Tai and Cher
An Honor Council Trial
Released Spring 2008

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Introduction:

Tai was a student in Professor Geist’s physics class. Cher was also in this class, and while taking a self-scheduled final during finals week, noticed that Tai consulted her physics book despite the test being a closed-book exam. Since she was currently taking a final, Cher waited until after the exam to confront Tai via email. To find out Tai’s name and email, Cher emailed Professor Geist. Professor Geist encouraged Cher to contact Honor Council and then sent an email to Tai also encouraging a meeting with Honor Council. Once confronted, Tai e-mailed Council. She explained that during the final, feeling pressed for time, she did not read the instructions, which stated that the exam was closed book, and hurriedly started the final. She mentioned that she was an international student, and in her home country students are always allowed to use books and notes on un-proctored exams, and she assumed it was the same in America. Tai expressed her deep regret that she had consulted her book and spoke of her extreme willingness to work with Honor Council to rectify the situation. The Co-Chairs presented the case to Honor Council, who quickly came to a suspicion that a violation of the Honor Code had occurred. After informing Professor Geist, Tai, and Cher that the case was going to trial, the Chair of the trial met with Professor Geist. In this meeting, Professor Geist explained she felt trials and the Honor Code worked best when administered by the students. Although willing to work with the jury, if necessary, she believed that Cher was the confronting person. Professor Geist explained to the Chair that Tai had told her exactly which section of the book she consulted and for which problems; Professor Geist adequately adjusted her points for those two problems. She explained that using the textbook for those questions would have been very beneficial for Tai, and Professor Geist accordingly revoked points from her correct answers.

Fact-Finding:

Cher’s Statement:

Cher stated that while she was taking her physics exam, she noticed Tai take her physics textbook out and place it on her bag. As Tai did not open the textbook, Cher was not immediately suspicious. During the exam, however, Cher witnessed Tai open the book to reference a specific portion of it, before she continued taking her exam. Cher knew this was a violation of the Honor Code because the instructions on the test explicitly stated that the final was a closed book exam. Cher also said that she believed she saw Tai open the book once, but definitely not more than two times during the test.

Tai’s statement:
Tai agreed that she had violated the Honor Code. She admitted that she did not read the instructions and thus was unaware the exam was closed book. On an earlier test, she did not have enough time to finish the test. In the interest of time, she signed the Honor Code without actually reading the instructions.

Her second reason for opening the textbook dealt with the concept of a self-scheduled exam. Tai did not understand what a self-scheduled exam was. She had not even realized, until she showed up for the test, that students could only take tests in certain locations. She noted that on an earlier political science take-home test, the professor had allowed students to use all books and notes. From this experience, she deduced that all take-home tests (and she thought self-scheduled and take-home were the same) were open-book; the only limitations on a take-home/self-scheduled exams dealt with time and consultation with instructors or peers. This was consistent with her tests back home. Therefore, while taking the self-scheduled final (which she believed to be exactly the same as a take-home test) she did not realize that she had violated the Honor Code by consulting her textbook.

Tai stated that she had consulted her textbook once during the second question. The question asked for her to define a particular term and list the particular criterion associated with it. Tai remembered all but one of the criterions and consulted her textbook as to the last one.

**Questions from the Jury:**

The jury asked about her previous performance on tests and if Professor Geist had mentioned in class that the test was closed book. Tai responded that she had done poorly on the first test and well on the second. She could not remember if Professor Geist had mentioned anything about the instructions in class, but she did say that she had been absent the day before the final.

After some questioning from the jury, some more information arose. Tai, an international freshman student at Bryn Mawr, had missed Customs Week because of flight complications. She had arrived at the last minute, just in time to hear the finale of the Honor Code presentation, in which they talked only about the Social Honor Code. She had had no further education in either Bryn Mawr or Haverford’s Honor Code. To the best of her knowledge, nobody had ever told her the differences between take-home and self-scheduled finals.

**Deliberations:**

The jury quickly came to the conclusion that a violation of the Honor Code had occurred. The exam had stated that it was closed book. She ignored and therefore broke those instructions. The jury questioned whether she had violated the Honor Code by not seeking further clarification on the instructions, or simply by not following the professor’s instructions. The jury discussed whether or not the clause about asking for further instructions should be included in the statement of violation, but after further deliberations came to the conclusion that it would be redundant. With no members standing outside, the jury consented to the following statement of violation:
When taking classes at Haverford, students “must follow a Professor’s instructions as to the completion of the test”. Tai violated the Honor Code by consulting her textbook during a closed-book exam.

Circumstantial Portion:

Tai informed the jury that the concept of self-scheduled exams was new to her. Growing up in her home country she never had self-scheduled exams; all of her tests were proctored by her teachers. For take-home assignments, she could not talk to any other classmates, but she could do research and use her books and notes. Tai thought that things were the same here. Tai also told the jury how little she knew about the Honor Code. There was one formal meeting about the Honor Code at the beginning of the year during Customs Week and since then there had been very little talk about it. Unfortunately for Tai, she missed most of the meeting about the Honor Code during Customs Week because her flight got in late.

