

President's Honor System Review Committee
Draft Report, Executive Summary, April 2012

General Findings

- The current Code has many strengths and largely lives up to its historic mission, but for so cherished a tradition, there is also more confusion and ambivalence than desirable
- To the extent that such issues arise from provisions in the current Code and its complex structure, the document should be restructured and the following key changes made:

Proposed Changes: Infractions

- More clearly delineate each type of academic Code infraction
- Codify that the effort to gain an unfair advantage, even if unsuccessful, is an infraction
- Restrict lying, cheating and stealing under the Code to the academic realm only for undergraduates, referring non-academic infractions to the Student Conduct system
- Codify the understanding that faculty may take reasonable steps to pre-empt infractions

Proposed Changes: Enforcement Processes

- Underscore the obligation to report infractions even if there is no penalty for not doing so
- Allow a faculty member and student, by mutual consent, to resolve less serious alleged infractions through a grade sanction and academic probation, without Council hearings
- Permit an accused student who accepts guilt to proceed directly to a sanction hearing
- Clarify what constitutes trivial matters and indirect evidence under the Code
- Clarify circumstances under which an accused student's rights to request recusal of a Council member, to seek separate hearings and to have an open hearing are granted
- Codify the rights of faculty involved to protect their work product, not to be evaluated by an accused student, to be free from harassment, and to be informed of case outcomes

Proposed Changes: Sanctions and Appeals

- Link the starting point for deliberation on sanctions for undergraduates to the severity of infractions (rather than automatically starting at separation from the College in all cases)
- Provide guidance on what may/may not generally constitute extraordinary circumstances that warrant a lesser sanction or aggravating circumstances warranting stricter sanctions
- Distinguish basic rights, any violation of which would be grounds for appeal, from errors of procedure, which would lead to appeal only if they significantly affect a case outcome

Proposed Changes: Administration and Amendments

- Make more detailed information about actual case outcomes public (while protecting the confidentiality of those involved) so as to offer guidance on how infractions are defined
- Allow the Undergraduate and each graduate Council greater latitude on procedure
- Designate the Student Senate as the Undergraduate Honor Council's governing body, with authority to approve the latter's system of elections and ratify Code amendments on its own (in place of the recent practice of submitting them for a referendum).
- Permit limited campaigning for election to the Undergraduate Honor Council
- Establish a standing student-faculty Honor System Advisory Committee that would have oversight authority, approve procedural changes, and submit proposed Code amendments to each school's governing body for final approval (subject to the President's consent)

Outstanding Issues [no consensus reached]

- Should an accuser have the right to withdraw an accusation after a Council investigation?
- Where the Provost's review finds procedural error took place, should the latter have the discretion not merely to direct new hearings (as currently) but to set aside a verdict?
- Should there be faculty consultants to offer input on Council investigations and hearings?