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Introduction:

Thomas the Tank Engine was part of a New Tank Engine Orientation Team with Percy the Small Engine and James the Red Engine. During New Tank Engine Training Week, Thomas revealed that he had occasionally gone over the time limit when taking take-home exams the previous year. He did not disclose how often he had done this or how much extra time he had taken. However, Thomas did acknowledge that those were bad decisions and vowed never to repeat them. Percy talked to Thomas about it again and was concerned that his actions were a violation of the Honor Code. Still concerned, Percy talked to James about it a few weeks later, and they decided to confront Thomas about what he had revealed. Even though Thomas felt that he had dealt with the issues personally, the parties agreed to submit statements to Honor Council. Honor Council consented to send the matter to an academic trial, which was chaired by another member of Honor Council because the Co-chairs had conflicts of interest.

Fact-finding:

All three parties were present for the fact-finding portion.

Thomas the Tank Engine’s Statement:

Thomas’s statement explained that over the course of his freshman year, he did not time himself on multiple take-home exams. The first such exam was a final on Train Signaling Technique in which students had to write several essays in a limited amount of time. Thomas stated that when he took the exam, he hand wrote the essays, as that was something he had done in high school. He wrote quickly, but needed to take some extra time to finish the last essay, and estimated that the excess time totaled ten minutes. Then, he realized that the conductor had indicated a preference for typed exams, so he typed them, exceeded the time limit for turning in finals, and had to email the exam with an explanation as to the lateness.

The next semester, he took a midterm exam for his Theory of Transcontinental Railroads class and chose to type it. In class, the conductor had said that the exam “should” take a certain amount of time, and had changed his mind about the amount of time allowed, giving the
impression that the time given was not a firm amount. When taking the exam, Thomas went through every question thoroughly, never looking at the clock. He estimated that he went about a half an hour over the time limit. Then, he proceeded to spell-check and copy-edit it before printing it. The same thing happened on the final exam for Theory of Transcontinental Railroads, and he stated that he might have exceeded those time restraints by half an hour to an hour.

Additionally, Thomas stated that he had taken other exams on Train Station Architecture, which came very easily to him. In these instances, he did not time himself, but believes he never exceeded the time limit.

Percy the Small Engine’s Statement:

Percy said that his friend Thomas confessed during New Tank Engine Training Week to violating time constraints on take-home tests throughout his freshman year. Thomas mentioned this piece of information as a learning experience while talking about his experiences freshman year. He explained that cheating was certainly a temptation, but that most approach time limits very strictly. Thomas was adamant that he had “worked through” this issue and punished himself enough, promising never to do it again.

James the Red Engine’s Statement:

James was also present when Thomas talked about taking extra time on the exams. James did nothing at the time because he figured the violations were minor, and because he got caught up in the craziness of New Tank Engine Training Week. Later, Percy approached James, and revealed that he had talked to Thomas about what he had said during New Tank Engine Training Week, a conversation which gave Percy the impression that the violations had been repeated and significant and merited a confrontation.

In the fact-finding portion of the trial, the parties involved re-capped the circumstances that they had outlined in their statements. The jury had questions about the way Thomas had handled filling out the coversheets on the exams. Thomas explained that he had filled in a block of time that corresponded to the time limit for the exams. The jury also had questions about the time management issues Thomas had mentioned in his statement, and whether he had had trouble with meeting deadlines on other class assignments. Thomas replied that papers had been a problem for him, and he had often turned them in late or asked for extensions. When asked why, he said that he often procrastinated, but that he was also very thorough about his papers and was not willing to turn them in until he was satisfied with them. He said that he had been better about getting his assignments in on time this year.

The confronted and confronting parties left, and the jury came to a statement of violation.

Statement of Violation:

The jury consented on three clauses in the statement of violation:
1. In taking extra time on 3 exams, Thomas the Tank Engine violated section 1.04 [a] of the Honor Code. “…students should not exceed the time limitations specified by the professor.”

2. By misrepresenting the time taken on these 3 exams on the coversheet and signing his name to certify that the times were factual, Thomas the Tank Engine violated the Honor Code.

3. In addition, by consistently failing to time himself during Spring semester and failing to ask for clarification in certain instances, Thomas the Tank Engine violated section 1.04 [a] of the Honor Code. “We must follow a professor’s instructions as to the completion of tests, quizzes, homework, and laboratory reports, and must ask clarification if the instructions are not clear.”

Circumstantial:

The jury re-convened two days later for the circumstantial portion of the trial. The confronting parties elected not to be present.

The chair asked Thomas to begin by discussing the circumstances that he felt were most relevant to the incident. Thomas talked about the ambiguity he perceived around time limits on in-class versus take-home exams, since conductors often allow students extra time to finish up an exam in class. Thomas also felt that the emphasis of discussions about the Honor Code seemed to be on its social portion, while the academic portion was skipped over as self-explanatory.

