

My fellow Undergraduate Ethics Committee members, after having deliberated on Mrs. Romanov's case, I have come to the conclusion that she must be punished for her act of academic dishonesty. My recommendation is this: Mrs. Romanov shall receive an F on the same paper that she was supposed to have written. Now, some on this committee may believe that the person in question should receive a harsher sentence for violating the university's Honor Code, which is in accordance with Professor Stone's wishes. Allow me to explain the reasoning behind my recommendation, and why I chose it over the other possible outcomes.

Our role here as the UEC is to- I quote- "Fill the the seats of judgement with just people, but not so absolute in justice as to forget what human frailty is". Please keep this in mind. While reviewing plagiarism cases, we are burdened with maintaining the delicate balance of reinforcing academic integrity and accounting for human imperfection. In order to accomplish this, I find it important to ascertain the guilty individual's frame of mind. Let us review the facts regarding the conditions during the offense. Mrs. Romanov purchased a paper from a peer-recommended term paper agency for Professor Stone's class in February for one hundred and fifty dollars. She subsequently turned it in as her own, with her name on it. In addition to this, note that she had four other papers due. Academic pressures aside, Mrs. Romanov also faced the emotional stress of her two-year old daughter falling ill with the flu. There are also psychological and medical factors to consider, such as Mrs. Romanov's depression and mononucleosis. I acknowledge that these conditions and any burden from from her home life are not excuses for her actions. She made the conscious decision to plagiarize, and did so of her own volition. However, the circumstances under which the plagiarism took place when taken together suggest that Mrs. Romanov acted out of desperation, rather than a casual decision motivated by laziness to violate

the Honor Code. I cannot claim the same for certain other student who have been reviewed by the UEC.

I at this time would like to remind the committee of the recent case which involved the graduating senior, who just so happens to be a Regent's son. His case was fairly similar to this one, in that he bought a paper to submit as his own work. As I recall, we deemed his violation to be worthy of failing that paper. However, this student never even suffered consequences, as our committee's decision was undermined by the president of the university. Given that, I fail to see how we can possibly justify a harsher sentence for Mrs. Romanov than what this student was supposed to have received for the same transgression.

Despite this, it is clear to me that comparative justice alone is not enough to defer the course being failed or a temporary dismissal. It certainly would not appease Professor Stone. For that reason, I pose this argument to the committee: we are compelled to choose what is right for the sake of the institution and the ones it nurtures, the students, rather than conforming to the will of the professor. As the majority of this committee is made up of professors, I understand how Professor Stone can be sympathized with. He is correct in his assertion that he was wronged. Not only him, but the individual who actually wrote the paper. But there is another who directly suffers from plagiarism; the plagiarist herself. In the report, it is stated that Mrs. Romanov does not find Professor Stone's class beneficial. By plagiarising, she is robbing herself of the opportunity to learn despite unfavorable conditions. With an F on the paper, she will have to put more effort into other assignments and learn to see the course, and potentially others in a new light. That said, if we were to fail the course, we would be robbing her of the opportunity to grow from her mistake. Being held responsible for solely the paper is what is best for the student, and

therefore the institution and the professors that it employs. We cannot kowtow to the indignation of those who would have Mrs. Romanov dismissed from the university for a first time offense. I am well aware of the criticism we have received from Professor Stone and others in the university who believe that we are not strict enough in our resolutions. However, I would like to point out that regardless of the number of students he refers to us, we are the university's Undergraduate Ethics Committee, not the Stone Ethics Committee. We will rule on what believe to be fair to both the professor and the offending student, based on our guiding charge and our experience across multiple cases.

So far I have argued for an F on the paper and against failing the course. I believe we can all agree that no penalty for clear and intentional plagiarism is out of the question if we are to respect the university's Honor Code. However, I also find dismissal, even for a semester, to be just as preposterous for this situation. Objectively speaking, Mrs. Romanov is what is commonly referred to as a 'good student'. She is a senior undertaking several courses and maintains a GPA of A minus. Prior to this incident, she has never been involved in any form of academic misbehavior. As I mentioned earlier, this is her first offense. To have all her effort thrown away for a single, albeit serious, mistake is in my opinion unconscionable. Returning to a previous argument, a university is meant to nurture and develop the abilities of its devoted students, who are willing to put in the work. That is the duty of the university. Yes, it is painfully obvious that it cannot accomplish this if deviance from that required effort in the form of plagiarism is tolerated. Yet at the same time, if the student is removed from the institution at the first sign of trouble, the university again cannot achieve its objective. In other words, the university would

lose more credibility than it would gain by sending away Mrs. Romanov rather letting her stay with appropriate punishment.

Thinking back to our charge, to be just yet aware of human frailty, I applied this case to that design in order to define my reasoning. I'd argue that Mrs. Romanov meets the condition of human frailty, as she succumbed the temptation of a simple yet immoral path out of difficult circumstances. As for the other part of the charge, in order to be just, her case must be treated with the same standards as other similar cases, so that she and others receive the same punishment for the same violation. Furthermore, in filling seats of justice, there is no seat available for an individual who has been wronged to preside of over the person who wrought the wrong. It is up to us, the committee, to decide with unbiased lenses what course of action is to be taken against the offender. The perspective of the university losing one of its scholars should also be considered. Ultimately, Mrs. Romanov made a mistake. While everyone on this committee would not make this particular mistake, as humans, we are all prone messing things up when the going gets tough. Since the damage of this mistake can be contained, and a lesson can be learned, I personally would rule out the available punishments of semester-long dismissal and for the course to be failed (and the no penalty option, of course). I implore the rest of the committee to follow suit in my recommendation for an F on the plagiarized paper. I can say with confidence that we will not be receiving a case about Mrs. Romanov again.