

Honor Research Fellowship  
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The purposes of this report are to 1) outline changing faculty opinion on the Honor System; 2) examine past and current materials provided to faculty in regards to the System; and 3) to report on faculty's present suggestions and concerns about outreach.

## **Speeches on the Honor System**

Although faculty's role in the System has changed over the years, the prevailing opinion among professors has been some form of support for the System. This can be seen in a speech given by Professor Dillard in September of 1963.<sup>1</sup> As a faculty member, Professor Dillard recommends that students put Honor before all else and emphasizes the importance of the Community of Trust. A second speech, given by Professor Kellogg in September of 1975, outlines the System more clearly, especially in regards to the faculty's role.<sup>2</sup> The speech was addressed to new faculty members and explains the System as having two unique features: student self-governance and a Community of Trust. The faculty role at this time was very different from the one we know today.

If you think that a student has intentionally lied to you, cheated or plagiarized in your course... you have the option of asking several students (ideally, perhaps, two students in your class) to determine for themselves whether the Honor System has been violated. The determination of guilt or innocence in terms of the Honor System is the student's responsibility from then on.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Professor Kellogg instructs new faculty to "avoid being placed in the position of a prosecutor," but instead enumerates the ways in which professors can make sure the students are aware of the Honor Policy in each class. These suggestions are, generally, the same guidelines recommended to professors today.

## **Past Materials**

As the System itself evolved, faculty members have been asked to become more involved and have therefore received updated pamphlets and guides to the System. The emergence of professors as reporters led to the creation of new education materials geared toward helping professors understand case processing. One example is a pamphlet entitled *An Introduction to the Honor System for Faculty Members and Teaching Assistants*.<sup>4</sup> The pamphlet is divided into a number of subsections, but its primary focus is on "Procedures and Proceedings." This section walks faculty members through their role in case processing, with a similar emphasis on making

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<sup>1</sup> *Selected Speeches about the Honor System*, see bibliography

<sup>2</sup> *Selected Speeches about the Honor System*, Kellogg, see bibliography

<sup>3</sup> *Selected Speeches about the Honor System*, Kellogg's speech, page 4

<sup>4</sup> See bibliography

reports as to what we see today. However, the pamphlet cautions professors on the “extraordinary time commitment” of the process, asking them to allow support officers reasonable extensions on class work and to set aside a sufficient amount of their own time for a case in which they are involved. In contrast, more current materials demonstrate an effort to lessen the time burden on faculty reporters. The pamphlet also outlines a Conscientious Retraction, but does not explain the professor’s role in its completion, unlike recent materials.

The pamphlet concludes with a list of ways for professors to engage in the System, a feature included in newer materials as well. First mentioned is the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), suggesting it played an important role in faculty liaison at the time. Other suggestions, including having students sign the pledge, take-home exams, specifying citation guidelines, and the faculty grading option, are similar to those we have today.

Beginning in 2002, the Committee provided faculty members with a “Faculty Handbook,” a sort of crash course for new professors and other staff unfamiliar with the System. Each year since, the Handbook has been updated to reflect the current System; however, most of the Handbook has remained the same since its conception. Information on the History, Philosophy, and sections about long-standing institutions such as the FAC have remained virtually word for word.

For example, the section dedicated to “What has changed” in the System has remained the same at its core, with new institutions such as the Informed Retraction being added on rather than replacing old information. This reflects a need to address similar faculty concerns on the System from year to year.

The Honor System is now more professional, fair, and legally sound than ever before. The Honor Committee is aided by a full-time Special Assistant who ensures institutional memory between Committees, ensures adequate training for Committee members and support officers, and aids the Committee in its day to day operations.

In addition, the Committee employs a Legal Advisor and consults regularly with the Vice President and Chief Student Affairs Officer. Further, the Committee regularly consults with its Faculty Advisory Committee and its Diversity Advisor Board... The Honor Committee is also much more efficient in its case processing today than in years past.<sup>5</sup>

This description addresses concerns over the legality and efficiency of a student run System, which faculty members believed needed professional counsel. The 2015 Handbook is very similar to the 2006 edition, despite numerous changes having taken place in the System.