When her professor was informed of this she suggested that Tai read the Honor Code in order to educate herself. Tai felt that this was a great idea and began reading the Honor Code as well as abstracts. Tai felt that she was educating herself on the Code and was learning a lot more information than was ever given to her and she was excited about continuing her education on the Honor Code. Tai informed the jury that she learned a lot from her experience and continued to apologize making it clear that she was very remorseful. Tai informed the jury that she would not make the same mistake that she had again and that she would make sure to read instructions and talk to her professors if she was unclear about something.

For her tentative resolutions, Tai suggested the following:

Tai will do more research on Haverford’s Honor Code by talking to her Dean, her Customs Group, and her friends.

In the future, she will be very careful when taking tests to understand the directions.

Tai realizes that students need to communicate with other students to ensure that they understand and are living under the Code.

Tai will write a letter about her experience, in an attempt to educate other freshmen.

Deliberations:

There was a lot of discussion on how to handle situations involving Bryn Mawr students. It was clear that the Code had not been well explained to Tai. Due to a failure in education, Tai was confused on what it meant to uphold the Honor Code, which is why she ended up breaking it. After discussion, the jury came to the conclusion that it would not be out of its place to suggest to Honor Board some resolutions to make them aware of the situation and assist them in better preparing their students as to prevent future misunderstandings. All of the jury members felt that this could be done via some sort of pamphlet, flyer, or letter that would be made available to Honor Board.
The jury asked whether Tai was held accountable for her actions. After discussing the professor’s deduction of points from Tai’s exam, the jurors came to the consensus that Tai was being held accountable for all of her actions.

The jury then turned back to the issue of Bryn Mawr’s lack of education on Haverford’s Honor Code. The jury was worried that they would be overstepping their bounds by suggesting that Bryn Mawr update their Honor Code orientation. After further deliberations it became clear that when a Bryn Mawr student breaks the Honor Code, it falls under the jurisdiction of the Haverford Honor Council. The jury addressed this by discussing the possibility of Honor Council creating a flyer to present to Honor Board with the hope that the flyer would be spread around campus.

The jury felt that there should both be a letter written by Tai as well as some sort of flyer to be given to Honor Board for it to distribute. The letter written by Tai would not be an apology because it was clear that she was very remorseful and took full responsibility for her actions. Instead the jury came to the consensus that the letter would be one that all freshmen at Bryn Mawr should receive as a tool to help educate them on the Honor Code. The jury deliberated for a bit about whether the letter should simply be given to international freshmen but that idea was quickly rejected. The jury felt that it would be important for all freshmen to have something that they could refer back to if they felt confused about the Honor Code and the letter would allow them to do so.

The jury came to the conclusion that Honor Council should be responsible for making a flashy and concise flyer, in hopes that Honor Board would post it around Bryn Mawr’s campus during shopping weeks to remind students of the Honor Code.

The jury discussed the value of talking with an international dean at Bryn Mawr. The jury felt that it would be important to talk to the international dean in order to inform her of the situation. It should be made clear that international students who arrive late need to be filled in on what they missed during Customs Week.

In the end, all jury members consented to six resolutions, with no one standing outside.

**Tentative Resolutions:**

1. *We support Professor Geist’s decisions regarding the academic consequences of Tai’s violation.*
2. *By proactively communicating with her Professor prior to the trial, we feel that Tai had restored her relationship with her Professor.*
3. *Tai will write an informational letter, not exceeding a page in length, with the purpose of sharing her experience and providing advice to Bryn Mawr students taking classes at Haverford.*
4. *Honor Council will recommend to Honor Board that Tai’s letter be distributed at Bryn Mawr.*
5. Honor Council will create a concise flyer regarding the Haverford Honor Code and will recommend that Honor Board post the flyer around Bryn Mawr’s campus during shopping weeks.

6. Honor Council will talk to the Bryn Mawr International Dean of Students regarding the education of international students concerning both schools’ Honor Codes.

Presentation of Resolutions:

The jury met again and went over the tentative resolutions and everyone again agreed to them. The jury then went over the tentative resolutions with Tai and she felt that they were fitting to her violation.

Tai felt that the resolutions would allow her to educate herself and the Bryn Mawr community more on the Honor Code and she felt that the trust with her professor would be restored. Tai again apologized for violating the Code and she assured the jury that she would do everything in her power to make sure that it did not happen again.

Final Deliberations:

Because Tai had no problems with the tentative resolutions and felt that they were appropriate for her violation, the jury consented to make the tentative resolutions final.

Final Resolutions:

1. We support Professor Geist’s decisions regarding the academic consequences of Tai’s violation.

2. By proactively communicating with her Professor prior to the trial, we feel that Tai had restored her relationship with her Professor.

3. Tai will write an informational letter, not exceeding a page in length, with the purpose of sharing her experience and providing advice to Bryn Mawr students taking classes at Haverford.

4. Honor Council will recommend to Honor Board that Tai’s letter be distributed at Bryn Mawr.

5. Honor Council will create a concise flyer regarding the Haverford Honor Code and will recommend that Honor Board post the flyer around Bryn Mawr’s campus during shopping weeks.

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