

Imagine you are a 25 year old married woman with a two year old daughter, taking classes at CU Boulder. Your daughter is sick, your husband resents your schooling, and he doesn't support you by helping out around the house. You're taking five classes on top of your childcare and household responsibilities, and with those five classes you have five papers due, so when your friend tells you about a term paper agency that she never got caught using, you spend \$150 on a paper and never think of it again. You get all your work done, your daughter recovers from the flu, and you finally feel like you're ahead of things and doing well, when you receive notification from the Undergraduate Ethics Committee (UEC) that one of your papers is under review for plagiarism. In the case of Alexandra Romanov, 25 year old senior at CU Boulder, I believe the penalty for her plagiarism should be an F on the paper.

First, we look at the facts of the case. The defendant, Alexandra Romanov, is a senior at CU Boulder and because she bought the paper in February, it is safe to assume that this is her last semester at Boulder and she only needs this and the other four classes she is taking to receive her degree. When presented with the options for the recommendations that can be made to the UEC, one can see that the first option is a recommendation that Alexandra be dismissed from the university for one semester. This option already seems too severe, but when the facts of the case state that this is her last semester anyways, it seems ruthless to dismiss Alexandra from the last semester she needs before obtaining her degree, especially for one plagiarized paper in one class of five. Also seen in the facts of the case, are Alexandra's living situation and financial situation. For the university to subject her to at least one more semester of college when she is married with a two year old and in need of the head start on getting a job, especially when she budgeted for the four years she has already paid for, it seems that the case would have to include an academically dishonest record or something more major in general. I assume a dismissal from

the university on academic dishonesty does not warrant getting tuition money back, so it is callous to dismiss her from her last semester and subject her to at least another semester's tuition because this event happened in her final semester. Even with all this, she was warned that plagiarism in this particular class would warrant the professor seeking dismissal from the university, and that fact cannot be overlooked.

Upon another look at the facts of the case, one sees the policy on plagiarism for this particular class, and the fact that the UEC has been accused of being soft on penalties for plagiarism. These are big facts in the case, because Alexandra knew exactly what she was getting herself into with Professor Stone, and the UEC cannot take these cases lightly; subjecting themselves to more criticism from not only this one professor, but from the community as well. If the UEC only hands Alexandra an F on the paper as penalty for this case, other students will notice that Professor Stone really cannot say in his syllabus that plagiarism will result in dismissal from the university, and other students will be more likely to plagiarize because of the lesser penalty. The university has a reputation to uphold, and if it is not upheld, the students will notice and there will inevitably be more plagiarism and academic dishonesty as a result. Another point worth mentioning is that an F on a single paper is easy to overcome in the grand scheme of things; if the student were to work really hard they could bring the grade in the class up like the infraction never happened. Fact number 34 in the case states that in a case prior to this one, another graduating senior passed off a paper as his own and the president of the university squashed the penalty of an F on his paper shortly after. Because the penalty of just an F on the one paper is so insignificant, it would be easy for someone higher up to just squash the whole thing, and it would be as if the case never happened. The university makes a really big deal out of plagiarism and the consequences as a result of performing it, so the UEC would look really

bad if after all that talk about plagiarism, the penalty wasn't really as bad as it was said to be. However, even though the university and the UEC have reputations to uphold, the case of plagiarism is not about the university's reputation, but rather the defendant and what a dismissal or failure in a course would do to a graduating, non-traditional senior.

Although Alexandra was warned of Professor Stone's policy on plagiarism, it is worth noting that this is her first violation of academic honesty. She had five papers due while her toddler was sick and her husband was less than helpful, so she passed a paper off as her own in her least favorite class to save some time for her child. On top of this, her husband is mad at her for not spending as much time as she should with their child, so paying \$150 for a paper was a small price to pay to be able to spend time taking care of her sick daughter and to avoid another day of arguing with her husband about all of it. Alexandra is a good student, her GPA is an A-, and she has never had a run in with the UEC before. This is a huge fact in the case, because typically someone with multiple infringements of the same nature would warrant a stricter penalty. That isn't to say that the first breach in policy deserves a warning, because the warning was in the plagiarism policy outlined by Professor Stone, but the UEC should not jump to dismissal for a full semester as the punishment for the first violation. Along the same lines, because Alexandra has never plagiarized before, she shouldn't outright fail the class, as that would for one, require her to pay tuition and come back for another semester outside of her four years, and for two, she only messed up with the one paper, so it is fair that she receives an F on the paper and as a result, she receives another chance to be honest and to do well in the class. Also, fact 26 states that Professor Stone prides himself on failing students, and while plagiarism is a serious offense, it is worth noting that the professor is more focused on catching students doing the wrong thing rather than teaching them the right way and giving them the tools to

succeed without cheating their way through it. And the UEC does have a reputation with the community of being too soft on students that plagiarize, but that does not mean that they should hand out stricter punishments than necessary to rectify their own reputation. It is more important to look into the students case and find out if there were extenuating circumstances like there are in this case than to dismiss a student from the university because the professor takes pride in that kind of thing and the community wants to see it done.

In conclusion, because of Alexandra's living situation, financial situation, the fact that it's her last semester, her GPA, and her clean academic record, I recommend that she receive the penalty of an F on the plagiarized paper. She lives in less than optimal conditions with no job and a husband that has a seasonal job with no college education, meaning she is probably already in debt and adding another semesters tuition to what she had budgeted for four years would be an injustice. Her GPA is almost perfect and she is almost done with her degree; on her way to starting her career. This is only her first offense and because it is her last semester, it is unlikely to happen again, so it is fair that she fails the assignment and has the chance to bring her grade up and do well. The university has been accused of being soft, especially from Professor Stone, however, a professor that has brought multiple cases to the attention of the UEC and pursues dismissal from the university every single time is not a professor who wants to see growth in students and does not fight for the student's success. It should not matter to the UEC what this professor and the community think about their judgements when they are penalizing students but also giving them an opportunity to work their way back up and be successful. Alexandra Romanov will have to put in some work to maintain her GPA, but such is only fair after cheating on an assignment.

