

total University population: 93,000

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
HONOR COMMITTEE

total Bloomfield population: 2000



158

285 { - analysis on '98-'03 - took differential initiation rates - significant differences in initiation rates
- analysis on Bloomfield cases showed that there was no significant difference in initiation rates on the basis of race, or sex, ect.

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FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT
An Analysis of Honor Initiations and Convictions, 1998-2003
31 October 2004

In the Spring of 2004, the University Honor Committee and its Faculty Advisory Committee conducted a thorough statistical analysis of Honor cases initiated between 1998 and 2003. The Honor case process has three phases: initiation, investigation and trial. The Honor Committee oversees the investigation and trial phases. The study analyzed the rates at which cases were initiated and guilty verdicts were found among students of different ethnicity, sex, national origin and athletic status in relation to the proportion of those student sub-groups at the University. The Bloomfield cases of 2000-2001 were analyzed separately and provided a partial control group as they were "blindly" initiated through computer-based, plagiarism-detecting software. The data support the following statements about Honor cases in the 1998-2003 period:

I. In the overall 1998-2003 student data, the proportion of international students who had an Honor case initiated against them was greater than the proportion of domestic students who had an Honor case initiated against them (4.99 to 1); of athletes compared to non-athletes (4.27 to 1); of African-Americans compared to Caucasians (3.38 to 1); and of males compared to females (1.89 to 1).

intl: domestic

4.99: 1

athlete: non-ath

4.27: 1

II. For the Bloomfield plagiarism cases, the initiation rates among these sub-groups of students were statistically indistinguishable.

Afr. Am: cauc

3.38: 1

III. For the Bloomfield plagiarism cases, the number of formal accusations was substantially higher than those for the overall 1998-2003 student data (by a factor of 19.53).

Males: Females

1.89: 1

IV. Once a formal accusation was made, rates at which students were found guilty of an Honor offense were statistically indistinguishable among sub-groups of students (e.g., a guilty rate of 27 percent for majority students and 24 percent for African-American students).

These statistics lend themselves to several plausible conclusions and explanations:

A. *The rate of Honor case initiations is significantly lower in the 1998-2003 data than in the Bloomfield data.* There is a wide variation in pedagogy among University courses. As a result, care must be taken in interpreting these data, because the Bloomfield experience may not be representative of University-wide behavior. Nonetheless, the size of the discrepancy is troubling and may indicate that a majority of honor offenses are either not being detected or, if detected, are not resulting in initiations.

B. *There are significant differences in the rates at which Honor cases are initiated for sub-groups of students.* The differences that occurred in the initiation rates could be the result of any of several factors, including:

- An excessive number of initiations against the sub-groups of students ("spotlighting"),
- A lack of initiations against majority students ("dimming"),
- Differential rates of detected Honor offenses among different sub-groups of students,
- A lack of Honor acculturation among sub-groups of students,
- Some combination of the above factors, or
- Other factors we have not yet discerned.

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Such higher rates of sub-group initiation do not seem present in the Bloomfield cases where a computer-based, impersonal system was used to identify potential cases of plagiarism. The higher rates of initiation in the Bloomfield data give rise to concerns that the potential biases noted above are occurring.

C. Honor investigations and trials, as opposed to initiations, are not influenced by sex, ethnicity, international or athletic status. High evidentiary standards and procedural safeguards in Honor hearings seem to successfully insulate cases against bias regarding investigated students' ethnic backgrounds, sex, international or athletic status.

D. Higher differential rates of initiation and an unbiased process still result in a disproportionate number of international students, African-American students, male students and athletes being dismissed from the University for Honor offenses.

Recommendations to the Honor Committee:

- 1. Investigate and identify factors that contribute significantly to differential rates of initiation.*
- 2. Continue enhancement of Honor education efforts through targeted educational initiatives.*
- 3. Explore and institute other specific measures to encourage all students, faculty and administrators at the University to initiate all suspected Honor cases.*
- 4. Continue to collect the detailed data required of the current study so that the analysis can be updated regularly (every 3-5 years) and performance can be studied longitudinally.*

The Faculty Advisory Committee supports the Honor System at UVa. We have provided this report to encourage constructive dialogue among all members of the University community as together we strive to strengthen the system.

Respectfully submitted, the Faculty Advisory Committee

RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Adopted unanimously by the faculty at their meeting on April 28, 2004

1. We recommend that students should supplement the single sanction with a forgiveness clause, whereby convicted cheaters would still be expelled from the University of Virginia, but would be offered some hope for redemption and readmission at a later date.
2. We recommend that students should recognize toleration of cheating as an affront to the Community of Trust and a violation of the University's Standards of Conduct. As such, toleration should be punished by the students' judicial system. To be in compliance with this non-toleration policy, a student who is aware of cheating must take action by initiating an Honor investigation, confronting the cheater, or notifying the instructor that cheating has occurred, even if this is done anonymously.
3. We recommend that the Community of Trust should henceforth mourn the dismissal of a member publicly by lowering a flag to half mast (or some similar symbolic act), and celebrate the forgiveness of a member by ringing a bell (or some similar symbolic act).
4. We recommend that students should tap alumni of the Honor Committee on a regular and formal basis, for the purpose of consulting with and advising current students about the Honor System.
5. We recommend that students should work to identify a pool of faculty advisors and liaisons to aid faculty members who initiate honor cases.
6. We recommend that students should say clearly what is and what is not an Honor violation. It is our belief that such clarity is fundamental to the definition of ethical behavior and therefore to the creation of the Community of Trust.
7. We recommend that the University as an institution should speak openly and often about the core value of academic integrity. Speaking ardently about the Honor System, though admirable and important, is not equivalent to speaking directly and explicitly about academic integrity—one of the core values of our entire scholarly enterprise.
8. We recommend that the University should openly and explicitly recognize that faculty who initiate honor cases are, in most circumstances, doing so in their capacities as members of the University faculty, and not as independent agents.
9. We recommend that, once the students have retaken responsibility for the Honor System, that the faculty talk about the system on the first day of class, and find a student volunteer to serve as honor representative in each class.