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<sup>5</sup> 2006 Handbook, “What has changed in Honor in the Last five years?” See bibliography

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This and other continuations suggest that faculty concerns over a System run by students rather than professionals have remained constant throughout the years, or are consistently raised by new generations of professors.

The major information added to the Handbook includes emphasis on diversity and fairness within case processing, Student Athletes, and faculty responsibilities after making a report.

In 2013, the Informed Retraction was added to the Faculty Handbook after being voted in by the student body.<sup>7</sup> It is explained in its own section, “What is an Informed Retraction,” as well as being mentioned in “What has changed in the Honor System Recently,” “If I decide to report a case, what is my time commitment,” and “What happens after I report a case.” The Handbook does not explain the philosophy behind the Informed Retraction, but instead focuses mostly on mechanics. If a professor was not new and did not receive a new faculty handbook, it is also possible that he or she did not receive much information on the new institution.

## **2006 Survey**

In 2006, the University’s Center for Survey Research collaborated with the Honor Committee on a Faculty Survey of the Honor System.<sup>8</sup> This online survey was sent out to faculty members and their teaching assistants; a total of 1,564 people completed the survey. The results demonstrated that while 66.3% of respondents supported the System to some degree, the majority were unaware of some of the System’s basic components. Just 41% of respondents were able to identify what constitutes an Honor offense from a list of options, and only 68% were aware of the Single Sanction. Furthermore, 85.8% of respondents did not know who their school’s Representative on the Committee was.

17% of respondents were opposed to the Honor System. When asked to specify what their objections to the System were, the most commonly mentioned reservations were the Single Sanction, ineffectiveness or unfairness, an unreasonable time commitment (especially outside of normal business hours and on weekends), the “seriousness clause,” a lack of student reporting, a

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<sup>6</sup> Faculty handbook, 2015 edition, “What has changed in the Honor System recently?” See bibliography

<sup>7</sup> 2013 Faculty Handbook, see bibliography

<sup>8</sup> Report of Results, 2006 Survey

need for more adult supervision, the difficulty in securing a guilty verdict, and the limited scope of offenses.<sup>9</sup>

The study also looked at reporting rates as compared to observed cheating. 16.4% of faculty who clearly observed cheating in their classes in the span of two years reported the incident to Honor; however, 37.4% of all respondents had observed or suspected cheating and dealt with it outside of Honor. Based on the data, the Committee estimated that about 707 Honor offenses occurred between 2004 and 2006, while the Committee only received 134 reports during this period.<sup>10</sup> This demonstrates a reluctance on the part of faculty to bring cases forward to Honor and a dissatisfaction with the process itself. Numerous respondents asserted that they had been warned by colleagues not to report cheating to Honor for various reasons.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, the survey asked respondents about their preferred method of contact with the Honor System. There was a clear preference for electronic methods of communication; 48.8% of respondents preferred the website, 40.3% showed interest in some type of web-based training, and 35.1% preferred email communication. A further 32% said that Honor Committee presentations at faculty meetings were helpful.<sup>12</sup>

The 2006-2007 Committee's response acknowledged a need for more interaction between faculty members and Honor. Specific ideas included an interactive quiz, a Department Liaison Program, and an increase in informational presentations.<sup>13</sup> The Committee felt that by increasing the faculty's knowledge of the System, classroom acknowledgement would improve.

## **Current Materials**

The most recent edition of the Faculty Handbook was distributed to new faculty members in 2015.<sup>14</sup> It features a few pieces of information not seen in older editions of the Handbook. First, it mentions that students who are found guilty of an Honor offense and asked to leave the University can get help transferring to another institution. Second, in the section "What should I tell the student regarding the case report," professors are asked not to talk to students about the report being made for fear that it will conflict with their ability to take the Conscientious Retraction.

