

# Honor Council

H A V E R F O R D C O L L E G E

TOM SAWYER ABSTRACT DISCUSSION Minutes from December 1, 2010

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**Members Present:** Jacob, Anna, Alex, Fairleigh, Abby, Jonathan, Noah, Florencia

1. Moment of Silence
2. The radiator is being annoying. Ugh.
3. Read Intro, fact finding, and statement of violation
4. Anna: Initial Reactions?
  - a. Abby: I feel that while it could be understandable that the source was assumed, you always have to put quotes in quotes. I feel that if the assignment were to summarize the article and he had just paraphrased without the bibliography, I would have been uncomfortable coming to a statement of violation. But material directly quoted must always be put in quotes.
  - b. Anna: So you're uncomfortable because he copied sentences directly but didn't quote it?
  - c. Abby: Yes.
  - d. Jacob: If you're using the language directly from the source then you have to say explicitly where it's from. When you notice your whole page is quotation makes then maybe it's time to talk to your professor. I see a lot of opportunities for the student to recognize that he was uncomfortable but he didn't take the time to take it up with the professor. In some situations, the discomfort makes it seem more deliberate but in this situation it seems almost accidental.
  - e. Anna: You're bringing up an interesting point saying that he sort of hesitated. It makes it sound like he knew he was doing something wrong. Does that make him more responsible?
  - f. Fairleigh: I think it does. I agree with Abby about the direct quotes without quotes. I find it hard to believe he didn't know he was plagiarizing while he was doing it.
  - g. Abby: While I don't necessarily think it's a lie, it could have been a retrospective thought. In retrospect it could seem a lot more wrong than it did at the time. The level of hesitation isn't clear.
5. Anna: What do you think about the idea that he had written summaries for jobs outside of campus that was acceptable? What do you think of this as a factor?
  - a. Jonathan: My impression at some point was that there are going to be different standards. I find it unlikely that there are any departments that won't care about not citing. But I won't say that...I feel like people will take different issues with different things. Mark Gould would be annoyed if he wasn't making an argument but he wouldn't care if he missed the quotes. He might think it was just a type-o. There seems to be an issue of differences across departments. It seems strange a student would confuse

- standards for a job application with standards for a course. But maybe he got confused.
- b. Abby: The comma is misplaced. He submitted the other papers at the job, not in order to get the job.
  - c. Jonathan: We don't know what the other job is but educational standards are different than outside the community.
6. Anna: I think what you're saying is interesting. Are there different definitions of plagiarism in different environments and places? Are there different ways to look at plagiarism?
- a. Abby: The way I considered it was that the statements of honor weren't more lax but that he was working for someone who just gave him an article and told him to summarize it. In that situation it's different from an academic situation and isn't necessarily plagiarism.
  - b. Anna: Are you saying it's not plagiarism or that it's plagiarism that doesn't matter?
  - c. Abby: I don't think its plagiarism. If it's understood that you're representing another's work then it's not the misrepresentation of someone else's idea.
  - d. Fairleigh: I agree. The definition of plagiarism is claiming someone else's work as your own and that might not be true in other settings.
  - e. Jonathan: It doesn't make sense to talk about plagiarism outside of Haverford. Like plagiarism doesn't apply in elementary school.
  - f. Abby: yes it does. You still have to quote.
  - g. Anna: Example about poems.
  - h. Jacob: Hey Arnold! Someone submitted a poem to a contest but it was really an Emily Dickinson poem. Then there was a guilt issue. There's a different level of importance but it still applies. The situations are different but you must address the issue in any event: it's jus how you do it.
  - i. Jonathan: In certain educational models it could be assumed that it's not your job to produce your own work but to represent someone else's.
  - j. Abby: That's consistent with what we said. It's just if it's understood that you aren't showing your own ideas.
  - k. Jonathan: Exactly. Different departments will have different standards
  - l. Abby: I just don't feel like you're disagreeing with me. I don't know what you're arguing.
  - m. Jonathan: Well there could be a justified point here. We don't know in this case but it could be plausible.
  - n. Abby: But it's always a problem to directly copy someone else's sentence and not quote it. The first part is not a problem, but direct quotations without citation is always a problem.
  - o. Jacob: I feel the level of assumption on Tom's part is very problematic. I learned in my writing Sem that you put a citation even when you're writing a paper only about one thing. Based on my experiences here I know you can't assume anything. Be overcautious. It's been so expressed to me that you can't assume anything and him saying what he assumed is not a good reason. Obviously, he's in a different situation. I wish the

circumstantial portion went further into what his experiences were and what he thought plagiarism was. I wonder if ignorance is a valid excuse here but I can't impose my view of plagiarism on him.

