



Department of Government

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**To:** W. Taylor Reveley, III  
**From:** Clayton M. Clemens, Chair, Honor System Advisory Committee  
**Date:** June 25, 2013  
**Re:** The Honor Code Review Process, 2010-2013

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In October 2010, President Taylor Reveley established a committee to review William & Mary's honor system. The President's charge to the committee read as follows:

It has been 13 years since our honor system was last reviewed by the campus community. It is time to take another look to ensure that the system remains alive and well. Thus, I am appointing an Honor System Review Committee (HSRC), as advisory to the President. HSRC will take a close look at the following matters and any others it finds useful: the Code itself, current Honor Council structure, procedures for responding to alleged honor violations and for conducting hearings, sanctions for honor violations, roles that faculty, staff and students (undergraduate, graduate and professional) have in the system, and how best to educate the William & Mary community about the system and nurture commitment to it. HSRC will make its findings and recommendations available to the campus community for comment and to the President for further consideration.

The Honor System Review Committee (HSRC) began its work in November 2010. It was composed of five faculty members, three administrators (two from the Dean of Students Office), four undergraduates (one from the Honor Council) and two graduate students (one from the Honor Council). From November 2010 through May 2011, it conducted an assessment of the current honor system, including:

- detailed examination of the Honor Code, Honor Council bylaws, select case documents and other materials on the William & Mary system;
- assessment of practices at thirty peer institutions;
- consultations with direct participants in the process, including Honor Council members, appeals panel representatives, and student counsels;

- solicitation of broader campus input through an online survey that drew responses from 500 students, 175 faculty members and 30 administrators/staff;
- solicitation of input/suggestions from the Student Assembly, Faculty Assembly, deans of all academic units and Arts & Sciences department/program chairs; and
- solicitation of input/suggestions from focus groups with student organizations.

Based on campus input and its own assessment, HSRC members agreed that the Code as it has evolved over time has many strong points. But they also found more confusion and ambivalence than desirable for so cherished a tradition, as well as pockets of criticism among faculty and students. The committee requested an extension of its charge for an additional year.

Throughout academic year 2011-2012, the committee, based on its initial findings, discussed and debated myriad proposed changes to the honor system. In April 2012, it produced a preliminary 30-page report on its recommended revisions to the Code. In a number of areas where members could not agree, the report set out different options. At the President's request, the report was submitted to the campus community for further feedback, including:

- presentation of the report to the Student Assembly on May 5: the SA voted to endorse the enumerated proposals and offered five additional recommendations (Senate Bill 319-059, May 6, 2012);
- presentation of the report to the Faculty Assembly for discussion on April 24;
- an open forum for any students, faculty and staff; and
- solicitation of online feedback, producing 38 student and 31 faculty/staff responses.

In June 2012, President Reveley charged the committee with converting its report's recommendations (with one exception) into a draft of a revised Honor Code. Work to that end commenced at the outset of academic year 2012-2013. HSRC was retitled the Honor System Advisory Committee (HSAC); six of its original members remained active in the process, joined,

starting in the fall of 2012, by newly-appointed participants from the Councils, the Conduct Council, and Student Counsels (CHAPS). In March 2013, the committee completed work on its draft of a revised Code. The document was made available to the campus community for discussion and feedback in early April, including:

- presentation to and discussion with representatives of the Honors Councils, Conduct Council, and CHAPS on March 24;
- presentation to and discussion with the Student Assembly on April 23;
- presentation to and discussion with the Faculty Assembly on April 23; and
- solicitation of online feedback from April 5 through May 6 (31 days) by the Office of the President, which elicited 29 student and 12 faculty/staff responses.

In early May 2013, the President's office made an independent summary assessment of the online feedback. It noted that a plurality of the student responses were positive, while a few of the others opposed retaining a student-administered honor system. Five responses opposed specific provisions of the revised Code. Most faculty/staff responses were either positive or voiced general reservations about the current system's effectiveness or fairness. Several responses sought clarification of specific provisions.

Based on his assessment of the committee's deliberations and campus response to them, the President concluded that the revised Honor Code should go into effect in academic year 2013-2014, subject to two understandings. First, at his direction, specific clarifications requested in the feedback to his office were made in a final version of the document. Second, HSAC, henceforth a standing committee, will assess the impact and effectiveness of changes in the honor system under this version of the Code and report its findings by the end of the spring 2015 semester.

