

Spring 2008

Dear Smeal MBA Community,

In the spring semester, four academic integrity cases were brought before the Smeal MBA Honor Board. These cases are outlined below.

All academic integrity case records are maintained in a permanent file at the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Case 1:

A professor reported an academic integrity concern upon noticing a student's signature on the class attendance sheet for a session that the student did not attend. During the Honor Board interview, the student acknowledged that s/he entered the classroom after class had ended and signed the class attendance sheet. Upon careful review of case facts, the Honor Board determined that, in an act of forgery, the student took credit for work and participation that s/he did not do. The Honor Board determined that there was a violation of the Smeal Honor Code, and the student earned a failing grade for course participation.

Case 2:

The Smeal Honor Board investigated a reported plagiarism case in which a student failed to properly cite work from two web sites within a paper. After evaluation of the student's work and the corresponding web site material, in addition to an interview with the student, the Board determined that the incident was the result of careless academic delivery and not an integrity violation; the student was simply unaware that slide citations included in the deliverable were not sufficient to cover necessary citations throughout the text of the paper. Therefore, the Board advised that the improper citation effort should be reflected in the assignment grade. The student received a formal academic warning.

Case 3:

An MBA student submitted a paper containing website text that was not cited. Upon interview, the student explained that a draft version had been submitted in error. As a result, a portion of the deliverable was incomplete. The Honor Board determined that a minor violation had occurred and recommended a reduced grade for that portion of the assignment.

Case 4:

The Honor Board also addressed a violation report regarding a nearly identical Powerpoint/Excel slide presented by two students on separate teams as part of a group project deliverable for two courses. This case proceeded through the investigative and review phases of the Smeal MBA Honor Code process.

Upon review of the investigating committee notes and exhibits; as well as the Honor Board's own interview with the student in question and several team members, the Honor

Board was able to identify authorship of the file. It was concluded that a violation of the Smeal Honor Code had occurred in the form of plagiarism.

As a sanction, the student received a failing grade for both courses and was asked to leave the program.

Key Learning

With your input and feedback we will continue the commitment to improve our Honor Code system. In the spirit of ongoing learning and dialogue, we would like to highlight two important takeaways from these experiences.

1) We are all part of a learning environment with a system of standards. The Honor Code is less about being *perfect* and more about taking ownership and accountability when we do make mistakes or when we are at risk of making a mistake.

2) It is important to remember that our process is designed to clear students who did nothing wrong, as much as it is designed to impose sanctions on those who do violate the Academic Honor Code.

3) The Smeal Honor Code represents a shared responsibility on the part of all members of the Smeal MBA community. We have a duty to hold ourselves accountable to one another and to be active participants in the process at *all* stages, from reporting to panel review and participation through key learning and sharing of best practices.

We invite you to reflect on these learning opportunities, and if you would like to share your thoughts with us please do so by contacting any of us by e-mail. Once again, we thank all of you for your ongoing commitment to honor and academic excellence in the Smeal community.

Sincerely,

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