

Double counting: What Went Wrong

The SEEC's program used the TSQL function "BINARY_CHECKSUM" to return unique results for certain strings. It turns out that, in rare cases, this command does not return unique results.

There are six cases in the SEEC's database where the results were not unique. The following strings, though slightly different, return identical BINARY_CHECKSUM's:

- a) "City of Seattle" and "city of seattle"
- b) "THE SYNAPSE GROUP" and "The Synapse Group"
- c) "SOUTH SEATTLE COMMUNITY COLLEGE" and "South Seattle Community College"
- d) "Kennedy Associates" and "kennedy associates"
- e) "Bader Martin, P.S." and "bader martin, p.s."
- f) "SEattle POlice Pension Board" and "Seattle Police Pension Board"

There are 11,605 employer strings in our database where the employer string returned a unique BINARY_CHECKSUM, i.e. it was not the same checksum as any of the other 11,616 employer strings.

Any contributor whose employer was reported, exactly, as any one of the 12 strings in 'a' through 'f' above, would have their contribution counted twice towards the total contributions for their employer.

This problem started occurring with "city of seattle" when Tom Carr's campaign reported a contribution deposited on 4/30/2009 from a contributor whose employer was listed as "city of seattle." Prior to that date, contributions reported as from "City of Seattle" were not being doubled.

For more information, contact the SEEC at 684-8500.