Omar, Pat and Theo
A Joint Honor Council-Administrative Panel

Abstract Released Spring 2002

Abstract Discussion: Monday, April 15th 6:30 PM in the Sunken Lounge
Photograph will be available for inspection.

Introduction

Following up on the discovery of an open window during winter break, Safety and Security found an elaborate halogen lighting set-up fostering the growth of two marijuana plants in the closet of a dorm. Several students believed to have been associated with the project were confronted by Safety and Security upon their return to campus following break. The issue was brought to Honor Council who then came to consensus on a suspicion of violation. Honor Council sent the case to a Joint Honor Council-Administrative Panel.

Statement of the Parties:

Prior to inviting Omar, Pat, Theo and Safety and Security into the room, the panel read the respective statements of the parties. The panel then asked Omar, Pat, Theo and Safety and Security to come into the room and recount the events in their own words.

Omar’s Statement:
Omar explained that the seeds were planted in the beginning of the first semester, and lights and equipment were added as time went on. Omar found he forgot something over break, and broke into his dorm to retrieve it. When Omar returned to campus after break, Safety and Security requested an immediate meeting with the Dean of the College and the confronted parties. One month later, Honor Council contacted him for an official statement.

Pat’s Statement
Pat agreed to the statement made about the project, but added details about lighting. The project was confined to the closet because there was insufficient sunlight in the dorm, and nothing could be planted outside because the plants needed isolation. A twelve-hour timer was added late in the project, and the closet door was kept open. Pat added that they had never considered fire concerns, and was unaware of how she had violated the Code.

Theo’s Statement
Theo did not have much to add to the previous two statements. He was not concerned with legal ramifications because he felt Haverford to be a protected environment, and never thought their actions would attract unwanted attention.
Safety and Security’s Statement
On a routine patrol, Safety and Security came across an open window and decided to look further into the matter. They found entrances to the dorm locked, and upon entering the dorm room with the open window, they found an extension cord running into the closet, with five cords attached to one electrical outlet. Upon opening the closet, the walls were found to be lined with tin foil, and there were dangling electrical appliances including numerous halogen lamps and two small plants (believed to be marijuana). Photographs were taken, and, because of the potential fire hazard in the closet, the lights were unplugged and the plants confiscated.

Safety and Security made it clear that they do not want to be seen as a buffer between the police and the Haverford Community and on other college campuses, this event would have gone directly to the police. They were impressed with the level of honesty and remorse exhibited by the parties.

Panel Questions
To further clarify the situation, the panel asked some questions to the parties.

Theo did not feel the growing of the illegal substances would have a negative effect on the community, although he recognized the serious fire hazard and its potential consequences.

After viewing the photographs Safety and Security took during the incident, Omar said he recognized the fire hazard not only endangered his own self but also the other uninvolved residents of the dorm. In regards to questions about the seriousness of growing illegal substances within his closet, he mentioned that he personally felt occasional drug use was in fact less harmful than drinking outside, particularly with regards to attracting unwanted outside attention. When asked if anyone else was privy to their project, he said that only close friends were aware but no one else knew, including the residents of the building. The jury questioned if there was a plan in mind, and Omar responded that it was a “learning” project with no long-range plan, just a process in experimentation. Dealing the grown marijuana was never at all planned.

Safety and Security added that the plants were indeed very small and never had the potential for any high yield that would warrant dealing.

Panel Deliberations
The Panel was concerned over both the growing and possession of illegal substances and the serious fire hazard the students created. All panel members agreed that the fire hazard was serious, though opinion varied on the seriousness of the drug possession as it relates to the Honor Code. The panel came to the conclusion that growing marijuana was not a clear violation of the Code in this specific case, and that the primary issue at hand was the seriousness of the fire hazard. Had the confronted parties been dealing marijuana, the panel’s considerations would have been much more extensive. The panel was alarmed by
the seriousness of the fire hazard which included an elaborate set-up of prohibited halogen lamps combined with water and low grade electrical equipment in a small space where heat could accumulate. Furthermore, none of the residents of the dorm were notified of the project and it was left unattended for one month. After long deliberations over the two main concerns at hand, the panel came to consensus on the following Statement of Violation.

Statement of Violation

The students violated the Honor Code by showing a lack of “mutual respect and concern” (Honor Code Article III Section B) for the community by creating a serious fire hazard.

Resolution Deliberations

The Honor Code states three areas to be addressed in making resolutions: education, accountability and repairing the breach of trust between the parties and the community. Many ideas for resolutions were discussed, and the panel decided to emphasize issues of inadequate knowledge of fire hazards. The panel thought this to be an opportunity for the students to present their findings to the community.

Resolutions:

(1) The students will complete an educational inquiry with the Safety Coordinator about the fire hazard they created as well as campus fire hazards in general.

(2) The students will take note of the fire safety in Haverford student housing, including fire prevention equipment.

