Abstract discussion will be held on Wednesday (3/25) at 8:00PM in the MCC (Stokes).

Great Expectations:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Spring 2015

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party did not consent to the release of the abstract. (The addition of this disclaimer began in Spring 2010).

Key:
Confronting Party: Professor Mrs. Joe
Confronted Party: Pip
Course Name: Blacksmithing Theory 200

Summary:

[Pip], while taking an examination in [Blacksmithing Theory], used his phone to inappropriately look up answers to several questions on his test. [Mrs. Joe], his professor, caught him and confiscated the phone, but she gave him the option of finishing the exam before she involved Honor Council. [Pip], however, chose to end the exam early and immediately sent an email to Honor Council, which decided to send the case to an academic trial. Throughout the trial [Pip] earnestly apologized and was ready to accept all consequences of his actions. The resolutions emphasized restoration and education.¹ Some Honor Council procedures (faculty awareness of the Honor Code and graduate school disciplinary reporting) were also addressed in the resolutions.

Fact-Finding:

[Mrs. Joe] began the fact-finding meeting with her statement. She explained that [Pip] was allowed to take time and a half on all exams, and that he would be taking his exam in a different classroom as part of his accommodations. The exam was closed-book and closed-notes. When [Mrs. Joe] went to check on him and other students working in the different classroom, she approached [Pip] and saw that he had his smartphone in his hand. [Mrs. Joe] could see that [Pip] was searching online for [hammering techniques] to answer a simple recall question.

¹ The three goals of an Honor Council trial are accountability, restoration, and education; these were discussed during the trial.
Joe] asked [Pip] for his phone but she said that he could continue working on the exam. Approximately 20 minutes later, however, [Pip] turned in his mostly blank exam and they both agreed that [Pip] should contact Honor Council.

When it was [Pip]'s turn to speak, he stated that he agreed with everything [Mrs. Joe] had said. He banged his fist on the table and declared, “I did it. I cheated.” [Pip] said he believed himself to be guilty of a gross violation of the Honor Code, and he apologized.

Given that [Pip] had not followed his professor’s instructions, the jury consented to the following statement of violation:

[Pip] violated the Honor Code by looking up test answers on his phone, thereby failing to adhere to the professor’s instructions. (All jurors consented.)

Circumstantial:

[Pip] began the circumstantial portion by explaining that he had changed his major from [blacksmithing] to [being a gentleman] because it was his stronger interest. This year in [blacksmithing], [Pip] said he was doing fairly well, but not great. [Mrs. Joe] said that [Pip] struggled to turn his work in on time, but he did have natural talent for [blacksmithing].

At the time of this exam, [Pip] also had three papers due, and he was having a busy and stress-filled midterm week. Since two of the papers were for his [gentlemanship] class, they were responsible for much of [Pip]'s stress. Though he began asking for extensions mid-week, the papers took priority, and [Pip] struggled to adequately prepare for his [blacksmithing] midterm.

[Pip] was also late to [blacksmithing] on the morning of the exam. [Pip] made it clear that this was a blunder and not an excuse, but he noted that it did add to his stress going into the exam. While [Pip] said he did not generally get anxious during tests, on this morning he panicked when he reached the question on [hammering techniques] and could not immediately come up with the answer. Going into the exam, [Pip] had known that the [hammering techniques] would be the hardest part for him, but he thought he would be okay. [Mrs. Joe] added that the portion of the exam on [hammering techniques] made up only a small percentage of the exam.

[Pip] then explained to the jury that, though [Mrs. Joe] said she would allow him to continue working on the rest of the midterm after taking his phone, he did not feel capable of continuing for a number of reasons. First, he had trouble focusing after the confrontation, and he could not stop thinking about how he had messed up. Though [Pip] said that he now thought he had had the knowledge to complete the rest of the exam, he told the jury that he had felt so defeated and guilty at the time that he was unable to perform. In addition, [Pip] felt very strongly that he had not had the right to continue working on the midterm after cheating and being caught because he deserved a zero.

When [Mrs. Joe] spoke, she first clarified that since her initial confrontation was not an official ruling of guilt, she had wanted to give [Pip] the benefit of the doubt. This was why she
thought it best to allow him the chance to continue working on his midterm while still possible. [Mrs. Joe] also talked about her initial reaction upon seeing [Pip] using his phone, saying that she was intensely disappointed. [Mrs. Joe] added that she was very impressed with the way that the situation had been handled from that moment forward, by [Pip], Honor Council, and the jury.

