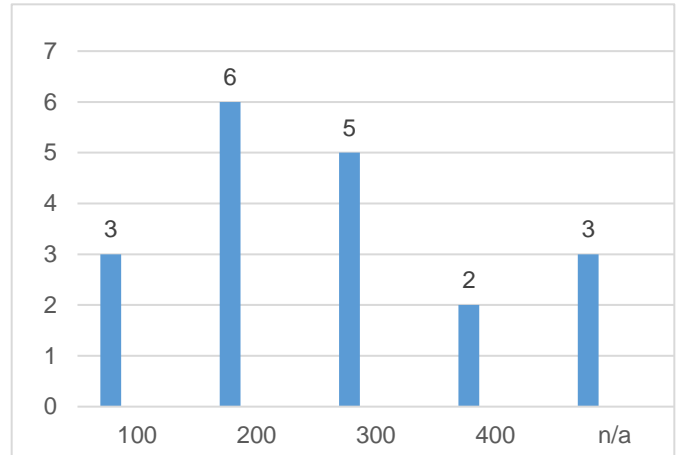


Figure 3: Involved Students by Course Department

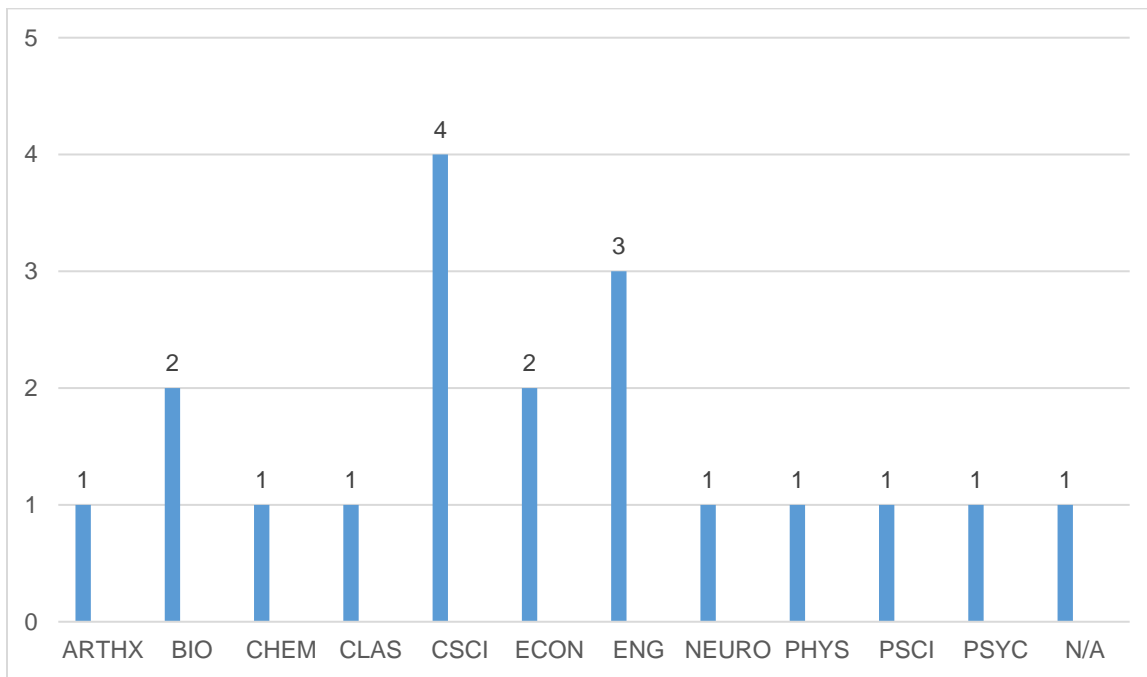


Figure 4: Involved Students by Course Division

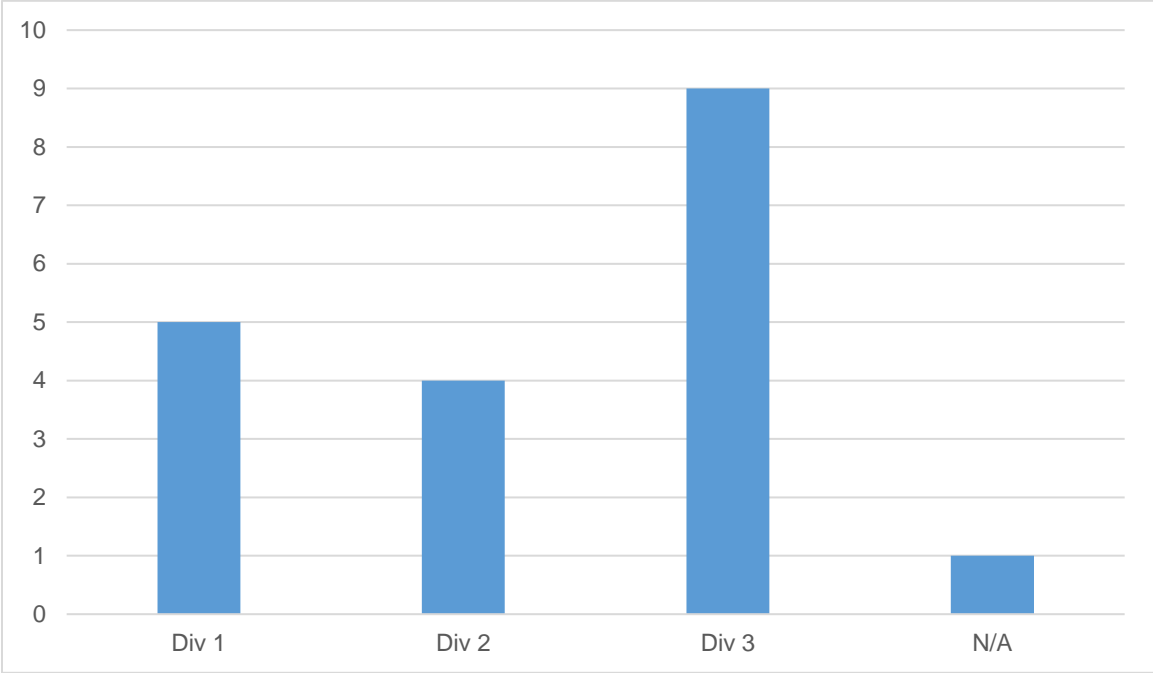
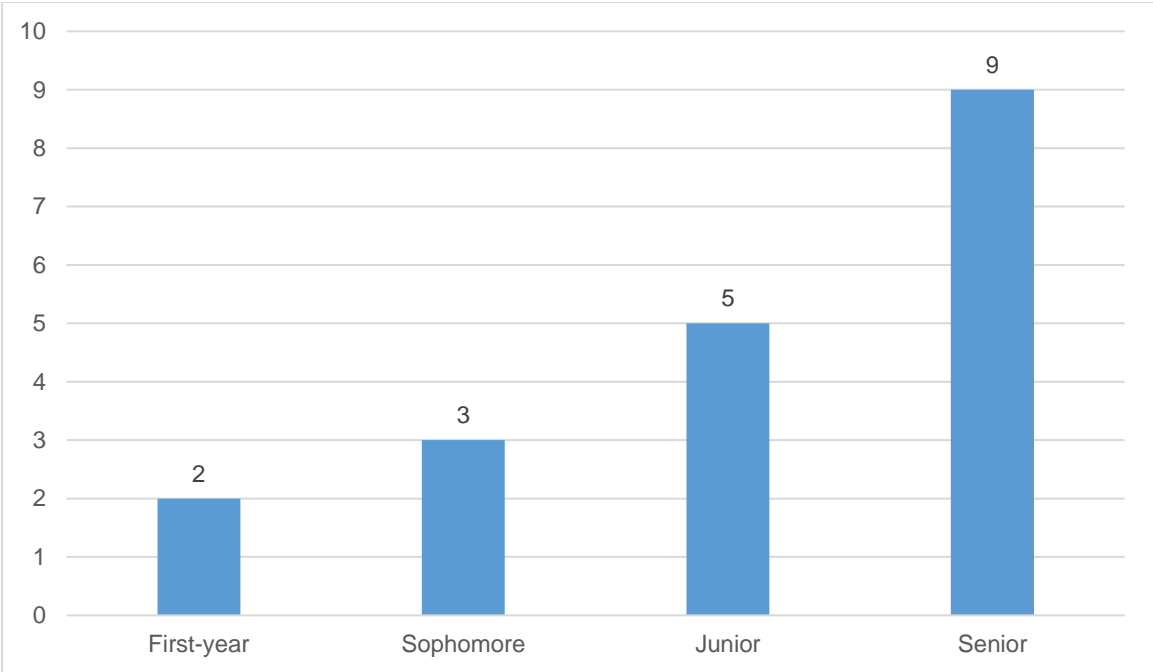


Figure 5: Involved Students by Class Year



Part III: Disciplinary cases

For the 2019-2020 academic year, two students were suspended between one semester to two years along with disciplinary probation for violations of the College's Code of Conduct with regard to theft and endangerment. Two students were placed on disciplinary probation due to violations involving theft and disruption. An additional 116 students received warnings about minor violations related to unregistered parties, underage drinking, marijuana possession/use, disruption, copyright infringements, and property damage.