(3) Within three weeks of the panel’s conclusion the students will give a formal presentation on their findings about fire safety to the Dean of the College, the Director of Safety and Security, the Safety Coordinator and the Co-Chairs of the panel.

(4) The students will write individual letters to the community which will include, but are not limited to, their reflections regarding the project, its impact on the community and the panel process and its outcomes.

Presentation of Resolutions:

The panel presented the resolutions to the parties. The confronted parties explained that after this process, they further understood how serious of a fire hazard they posed
to themselves and the residents of their dorm. The resolutions were accepted without change and the panel came to a final consensus.

Questions

(1) Is growing marijuana a violation of the Honor Code?
(2) What are the Haverford community standards regarding drug use and manufacture?
(3) Is breaking into your own dorm room over break disrespectful to the community?
(4) What is a community member’s responsibility if they come across a fire hazard?
To the community,

The confrontation, hearings, and resolutions of this trial have been a positive experience for me. During my time here I have often found myself critical of the so-called “Haver-bubble”. I am constantly frustrated by the sheltered privileges that we all take for granted as members of this community, however, until now I perceived this as a predominantly institutional problem. While I remain somewhat cynical of the relentless reproduction of community image at this school, this experience has given me the opportunity to really examine what role I play in abusing the privileges of this community. In my time at Haverford I have never before questioned the extent that the “Haver-bubble” permeates and sometimes clouds my own reason and sensibility. I made no protest when found in violation of the honor code because from the start it was painfully clear to me that I had been in the wrong. Not only had I endangered myself, and those who live in my dorm, but my actions also contributed to the general neglect of the Haverford community that I am so often critical of. It both intrigues and frightens me to see that for the months that I participated in this “project” my course of action was governed entirely by individual impulse, and while I was unaware of the extent to which my actions could have been harmful, I should have at very least considered the possible effect I might have on the larger community. The honor code, and the Haverford community as a whole succeed when individuals truly consider the responsibility we have to act with respect, trust, and consideration. Our community strives to embrace a diversity of people, opinions, and lifestyles in a process that is often times more of a struggle that a reality. The honor code is no more than piece of that struggle, serving as a means to a commonly desired end. Despite its imperfections, the code is representative of a general consensus that the members of the Haverford community value a respectful and trusting environment. Therefore, my lack of consideration for the larger community indicates that I have not entirely self-imposed the respect and trust that we as a community struggle to preserve. The honor code serves as a guideline for both the community and the individual and as participants we not only have a responsibility to abide by it, but understand, reflect, and improve it as well.

Theo

Dear Haverford community,

Recently I chose to do something in the privacy of my own living space which I thought was of no concern to anyone outside. Thus in thinking through the process of getting everything in order to grow something for the pleasure and amusement of myself and my living-mates, I inadvertently put the larger community at risk. Not only is the apparatus required for such a endeavor quite complicated, but the impetuosity in which we threw it together rendered a disaster possible. Immediate gratification was all that was on my mind, and so the risk posed to the community in light of the fire hazard of the apparatus seemed inconsequential. In fact, I never really thought about it. For a while I wondered if the simple cultivation
of marijuana for personal consumption was in violation to others well-being or the standards of the community in general. However, what is the difference between marijuana and alcohol? Does private use of pot put the greater community at risk in any way? Of course all these questions I quickly justified to myself, in the manner that we often do. It's my decision. Pot, to me, is a mundane and usually harmless activity - no crazier than other drugs we consume daily or alcohol drunk nightly. These are personal beliefs, and I invite you to think about them. However, my concern with these matters led me to overlook the very real danger of an electrical fire. For those living around me, those oblivious to the threat that my living space posed should something explode, I am extremely sorry. All sides of such matters ought to be regarded before taking such action. We all should know the potential hazards for which we are responsible.

Pat

To the members of the Haverford community-

I put members of this community in serious risk and for this I wish to apologize. The fire hazard that was present in our residence posed a danger not only to ourselves but also to those around us. I feel as though I may have courted disaster and I take heart in the fact that I am not writing this after some terrible disaster.

I feel, moreover, that we as a community need to think more about fire safety. The fire hazard in our room was there without any thought that it could have been a fire hazard. Just like those who have known themselves or others to place bags over the fire detectors or leave bikes in the stairwell or have halogen lamps, we were ignorant of the possible consequences and people could have been hurt as a result. I feel that if we are to honor the Code in its form, fire safety must be of the utmost importance to respecting those around us, as this trial has demonstrated.

However, this issue goes beyond even Honor Council, for I hope to respect the lives of anyone I come into contact with. My fault was that I was not aware of the danger posed by a poor quality extension cord hooked up to a massive 8-outlet surge protector. I hope, therefore, that I will be more aware in the future and I hope that the community, in reading this, will also think more about the ways in which their everyday actions could pose a serious fire hazard to those around them.

Omar