Thomas said that it got easier to take extra time on the exams after the first instance, on the Train Signaling exam. He explained that he did not feel guilty about it at the time. He only felt numbed. Thomas elaborated on the personal issues with time management that he had discussed in his statement. He explained that time was a point of stress for him, and that ignoring time was a way to eliminate this stress. He did not realize how seriously students at Haverford abide by time limits; he had never heard timed tests discussed when talking about the Honor Code, and did not think that this was the kind of issue that Honor Council would deal with.

Thomas also expressed that he knew the material, and that his trouble with time often came from wanting to express the full extent of what he knew. When asked whether he regretted his admission and subsequently being brought to Honor Council, he replied that he was grateful for the reflection that the process had provided, and that his friendship with Percy had become even stronger. He was glad to get the situation off of his chest, and felt that the experience had given him a better understanding of the Honor Code. He was also glad that that the situation had caused him to seek therapy.

Thomas the Tank Engine suggested the following resolutions to Honor Council:

Thomas’s proposed resolutions

1. Never take take-home exams in his room.
2. Handwrite as much as possible.
3. Continue his therapy.
4. Have a discussion with his freshmen.
5. Write a letter to the community, but a shorter one than his statement to Council.
6. Talk to the conductors,
   o Tell them about the situation and ask them what they want him to do about it.
   o Tell them about the Honor Council trial.
   o Ask to retake the Theory of Transcontinental Railroads exams again in the Spring, especially since the conductor might be Thomas’s future advisor.

The chair then read Percy’s proposed resolutions aloud:
1. Have Thomas re-take the three exams on which he violated time constraints, for less than the original amount of credit.
2. Have Thomas write a letter to the community about how he violated time constraints on tests.
3. Have Thomas take all future tests in public spaces.
4. Have Thomas talk to other conductors about how he did not follow exam times particularly closely.

James did not have any proposed resolutions, but felt that the course of action should be mainly at the discretion of the conductor.

**Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury began deliberations immediately following the circumstantial portion, but due to scheduling conflicts did not finish discussing tentative resolutions until it met again nearly two weeks later.

The jury first discussed a resolution asking Thomas to talk with the conductors on whose examinations he had taken extra time. Some jury members felt that the discussion should be mediated by an Honor Council member or member of the jury to help ensure that the conductor understood the circumstances and acted in a way that seemed fair to both parties. Other jury members thought that because taking extra time was Thomas’s mistake, restoring the breach of trust by talking with the conductor was a hurdle that he needed to jump himself. It was finally decided that Thomas was the best barometer of his relationship with the conductors, and that the choice of whether to have an Honor Council member accompany him would be his. The jury wanted to specify a time period by which these discussions had to be held, and to have Thomas report back to the Honor Council Co-chairs about how the discussion had gone.

The jury discussed whether it should recommend that Thomas retake the exams, and whether this should be for a smaller amount of credit or for the same amount of credit. The jury was concerned about the logistics of retaking the exams and causing extra work for the conductor. It ultimately came to consensus to recommend that Thomas retake the exams, but to leave the amount of credit up to the conductors.
Everyone on the jury agreed that Thomas should write a letter to the community to help restore the breach of trust.

The jury discussed at length whether to include Thomas’s proposed resolution that he continue therapy. Many jurors were uncomfortable mandating that he continue going to therapy. However, many jurors thought that going to therapy had so far helped Thomas effectively deal with the issue, and had addressed the root of the problem of time management. They pointed out that Thomas seemed to think that going to therapy was helping to restore him to the community. The jury decided to express support for Thomas’s decision to address the problem through therapy without mandating that he continue receiving therapy.

The jury discussed Thomas’s proposal that he be required to take exams outside of his room, and decided that this was not something that was the jury’s business to decide for him. The same was decided about hand writing the exams. The jury felt that trusting Thomas fully was an important part of restoring him to the community.

The jury discussed Thomas’s proposed resolution to have a discussion with his freshmen. The jury decided that it could not make this a resolution, as it would require him to break confidentiality.

The jury consented on the following tentative resolutions:

1. Upon receipt of the resolutions, Thomas will contact the conductors in question (Sir Topham Hatt and the Conductor) within a week to set up a meeting at their earliest convenience. Thomas will discuss the respective exams on which he took extra time and inform the conductors that this issue has been brought to an academic trial. Thomas has the option of having the trial chair accompany him to these meetings, though this need not be a uniform decision. After these meetings have concluded, Thomas will contact the Honor Council Co-Chairs to update them as to the meetings with the conductors.

2. The jury recommends that Thomas be required to retake the three exams for an amount of credit at the discretion of the conductor.

3. Thomas will write a letter to the community.

4. We support Thomas’s proposed resolution to continue therapy as it has been restorative for him thus far.

The jurors consented on the above tentative resolutions with no one standing outside of consensus. They were instructed not to discuss the tentative resolutions with each other before the next meeting to allow each person to decide for him or herself whether the resolutions felt right.