[Mrs. Joe] also told the jury that she firmly believed in trying to see this kind of situation from a student’s perspective, and that she had had conversations with past [blacksmithing] students about the temptation to cheat in this particular class. This kind of reflection led [Mrs. Joe] to write a statement for her syllabus on the difficulty of [blacksmithing], and to try to be as available as possible to her students. She also mentioned that she hadn't had much education about Honor Council proceedings as a new faculty member.

[Pip] informed the jury that he had read this statement on [Mrs. Joe]’s syllabus, and that he had read the Honor Code and taken the academic integrity tutorial on Moodle. He said he had known that he was cheating at the time, and while the act was made much easier by the fact that he was taking the test in a different classroom, due to his accommodations, he felt it would be immature to blame his extended time for the violation. When a juror asked [Pip] what he would have done if [Mrs. Joe] had not caught him, phone in hand, [Pip] was unsure.

**Tentative Resolutions:**

Prior to deliberation, the jury learned that, for several reasons, [Pip] had decided to drop this course after the violation but prior to the trial. The jury was therefore uncertain how to proceed with resolutions because a grade change would be impossible. [Pip] also expressed an interest in rebuilding his relationship with [Mrs. Joe]. [Pip] was doubtful that he would ever return to [blacksmithing] because he felt that the field was not for him; he was much more interested in [becoming a gentleman].

Ultimately, the jury all agreed that it was for the best. One juror pointed out that in some ways, [Pip] had already held himself accountable for his actions by opting not to finish the exam when he could have, and by dropping the course. Another juror pointed out that [Pip]'s dropping the course may have just been an "easy way out." But the jury members decided that [Pip]'s attitude had been so remorseful and genuine that this was probably not the case. For these reasons, the jury did not feel that separation was in order, and they agreed to focus their tentative resolutions more on education and restoration than on accountability.

To that end, the jury discussed areas in which [Pip] seemed to need further education. While the jury felt that knowledge of the Honor Code was not an issue for [Pip], they thought that academic stress, time management, and study habits were areas in which [Pip] could use education and support. Several jurors also thought that [Pip] could benefit from some education on how to best practice self-advocacy when it came to situations where he needed extensions from professors. Though one juror pointed out that it may be very time-consuming to ask [Pip] to seek out education on each of these different topics, it was ultimately decided that the benefits outweighed the potential of adding some stress to [Pip]’s schedule.
The jury then turned their attention to how the faculty, just as much as the student body, need education about Honor Code violations and how they happen. Some jury members were concerned that addressing faculty education in this way may be outside of the jury’s purview. Overall, the jury members agreed that they were unsure what the best solution would be, but that something should be done, since [Mrs. Joe] had not been given much background on the Honor Code as a new faculty member.

On the other point that [Mrs. Joe] had raised, on the temptation to cheat in [blacksmithing] classes specifically due to their level of difficulty, the jury was similarly divided. The jury discussed whether the temptation to cheat should be lessened or removed with stricter test-taking regulations. Some felt that nothing should be changed, since resisting temptation is a valued aspect of academic integrity at Haverford. Others thought that removing excess temptation would be a way to demonstrate concern for the community members taking [blacksmithing]. Eventually, a juror suggested that a resolution in which [Pip] and [Mrs. Joe] work together to address the issue of cheating in [blacksmithing] may aid future [blacksmithing] students and also restore the trust between the parties.

A letter to the community was also discussed as a way to educate the community on [Pip]’s case, and to repair the breach of trust between [Pip] and the community implicit in any violation of the Honor Code.

The jury discussed whether or not to recommend that [Pip]’s violation be reported should he ever transfer or apply to graduate school. One juror took issue with the fact that juries are asked to make this recommendation at all; the juror said it was unfair to force this duty upon jury members, since it was effectively like making the Dean’s decision for them. Other jurors explained that the Dean of the College asks jurors to make this recommendation, since a jury tends to know the case best, and is thus in the best place to make an informed recommendation. This particular juror remained in favor of the jury making no recommendation either way.²

[Pip]’s remorse throughout the trial process was also brought up as a point against the idea of recommending to report to graduate schools, and some jurors voiced the opinion that it would be better to err on the side of too little accountability than to hold [Pip] accountable to an extent that the resolutions became punitive. However, [Pip] holding himself accountable was different in some jurors’ eyes from the community holding him accountable, and since [Pip]’s actions were such a clear violation of the Haverford Honor Code, the jury decided that a recommendation not to report would be akin to recommending that the Dean of the College lie to the institutions receiving [Pip]’s application on Haverford’s behalf.

