

FORMAL RESPONSE TO ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT ALLEGATION

Case Number: 2024431701
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Course: CS362 – Software Engineering II
Date: May 19, 2025

1. Summary

I am writing in response to the academic misconduct allegation filed against me in CS362, specifically related to Homework 3 – Random Testing. I understand the seriousness of this process and submit this statement with full respect for OSU’s academic integrity framework. However, I strongly contest the allegation of fabrication. The issue in question arose from a formatting error during a document conversion process—not from any intent to deceive or falsify data. My goal in this response is to clarify what happened, provide evidence of my good faith and transparency, and respectfully request that the charges be reviewed in light of the full context.

2. Background of the Assignment

On May 9, 2025, I received a grade of 17/25 on Homework 3. The feedback read: "Decent attempt. However, many of the theories were not correct." This indicated that the assignment was evaluated, accepted, and scored as legitimate. There was no mention of misconduct or suspicious activity at that time.

Three days later, on May 12, the grade was overridden to 0 by Professor Ianni, accompanied by a note stating: "This is being reported for Academic Misconduct (Fabrication). If you are found Not Responsible, the original score will be restored: 17."

This preemptive grade penalty was applied before any formal notification, report, or adjudication process, in contradiction of OSU's Academic Integrity Process (Section 5.11). The zero grade was only restored after Associate Head Dr. Chris Hundhausen reviewed the situation and directed the instructional team to comply with due process.

3. Clarifying What Happened

The allegation centers on the presence of test case values in my Homework 3 PDF write-up that allegedly do not align with the bugs they were meant to trigger. The PDF was produced by converting a .docx document to LaTeX format using GitHub Copilot, a formatting tool that assists in generating LaTeX structure.

The content—including the analysis and bug triggers—was written by me in Word. However, during the formatting process, several numeric values in the text were inadvertently altered by the tool, which introduced hallucinated values. This was not something I caught prior to submission.

The code submitted to Gradescope was correct. I submitted 13 test suites, several of which successfully triggered the required bugs. In fact, Submission #4 and Submission #7 each scored 8.5/9.0 and identified all eight bugs. This proves I had the correct test logic, had completed the assignment successfully, and had no academic reason to falsify anything.

4. Intent and Benefit

Academic misconduct allegations, particularly fabrication or cheating, rest on two pillars: **intent to deceive** and **benefit gained**. Neither is present here.

- **Intent:** I had no intention to deceive. The formatting artifact occurred during LaTeX conversion and was disclosed as soon as the issue was raised.
 - **Benefit:** I had already received a D-range score (17/25), and I did not dispute it. I submitted the regrade request in accordance with class policy—not to inflate my grade, but to clarify what I believed was an error.
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The test cases in question only appeared in the write-up PDF—not in the code submitted for actual evaluation.

5. AI Policy Clarification

The course AI policy states:

"You are not permitted to use any AI tool/service for your work in this course. While using AI to help you code can be beneficial, this course requires students to engage with the material directly in order to gain mastery before abstracting it via an AI."

I used GitHub Copilot to assist with LaTeX formatting—not to write code or generate solutions. This use case is parallel to tools like citation managers (e.g., Zotero), which automate formatting but not content. The values in question were not created dishonestly—they were structured automatically during document preparation.

6. Instructor Handling and Process Breakdown

When I submitted a private regrade request through Edstem—as explicitly encouraged by the course announcement—I was met not with clarification or feedback, but with a misconduct allegation. I was told, "The reason you have a 0 in the gradebook is that the plan as of this morning was to report you." This was before any report had been filed or notification sent.

Despite asking directly, "What am I being accused of?", I never received a direct answer. The allegation evolved over time, shifting between formatting violation, fabrication, and cheating. The scope and clarity of the charge were never made transparent until the CHO process began.

This inconsistency is documented, and I believe it reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of both the tool I used and the context in which the error occurred.

7. A Simple Technical Analogy

Using GitHub Copilot to convert my Word file to LaTeX is the academic equivalent of using EndNote to format citations or exporting a spreadsheet to JSON. The core content is written by the student—the tool merely structures it for readability. If a citation is misformatted or a value is misplaced during that conversion, it's a formatting error, not academic fraud.

8. Closing

I appreciate OSU's commitment to integrity and due process. I also respect that this system exists to protect everyone—students, instructors, and the institution. But the facts of this case do not support a finding of misconduct:

- The code submitted was valid and successful.
- The formatting tool unintentionally introduced incorrect values in the write-up.
- I disclosed the tool use transparently and provided the original `.docx` document.
- I followed course regrade protocol and did not attempt to challenge my original score.

I respectfully request a finding of **Not Responsible**, and I appreciate your time, effort, and impartial review.

Sincerely,

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