

Report and disposition of Honor Code Matter 001

Spring, 2001

Excerpts from the Report of the Honor Code Prosecutor to the SBA

Executive Board (May 3, 2001):

In the spring semester of 2001, Professor A taught a class in which Student 001 was enrolled. The grading mechanism for this course is a 20-30+ page paper, due by May 6, 2001. Students enrolled in the class had the option of writing a one-draft paper, or by notifying the professor, write a 2 or 3 draft paper. Student 001 notified Professor A of his/her intention to submit a multi-draft paper for the course. Student 001 turned in the first draft of his/her paper in mid-April.

In reviewing the first draft of Student 001's paper, Professor A noticed the phrase "The Supreme Court recently proclaimed" on page 10 referring to a 1981 case, and became suspicious. After doing some research on Westlaw, Professor A discovered that Student 001's paper was comprised largely of verbatim passages from 4 law review articles. These verbatim passages included, at one point, an 11-page passage of the student's paper, which came entirely from one law review article without a single change. The 189 footnotes in Student 001's paper were also verbatim of those in the law review articles that were cited. Only one of the four law review articles themselves was cited in a footnote, and even it was a reference, not as a citation of copied text.

Professor A contacted Dean Cropper to inform her of the problem with Student 001's paper. Dean Cropper contacted Steve Martin, the Honor Code Prosecutor, on April 25, 2001. The Honor Code Prosecutor received a copy of the paper with Professor A's comments and the four law review articles in question. On April 26, the Honor Code Prosecutor spoke with Professor A about the paper and the situation.

On April 30, 2001, Dean Cropper submitted a written complaint, charging Student 001 with plagiarism. The Honor Code Prosecutor contacted Student 001 on May 1, 2001 to inform him/her of the complaint and suggested that s/he contact Richard Hayes, the Honor Code Executive and/or Professor Burns, the Faculty Advisor for the Honor Code Executive. Student 001 was given an opportunity to submit a written statement to accompany this report.

Notice of SBA Executive Board Finding of Probable Cause (edited to preserve anonymity)(May 3, 2001):

On May 3, 2001, the Executive Board of the Student Bar Association of the Northwestern University School of Law returned a finding of probable cause against the accused, Student 001, in the above matter. Specifically, the SBA determined that probable cause exists that Student 001 violated Art. I §2(e) of the Law School Honor Code by plagiarizing substantial portions of his/her paper for Professor A's seminar in the spring of 2001.

In compliance with Art. IV, §4(b) of the Honor Code, this notice is being provided to Student 001 within a week of the Executive Committee's finding of probable cause.

Because Student 001 is a third-year law student and the alleged violation occurred within two months of his/her graduation date, this matter and all evidence is hereby referred to David Van Zandt, Dean of the Law School, for consideration and adjudication. (Art. IV §5)

Disposition

1. The Law School will notify the relevant bar examiners of the charge and disposition.
2. You are hereby placed on academic suspension until August 31, 2002. No credits can be earned toward your degree until your suspension has run.
3. Notation of this Honor Code violation will be placed on your transcript.
4. A grade of "F" will be entered for you in the class.
5. You will be required to earn the credits remaining toward your degree in courses taken at the Law School and while in residence.