The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions:

1. [Pip] will meet regularly with an OAR staff member on a time frame to be determined by

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² At the time of the release of this abstract, an Honor Council document about this issue can be found here, on the Honor Council website in the Guidelines section.
[Pip] and the staff member. Topics to discuss include time management, academic stress, study habits, test taking strategies, and self-advocacy. These meetings will continue until [Pip] and his dean agree that they are no longer necessary. (All jurors consented.)

2. [Pip] will have weekly meetings with his dean. These meetings will continue so long as they agree that they are productive. (All jurors consented.)

3. The jury recommends that [Pip] consider using CAPS. (All jurors consented.)

4. [Pip] and [Mrs. Joe] will meet to discuss the temptation to cheat, with the goal of creating a resource together for the community about this temptation. This meeting is designed to restore the trust between [Pip] and [Mrs. Joe]. (All jurors consented.)

5. The jury recommends that the procedures for educating new faculty about test administration under the Haverford College Honor Code be evaluated and revised. (All jurors consented.)

6. [Pip] will write a letter to the Haverford College community reflecting on his experience. (All jurors consented.)

7. The jury recommends that this incident be reported on applications to institutions of higher learning. (9 jurors consented, 1 stood outside.)

Resolutions as a whole: All jurors consented.

Finalizing Resolutions:

[Mrs. Joe] said that the tentative resolutions seemed generally good to her. She was happy to work with [Pip] on an academic honesty resource for her [blacksmithing] class, and she believed his thoughts could be very beneficial.

[Mrs. Joe] was somewhat concerned that the jury’s graduate school recommendation seemed punitive, considering how cooperative and apologetic [Pip] had been throughout the trial process. [Pip] said that he was anxious of the reporting recommendation, but he said he had no good reason to object to it. One juror explained to the parties that it would constitute a lie for Haverford not to report this incident, since [Pip] did cheat on his exam. Jurors also explained that the report would probably be part of a larger explanation about [Pip]’s dropped class, and that the recommendation was the only resolution that addressed the goal of accountability. [Mrs. Joe] then said that she was unsure if [Pip] needed this measure to hold him accountable, but that Haverford’s need to be truthful was compelling. She also mentioned that this resolution more than the others would probably be a constant reminder for [Pip] of what he had done, and she did not believe this to be necessarily a bad thing.

[Pip] had no objections to the tentative resolutions.

The jury then discussed the faculty orientation as an opportunity to teach new professors about how to proctor exams under the Code, what the expectations are for confidentiality about confrontations and trials, and how confrontations should go. To ensure that the faculty
orientation would thoroughly and clearly cover the Honor Code, the jury decided it would be worthwhile for Honor Council to reconsider what it communicated to faculty members, and to encourage [Mrs. Joe] to speak to the coordinator of faculty orientation.

The jury then turned its attention to the recommendation to report to graduate schools. While all agreed that a recommendation not to report the incident would be dishonest on Haverford’s part, one juror still took issue with the fact that the Dean of the College asks Honor Council juries to make such a recommendation in the first place. This juror then brought up the Honor Council guidelines for making a recommendation. As of the time of this trial, these guidelines state that, first, the jury makes a recommendation, then the recommendation is reviewed by Honor Council, and then Honor Council makes the same or a different recommendation. These recommendations go to the Dean of the College, who makes the final decision. The trial chair informed the jury that these guidelines were unintentionally not being followed because the recommendation never went to Honor Council for approval. Some jurors felt that this aspect of the guidelines should be followed, and some disagreed. In the end, however, the jury came to the common understanding that Haverford was obligated to report the incident, and, since [Pip]’s transcript for the semester would already be unusual, since he had dropped the class, [Pip]’s violation would be one explanation among many, and a chance for him to redeem himself.