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<sup>9</sup> 2006 Faculty Survey Open-ended responses, see bibliography

<sup>10</sup> Honor Committee Response to 2006 Survey, see bibliography

<sup>11</sup> Free Response, see bibliography

<sup>12</sup> Report of Results, see bibliography

<sup>13</sup> Honor Committee response, see bibliography

<sup>14</sup> 2015 Handbook, see bibliography

Also on the website is what is called the Faculty “1-Sheet,” a “brief introduction” to the Honor System.<sup>15</sup> It explains the System’s Single Sanction, defines an Honor offense, outlines the Conscientious and Informed Retractions, explains how to make a report, and encourages faculty members to become involved.

One thing not included in any faculty materials that might be helpful is a flow chart of the case processing System, especially in the section “What Happens After I Report a Case?” The visual would be easy for professors to understand quickly and refer back to in the event that they make a report.

On the Honor website there is also a guide for Teaching Assistants to use.<sup>16</sup> The guide focuses on the fact that as students, TAs are subject to the Honor Code as well as being asked to help enforce it. One major difference between materials provided to professors and the guide for TAs is an emphasis on the fact that there is no penalty for not reporting students. Since TAs need to make sure their actions do not constitute an Honor Offense, this is an important distinction.

Additionally, Honor has provided a sample syllabus that professors can use when adding a section about the System to their own syllabi. The section can be used verbatim in a syllabus, although it prompts individual professors to include class- specific policies. It also provides contact information for the Committee, information on making a report, and a place to specify any Support Officers who are taking the class. None of the professors I spoke to, however, mentioned using this, preferring to use their school’s specific Honor policy in their syllabi or to write their own.

### **Faculty Orientation and Interaction**

The idea of Honor Representatives presenting at new faculty orientation and/or other department meetings is a very popular one. The current script for new faculty orientation addresses many faculty concerns. In it, Representatives explain who they are, the ideal of Honor, and student self-governance. They then go through a mock case and talk about perceived problems in the System. Two concerns addressed are the length of time between the report and resolution and frustration over “not guilty” verdicts; both of these were raised by professors I have spoken to and by respondents in the 2006 survey. If this presentation could be seen by a larger number of faculty, that might help raise faculty opinion of the System.

Another way for current Support Officers to interact with faculty is by emailing their professors, which there is a template for. The template would inform a professor that a Support Officer is in their class and give them a chance to ask any questions or to meet with the Support Officer in

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<sup>15</sup> Faculty 1-Sheet, see bibliography

<sup>16</sup> Guide for TAs on the Honor Website, see bibliography

person. Some of the professors I spoke to brought up a desire to have personal interaction with students involved in Honor, so utilizing this resource could be a good option going forward.

Last year, a newsletter was sent out to some faculty members with information on the current status of the Honor System. Those professors who received it found it informative. The prevailing opinion is that these newsletters should only be a page or two long and should feature hard statistics about the business of the Committee: how many reports were made, how many IRs and CRs were taken, how many hearings occurred, and of those, how many were guilty or not guilty. Professor Bass (COMM) felt that sending this out once a semester would be plenty; Professor Pivonka (CLAS) also felt that a simple informational sheet such as this one, sent out once a semester, would be ideal. One thing to note is that not all professors received the newsletter that was sent out last semester. Professor Carroll (NURS) said she did not believe that nursing professors got it. She did, however, think that it was a good idea, because a lot of professors want to know more about what is going on in the Honor System. Seeing that case processing was moving smoothly and getting done in a timely fashion would potentially boost support for Honor among faculty.

The primary focus of the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) during the 2015-2016 school year was the upcoming vote on Sanctioning. Faculty members raised a number of concerns regarding the plausibility of a multi- sanction System; they were especially concerned about the integrity of the Faculty Grading Option. The contributing faculty members felt that Honor and the Single Sanction are a large part of the University and contribute to respect, community, and trust in the classroom. A further concern was raised in both October 2015 and March 2016 about the specification that only 10% of students need to vote in order to have Honor's Constitution changed.