- p. Abby: I've done essays before on one book but forgot the citation at the end. It wasn't the right thing to do but in that sense I understand how that could be forgettable.
  - q. Anna: In that case, it's not plagiarism but improper citation.
7. Read Circumstantial
8. Anna: Do you have any new thoughts after reading the circumstantial?
- a. Anna: I think it's interesting about the distinction that if he were going to publish the work he would have cited but he thought it was just an informal summary. But in an academic setting how much does plagiarism affect it?
  - b. Abby: I think it affects it a lot. In academic settings it's more important. In my one page responses for a class I don't have a works cited page and it's fine. But this seems like Tom was just careless to a problematic degree.
  - c. Florencia: I thought about that too. But I think not putting a works cited on a small thing like that is just improper citation, not plagiarism.
  - d. Anna: It doesn't matter that he took direct pieces from the carticl and still not cited but had put quotes around it, whoudl it have been plagiarims or imporper citation?
  - e. Florencia: It would be improper citation because he wouldn't be claiming that work as his own.
  - f. Noah: The usual standards are that if you're writing a paer without quotes then it's assumed that it's your ideas.
  - g. Florencia: You can paraphrase or explain an idea but you still have to say where it's from.
9. Anna: how do you feel about Professor assigning a grade before the conclusion of the Honor Council proceeding?
- a. Abby: I think it's appropriate because he has the most understanding of what the assignment was and what was wrong. Honor Coucnil can always give a new recommendation but the professor might know best. Honor Council probably would have made the same resolution anyway and it was good for Tom to know where he was
  - b. Jacob: It was the jury's decision to say whether the Code was violated and if plagiarism happened. But if the prof had decided he had plagiarized and given a grade then I would be uncomfortable. But the Prof changed the grade because Tom didn't write the paper correctly, then it's ok
  - c. Abby: Also the fact he got a D- means he had some original work
  - d. Florencia: Given that the grade wasn't set in stone then it's fine. He's the professor; he assigns the grades.
10. Anna: Skip to final resolutions
11. Anna: Are they appropriate, inappropriate? Are there any you want to talk about specifically?
- a. Abby: I think 4 may be a bit of overkill but it can't hurt. There were others on the jury that said the instructions weren't unclear but it couldn't

hurt. Talking to professors about the Code is a good idea. It's nice, but not necessary.

- b. Florencia: I feel like none of these are out of the ordinary or excessive.
- c. Jonathan: The way I reacted is that I feel the jury did not make enough of an effort to kind of find a way to make Tom learn. But he didn't seem to participate in the trial that well to begin with. I think he makes it very clear in the abstract that if there is an issue he doesn't think the jury has been approaching the right issue. For him the issue still seems to be about why he didn't understand what he was supposed to be doing or even what the problem was. It's hard to talk about because we all see it as plagiarism, but I would have difficulty being on this jury, but there's not, there doesn't seem to be any effort to take seriously his position that it's not clear that it was plagiarism or that there was a possibility of confusion. There doesn't seem to be a discussion about the validity of Tom's concerns.
- d. Anna: What could the jury have done to address that?
- e. Florencia; I don't think you can make someone have a good attitude about a trial. Clearly he sees it as a misunderstanding and it's not his fault. If that's what you believe then it would be hard to shake someone out of that, especially in a trial when someone could get defensive.
- f. Jacob: I think it's unfortunate that he didn't have any proposed resolutions. You can't not propose anything and then complain about the resolutions. There's no accountability to the rest of the community without the letter. Maybe he thinks the grade was enough. If he still thinks it's a misunderstanding then the trial failed because he hasn't learned what he did wrong.
- g. Jonathan: The starting point should be why it is that he thinks it's a misunderstanding. If that doesn't happen then you can't restore him. If you come to an understanding then restoration is possible. If there's no agreement about what's going on there nothing can happen with restoration.
- h. Noah: It's worth pointing out the statement that the jury said that while Tom did not mean to violate the code, he did. It's still a breach
- i. Anna: My sense of the proceeding was that there was really nothing that we felt like we could do. Maybe we didn't think hard enough, maybe we didn't brainstorm hard enough. But given the way the conversations went about it being a misunderstanding, what can you do at that point. You can't make someone understand what plagiarism is. You can't just say here, know it in your person. Towards the end of the trial they proposed resolutions and maybe something was missed, but what more could have happened. All the resolutions look appropriate, but do we leave it off there?
- j. Florencia nods head. Jacob too.
- k. Fairleigh: I think so. There's nothing you can really make Tom do. The resolutions of meeting with Finn and going to the Writing Center are for Tom to take upon himself, but it's good he has to take it upon himself.

1. Anna: I like that the part of Tom's letter where he has to work with the prof about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it is good. It was our intention to have the talk about their different understandings.
12. Anna: Let's talk about the fact-finding portion, missing a multi-cultural juror thing.
  - a. Fairleigh: explain please
  - b. Anna: There's a quota (maybe not right word), but you need 3 multicultural jurors on a jury. When Secretaries send out emails they ask potential jurors to identify as male or female and if they identify as a student of color. If they say yes to the second question then they are multicultural juror.
  - c. Fairleigh: I understand the purpose of the multicultural juror, but I think that maybe just finding people who identify as students of color is the right way to find the best jury from multiple backgrounds.
  - d. Florencia; My interpretation is not about different background but about having minority students. Like, an all white jury would be awkward on a trial like Muppets. At least for me, as a student of color, that's my interpretation. I think what the jury did to catch the juror up makes sense. It's nice that they tried to get in contact with the person again when they found out the person was multicultural.
  - e. Anna: It's an interesting consideration about whether the juror is more important because the juror was multicultural. It took precedence over the number of jurors.
  - f. Anna: once a jury starts meeting, everything procedural is left up to the consent of the jury. The jury could have consented to say it doesn't matter to proceed without the multicultural juror. The whole multicultural juror thing was a big discussion topic my freshmen year.
13. Anna: Any final thoughts?
14. Moment of silence