

“Fill the seats of judgment with just people, but not so absolute in justice as to forget what human frailty is.” It is the duty of the Undergraduate Ethics Committee to render not merely consequences, but opportunities for change. Thus, keeping our charge in mind, I recommend - in contrast to Professor Stone’s insistence for the maximum penalty - that the paper is awarded an F in light of Mrs. Romanov’s circumstances and a low chance of recidivism as indicated by her academic record. It is the context which makes the recommendation right and just as our humanity guides us towards a decision.

At the time of her transgression, Mrs. Romanov was surmounting many obstacles in her day to day life in addition to her challenging academic work. While carrying a hefty five class course load, she was caring for her sick toddler at home while bearing a case of mono herself. Furthermore, she acts as a primary homemaker and has balanced her responsibilities thus far as exemplified by her A- grade point average. Moreover, her situation was exacerbated by having five papers due at the same time. Each factor by themselves posed a suitable challenge for any individual and when combined with her depression, it ultimately compounded into a catalyst for bad decisions, thus culminating in the case of plagiarism we have here today.

That is not to say Mrs. Romanov should not be held accountable for her actions; actions beget consequences and the context is no exoneration. Plagiarism is an offense which not only harms her integrity, but also the integrity of her classmates’ work. The paper was not discriminately assigned nor was there an undue burden placed particularly on Mrs. Romanov by Professor Stone. Mrs. Romanov voluntarily sought out

a paper that was unreflective of any original work and attempted to pass it off as her own. As the paper she turned in was not hers, her grade should reflect the absence of turning in an assignment at all.

Furthermore, there is precedent set by this committee's decision regarding the son of a Regent. The student committed the same infraction - trying to pass off another individual's paper as their own - and they were given a failing grade. Regardless of the university president's decision to undermine the ruling of this committee, it would be unjust of the UEC to administer varying punishment for the same offense.

Nonetheless, Professor Stone is requesting the maximum penalty: dismissal from the university. It is well within the right of the professor to recommend a punishment, however once more the context must be taken into consideration. Professor Stone disclosed on the first day of class that he would seek dismissal for any case of plagiarism and regards himself as the ideal teacher. Furthermore, Professor Stone has referred more cases per year to this committee than any other professor. He not only harshly grades his students, he takes great pride in failing them while viewing any academic dishonesty as a personal offense. On multiple occasions, he has criticized the rulings of this committee as being irresponsibly lenient. It is evident that the professor bears a sizeable ego and seeks to reduce Alexandra Romanov's offense to being an absolute dishonest act which warrants an absolute response of expulsion. Professor Stone purports a heavy-handed punishment for any and all infractions, something which lacks the nuance that the UEC handles regularly. Thus, Professor Stone's personal

crusade against students cannot influence this committee's decision as we look not only at the facts of the transgression, but at the human who committed it.

Mrs. Romanov has maintained an exemplary A- grade point average as she has moved into her senior year. Furthermore, she has no past record of academic dishonesty. The mere fact that Mrs. Romanov's case is before this committee will be deterrent enough to any future motives she may have to once again plagiarize.

It is our charge to render justice with a sense of humanity and give opportunities to those who have stumbled on their academic journey when it is warranted. Mrs. Romanov made a bad choice - whether it be due to her depression, sickness, or the struggle of balancing her household responsibilities with a challenging academic schedule - and she must be held accountable.

The committee is faced with a choice of considerable magnitude: are we to end the collegiate career of an individual with considerable financial and familial hardship based on the recommendation of a professor with a vendetta against his own students or are we to contextualize Mrs. Romanov's actions with her hardships and recognize that a failing grade will result in a lesson learned.

I believe that it is in the best interest of this committee to recall that our judgment must "not so absolute in justice as to forget what human frailty is." Mrs. Romanov was at her most vulnerable and faltered in her integrity, but I believe it is our place to show compassion. Mrs. Romanov will benefit from graduating and will appreciate the discretion of this committee while understanding that her actions have consequences. I believe the best course of action is to understand that, in the words of Alexander Pope,

“To err is human, to forgive divine.” Thus, in the view of this UEC member, Professor Stone’s recommendation should be disregarded and Mrs. Romanov’s paper grade should receive a failing grade.