The FAC also talked about faculty outreach and support over the course of the year. One possible cause mentioned for declining faculty support was a lack of engagement with department heads. In regards to outreach, a paid ad in the Cavalier Daily for hearing summaries was suggested. There was concern that sending out a newsletter more than once a semester would be too much.<sup>17</sup>

## **Interviews**

Eight University professors and one Graduate Assistant were asked a set of questions about their interaction with the System.<sup>18</sup> The prevailing opinion was of support for the System and its student self governance. Professor Elzinga (CLAS) described it as “one of the most important

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<sup>17</sup> Notes from 2015-2016 FAC provided by Katherine Kamis, Chair

<sup>18</sup> Attached to this report are notes from each professor's interview. All participants were asked for and granted permission to include these transcripts in the report.

parts of the DNA of the University,” and professors who were less familiar with the System were open to learning more about it. All of the professors interviewed felt that the Committee took faculty opinions and ideas seriously, and that faculty outreach is moving in the right direction.

Overall, those who were able to speak to the Committee’s emphasis on faculty outreach thought that it had improved over the years. Professors Bass and Cohen both spoke to a noticeable improvement in the area, and Professor Carroll agreed that the Committee has been trying very hard, even if outreach methods have not quite been perfected. While professors less directly involved with Honor voiced a frustration that Honor Representatives had not come to speak to them until recently, the fact that people have reached out to them fits with a growing effort toward faculty outreach. More face- to- face interaction between Honor Representatives and faculty members, especially those not on FAC, would be viewed in a positive light.

The goal was to speak to professors from multiple schools within the University in order to gauge if faculty outreach has been more effective at one school or another. Professors from each school spoke about unique problems that faculty members at their school face regarding Honor. The major difference was at the schools that teach primarily grad students, such as the Law School, the Nursing School, and the School of Commerce.

There’s some tension [in the Law School] over jurisdiction over students. Law graduates who become practicing lawyers have to sit for tests and be certified by the school, so the school’s position is that we have our own obligations to address student misconduct. It’s a separate System... Many faculty members don’t immediately think of using Honor when they have an issue of student misconduct. There have been some cases, but not that many. It’s an issue that I think needs to be discussed or understood. At the law school we don’t see it as a problem or inconsistency- there’s a perception here that it’s more for the undergraduates or the other schools. – Professor George Cohen, LAW

Even if [nursing students are] full time students, they’re typically also full time nurses, so there’s more of a commuter experience instead of being here all the time. We have a lot of the same things arise as you see around grounds in regards to Honor, but it’s typical that grad students get in trouble because they’re tired, not because they plan to cheat. – Dr. Theresa Carroll, NURS

[The problem is] getting all of the people who are involved in teaching to have some understanding [of Honor]. The follow up question is that do all of the faculty members need to know the details [of how the Honor System works]? Probably no, it’s more important for System Leaders to know. – Dr. David Moyer, MED

The two most preferred methods of communication were 1) direct contact with an Honor advisor and 2) some sort of online communication (especially email). Every professor spoke highly of the idea of having Honor Representatives come to the first faculty meeting or department meeting of the year. One strong trend was that while none of the professors remembered any materials they had received from the Committee when they began teaching, they all remembered interactions with Honor Representatives or presentations they had been in. From this it seems like the Committee's priority should not be creating new materials, but in giving as many presentations as possible so faculty can have that interaction.

The resource that professors found most helpful was interaction with students involved in Honor. Four out of eight also cited the website as being helpful; however, professors need to have reason to do so before seeking out information on the website. Professor Bass (COMM) mentioned that one way to increase this helpful student- staff interaction would be to have a greater Support Officer presence at FAC meetings. Only two of the eight professors had had an Honor Representative speak in their class, but both found it to be very helpful, so it seems that the increase in class presentations could help raise faculty awareness of the System.

Seven of the eight professors I spoke to had some degree of familiarity with the System, though every professor stated that they did not believe their colleagues were as well informed as they should be. A major factor in this is that many of the professors interviewed are already involved in Honor, and thus would be expected to be more familiar with the System than their colleagues. By increasing the number of professors who have this kind of face to face interaction with Honor Representatives, the Committee could expect to have an increase in awareness of the System. The current state seems to be that a few professors who know a lot, but recognize that their colleagues are less aware of the System and how it works.