The jury then consented to the following final resolutions:

1. [Pip] will meet regularly with an OAR staff member on a time frame to be determined by [Pip] and the staff member. (All jurors consented.)
2. [Pip] will have weekly meetings with his dean. These meetings will continue so long as they agree that they are productive. (All jurors consented.)
3. The jury recommends that [Pip] consider using CAPS. (All jurors consented.)
4. [Pip] and [Mrs. Joe] will meet to discuss the temptation to cheat, with the goal of creating a resource together for the community about this temptation. This meeting is designed to restore the trust between [Pip] and [Mrs. Joe]. (All jurors consented.)
5. Honor Council will evaluate and revise the procedures for educating new faculty about test administration under the Haverford College Honor Code. [Mrs. Joe] will speak to the coordinator of new faculty orientation about how much attention is paid to the Honor Code. (All jurors consented.)
6. [Pip] will write a letter to the Haverford College community reflecting on his experience. (All jurors consented.)
7. The jury recommends that this incident be reported on applications to institutions of higher learning that inquire about disciplinary action. (All jurors consented.)

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3 See Footnote 2.
4 The guidelines have since been changed; now only the jury makes a recommendation to the Dean
8. Honor Council will review the steps for making recommendations regarding reporting incidents on applications to institutions of higher learning. (All jurors consented.)

Resolutions as a whole: All jurors consented.

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Letter to the Community:

Dear Haverford Community,

I am a cheater. It is an ugly fact, but true regardless of the repugnance. Forever more, I will know this about myself. When push came to shove, I made the weak and small decision to take advantage of my professor’s goodwill and our Community's trust and cheated on my exam. Sure, there were factors that lead up to my decision, but ultimately neither those factors, nor my decision to cheat, were out of my control.

In my reflections of the time leading up to the exam, the cheating, and the trial, I have come to a few realizations. The first is that I am not as good a person, nor as good a student, as I would have believed myself to be. Ultimately, it was my pride that did me in. I could not bear to ask my professor for help or accommodations, even though I desperately needed it. Rather than admit weakness, I pretended I was handling every thing just fine. It was the wrong choice. To accompany the issue of pride, was my fear of asking for help. Perhaps it is just how I was raised, perhaps I am vain, but asking for help never even occurred to me as realistic option. Rather than admitting weakness and letting my professor in on the fact that I was not as good a student as I outwardly presented, I tried to hide it until I could hide it no more.

The second realization is that, unlike many of the others who have experienced sitting before the Honor Council, this process has not been restorative for me. While I am fully committed to regaining our Community’s trust, the Trial and steps already taken have not lifted the guilt and shame I feel. I will bear these feeling through the remainder of my Haverford career and beyond. This letter is not a declaration of my renewed zeal for the Honor Code. I am not a “transformed” person, as a previous Letter to the Community triumphantly proclaimed. No, I am humbled, I am debased, I am ashamed. I am the same person I was before cheating, just one who has learned from past mistakes. I am still prideful, I am still vain, but I am now more mindful of how these character traits and flaws affect my interactions, or lack thereof, with my professors and our Community.
I would like to apologize to this Community, even though an anonymous apology does feel feeble. What I did was absolutely wrong. It was the wrong choice for me personally, and it was the wrong choice as a member of this community. Please, if you are feeling overwhelmed or like you are drowning in your courses, go and ask for help. In talking with my professor, I realized there was no judgement coming my way. If I had only asked for help, this professor would have worked with me. Instead, I allowed my pride and fear of asking for help to get in the way. So, please, do better than I did. That I really all I can ask of this Community, but I do pledge, even if it is anonymously, to take my own advice and work to let go of my pride, to let go of my fear of appearing weak, and not let such paltry matters impede my education at Haverford.

Sincerely,
Pip

Discussion Questions:

1. How much should professors focus on eliminating temptation in exams in general? Should this change in a high-stress academic situation like [Pip]’s [blacksmithing] class?
2. Do you agree that the resolutions should reflect [Pip]’s forthright and apologetic attitude throughout the trial, and that accountability should not be emphasized as much as restoration and education?
3. Do you expect that [Pip] would have notified Honor Council about his violation if he had not been caught? How might the trial have run differently in that case?
4. The Dean of the College asks the jury for a recommendation of whether or not to report an incident to graduate schools, if asked by the graduate school. Discuss this process and the value of a jury making a “yes” or “no” recommendation, or no recommendation at all.

5 See Footnote 2.