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCES
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE HONOR SYSTEM
April 28, 2004**

Reforming the Honor System: Recommendations

Central to the academic enterprise at any great university are integrity, respect, and trust. No eminent community of scholars can long survive without generous measures of these three noble virtues. For over 160 years, the University of Virginia Honor System has sought to achieve those worthy goals by uniting students at this University into a vital and vigorous Community of Trust.

Unfortunately, in recent years, this Honor System has lost much of its luster, primarily through the decay of student responsibility and the consequent disintegration of the Community of Trust. The Honor System has become progressively more faculty driven and its ability to elevate life at the University has diminished.

It is out of an abiding passion for the honest scholarship and elevated academic life that a secure, functional Community of Trust can provide, and out of our hope that a reformed and reinvigorated Honor System will bring us closer to those ideals, that we propose the following resolutions.

While we recognize that resolutions directed toward the students and administration can be no more than advisory and that they have no direct capacity to alter policy, we observe that this exceptional institution, described by Jefferson as the "bulwark of the human mind in this hemisphere," (letter to Thomas Cooper, 1820) stands like a tripod on three legs: its faculty, its students, and its administration. We therefore request the other two legs to give our resolutions their most serious possible consideration.

1. Students should supplement the "single sanction" with a forgiveness clause.

While the "single sanction" reflects a compelling Kantian logic—even a single act of cheating cannot be tolerated because if such acts became widespread, the Community of Trust would be undermined—this philosophical foundation is fully consistent with adding a "forgiveness clause" to the single sanction. Forgiveness is a virtue, and if this virtue were to become widespread it would augment, not undermine the community of trust. A forgiveness clause would bring students and faculty back into the system by offering a student who has violated the honor code some hope for redemption rather than "certain death." That hope would also encourage honorable behavior by students who are undergoing investigation or trial.

2. Students should make toleration of cheating a "judicial violation."

When students tolerate cheating, they fail in their duty to uphold the Honor System and they undermine the Community of Trust. That Community of Trust is not an assembly of individuals; it is truly a community and, as such, derives its value from universal participation and support. The non-toleration clause should be reinstated, with failure to act on awareness of cheating treated as a judicial violation.

3. Students should publicize Honor casualties and rehabilitations

Our community is not simply a collection of isolated individuals, but instead is constituted by members working together to form a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Injuries to this body must not go unremarked, since a healthy community reinforces itself and its traditions through focus on collective events, both good and bad, publicly marking both its triumphs and defeats. We therefore recommend symbolic public actions to mark both the dismissal and rehabilitation of student offenders.

4. Students should underscore the tradition of the Community of Trust through alumni

Those students most knowledgeable about the Honor System leave at their graduation, but they remain members of the Community of Trust. Alumni of the Honor Committee seem to us important and under-utilized defenders of this Community. Through the traditions they value and the practical knowledge they possess, such alumni could provide substantial guidance to the Honor Committee and to students.

5. Students should improve support for faculty filing complaints

Upon reform, we hope that faculty will no longer be the Honor System's main defenders, although we will continue to be important participants. Students can help make our task of dealing with the Honor System less overwhelming by identifying a pool of volunteer faculty members to be on call to assist and advise faculty bringing honor charges and to act as liaison between them and the Honor System.

6. Students should clearly name exceptions to the proscription on lying, cheating, and stealing

Historically, students have at some junctures turned a blind eye to certain forms of lying, cheating, and stealing. If the students feel genuinely that these behaviors are not Honor violations, then they should say so openly and explicitly. Students may want to consider clarifying the ethical status of behavior such as lying about one's age to obtain liquor (e.g., preparing false IDs), deceiving another to obtain a sexual favor or violating another student's privacy or bodily integrity (e.g., seduction or date rape), and maintaining and using private "Poodah files" of past coursework not to study but to complete assignments.

7. The Institution should speak openly and often about the core value of academic integrity

While the University of Virginia, through its Board of Visitors, has delegated oversight of student ethical conduct to the students themselves, it retains an abiding interest in academic integrity. The University is, after all, founded primarily around its academic mission. It is crucial, therefore, that the University never appear indifferent to academic integrity, and especially that it act definitively to counter any misperception regarding the strength of its commitment.

8. The Institution should recognize faculty as key players in upholding the Honor System

Most faculty members who initiate Honor cases believe that they are doing what the University expects: employing a University-sanctioned mechanism to maintain academic integrity in their own classrooms. However, the University at present views faculty initiators as independent agents in disputes between two private individuals: the initiator and the investigated student. In effect, the University views initiating an Honor investigation as something that faculty members do on their own, unrelated to their employment by the University.

Such distancing may provide the University with some safe legal harbor. But it leaves faculty initiators as lone individuals, discrediting their contributions both to the maintenance of academic integrity in general and the University of Virginia's Honor System in particular. This distancing is neither neutral nor innocuous. When community members act to sustain the Honor System, and especially when faculty members act to uphold academic integrity, the University must not set them afloat but instead should support them.

9. After reform, faculty will support the Honor System in classes

Once students have retaken responsibility for their Honor System, we will do what we can to support their efforts. Public discussion of the Honor System at the start of all classes would make an explicit, collective re-commitment to honorable behavior and reinforce the Community of Trust. Similarly, identifying a student honor representative in each class would remind us that students, not faculty, must be the core defenders of the Honor System. That student representative would be the conduit for all honor complaints, including those from faculty.