Similar issues to those that were raised in the 2006 faculty survey were also voiced by the professors participating in these interviews. One of the major reservations that faculty members had in 2006, the Single Sanction, is actually the area in which there seems to have been the most improvement. According to Professor Bass, many professors who formerly opposed the Single Sanction are now more okay with it because they feel that the Informed Retraction gives students more options. A separate issue of professors feeling as if they are being put on trial seems to have been addressed as well- Professor Bass said that he does not hear complaints on this matter nearly as often as he used to. However, Professor Braithwaite (BATT) mentioned a commonly heard concern about spotlighting and dimming, which has in some cases affected faculty views of the System. Professor Braithwaite also raised concerns over lack of communication during lengthy cases. Some faculty members have had the experience of placing a report and then, if it is dropped, hearing nothing for months on end, or possibly never hearing anything at all. This prospect has deterred other professors from reporting, especially when they feel that the act of cheating was especially blatant.

Following are some specific ideas that professors presented to improve communication with staff members.

1. Having Support Officers follow up after presentations to new faculty members to ask if they have questions (Professor Lucien Bass, COMM)
2. Have a faculty member in each school or department who is well-versed in the Honor System and publicized as a resource for their colleagues. This person should be well-known so that people know who to come talk to (Professor Bass, COMM)
3. Rotate members of FAC and get more professors involved so that more voices can be heard. It was expressed that while current FAC members are very helpful and know their stuff, other people would bring diversity to the conversation (Professor George Cohen, LAW)
4. Print statistics on Honor cases in the Law School newspaper and/or on the Law (and other school- specific) websites (Professor Cohen, LAW)
5. Have Honor Representatives present to the System Leader [like department heads for the medical school] meetings at the School of Medicine so they can serve as resources (Dr. David Moyer, MED)
6. Create a five- minute video briefly explaining Honor for faculty members so they can familiarize themselves with the System (Dr. Moyer, MED)
7. Newly elected Honor Representatives to the smaller schools (specifically Batten) should send out emails to faculty members introducing themselves and offering to meet up or answer questions (Professor Jeanine Braithwaite, BATT)
8. Have a mock case during the year for professors to discuss. This works best for the nursing school because they all have the same lunch, but some exposure to a mock case is very beneficial (Professor Theresa Carroll, NURS)

During the course of this project, I also spoke with one Graduate Assistant from the school of engineering, Philip Tan. He felt that he was very familiar with the System, but that there was a lot of frustration over class- specific policies among students that he taught. Furthermore, he felt that the biggest challenges for TAs and GAs is not the fact that they are subject to the System as well, but that it becomes difficult to enforce the System when they are unclear on professors' specific policies themselves.

In regards to the Single Sanction, Mr. Tan pointed out that in his experience it has deterred faculty from reporting because 1) they feel it is too severe a punishment, 2) they feel that because of the severity, no action will be taken, or 3) they think it is more trouble than it is worth to make a report. However, he expressed support for the ideal of the Single Sanction, and believed that professors he has worked under feel the same way.

Mr. Tan also said that he never received any materials from the Honor Committee specific to TAs, nor was he aware that such resources existed. He suggested that, if materials were to be physically distributed, this should happen at the August teaching workshop that all TAs are required to attend. Ideally, this material would be a short one- or two- page overview of the System, with some sort of flow chart or graphic that would make the System more accessible to TAs who are already very busy. Something else that could be highlighted on this sheet is the Faculty Grading Option, which most TAs do not seem to be aware of.

## **Conclusion**

Faculty outreach seems to be going fairly well, though there is definite room for improvement. As far as this small sample goes, faculty opinion has gone up since the 2006 survey. There is at the very least a solid core of professors who support the System and want to learn more about it. Faculty outreach materials are effective, but not widely known. However, face to face interaction with students involved in Honor is a much more effective tool for faculty outreach than handouts. Goals for the coming semester could include scheduling more faculty presentations, disseminating outreach materials more widely, and having a larger Support Officer presence at FAC meetings.

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