Presentation of Tentative Resolutions:
The jury met 24 hours later. The chair read aloud the resolutions from the last meeting, and the jury felt that these resolutions were still appropriate. The chair had emailed the tentative resolutions to the confronted and confronting parties after the last meeting. Thomas then joined the jury. The jury explained its reasoning behind the tentative resolutions, and why it did not include some of his proposed resolutions. Thomas did not have a problem with any of the tentative resolutions.

**Final Resolutions:**

After Thomas left, the jury consented for a final time on the resolutions with no one standing outside of consensus. The final resolutions were as follows:

1. **Upon receipt of the resolutions, Thomas will contact the conductors in question (Sir Topham Hatt and the Conductor) within a week to set up a meeting at their earliest convenience.** Thomas will discuss the respective exams on which he took extra time and inform the conductors that this issue has been brought to an academic trial. Thomas has the option of having the trial chair accompany him to these meetings, though this need not be a uniform decision. After these meetings have concluded, Thomas will contact the Honor Council Co-Chairs to update them as to the meetings with the conductors.

2. **The jury recommends that Thomas be required to retake the three exams for an amount of credit at the discretion of the conductor.**

3. **Thomas will write a letter to the community.**

4. **We support Thomas's proposed resolution to continue therapy as it has been restorative for him thus far.**

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Is it acceptable for professors to allow extra time on in-class exams while expecting take-homes to be timed exactly?
2. Is the social Honor Code emphasized more than the academic Honor Code? What is the significance of this?
3. Because students can’t discuss form, content, or degree of difficulty of any exam, take-home exams are rarely talked about at all, even just the process of taking them. Is this a problem? How can we encourage understanding?
I'm sorry. I'm sorry for what I did, for the breach of trust with my professors, classmates, friends, and the community. But rather than rehash what you've already read in the abstract, I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know what I've learned from this long process.

When I first signed my name to the Honor Code upon matriculation, I did not all of a sudden absorb the principles on the paper. I needed something drastic to force me to face my own moral code and the effect of my actions on others. I now see the Code not as a list of rules, but as a suggestion of how to live one's life as truthfully as possible. Many people have a strong sense of personal integrity before entering Haverford, but others, like me, might need a little assistance in moral development to become a full member of the community. I'm glad there are people at Haverford like Percy and James who truly live the Code, and that I can now consider myself one of them. I am awed at Percy’s strength, and feel blessed to have a friend who always looks out for my best interests.

I am grateful that the confrontation and following trial led me to seek therapy for the first real time, which forced me to face some long-standing issues and gave me the determination to change destructive habits beyond those concerned with the trial. The self-control I now display in testing procedures has gradually seeped into other aspects of my life. I highly recommend Psych Services to anyone in any sort of emotional or psychological distress, or to anyone who is just looking for someone to listen and help sort out the jumble of thoughts or concerns in your head.

I have read a lot about other colleges’ honor systems (or lack thereof), which often state that only in an ideal world could administrators put faith in a student body to adhere strictly to an honor code, and that it is hence silly to hold students to that unrealistic standard. But at Haverford we actually do have such a system in place. Sure it may not be completely ideal without occasional mistakes, but in general it is an unbelievable amount of trust professors give us. I understand how much professors rely on the honesty of their students and how much freedom that gives them to focus on the process of learning. If even one student threatens that sense of trust, it might infect a professor’s outlook for his or her entire class. For the honor system to work, the community must be made up of individuals who hold themselves to the highest level of integrity. It is a precious environment we have built here—one that we will only experience at this moment in our lives. I will miss it when I graduate, but while I'm still here I want to do everything I can to play my part in contributing to its existence and continued success. There was an inconsistency in my proclaimed value system and the hypocrisy of my lack of honesty freshman year. I now value the importance of being a timely person and doing my part to stick to both the written Honor Code and also my internal code of honor and integrity, at Haverford and in my professional career beyond.

I suggest that everyone, particularly freshmen, deeply think about what the Code is to you and if you actually embody it. If you’ve ever felt the temptation to violate the Code, I urge you to take a step back and examine the causes and perhaps deeper issues that led to this temptation before it has time to grow into something more difficult to suppress.

My advice to those of you reading who have done something against the Honor Code is to not be afraid to confess. Honor Council is not as scary as it seems. It is a group of your peers who, like everyone else at Haverford, really care about the individual and do everything they can to make sure they understand all sides of your story. The questioning during the trial was thorough and expressed a genuine desire to understand my point of view. I left every trial session feeling lighter, not just from the relief of it being over, but from the act of deep reflection to an
audience eager to listen and understand. They asked questions that went beyond the direct issues of the trial, and made me think about and work towards stopping other bad habits. Whenever I see members of the jury, I can't help but feel a sense of warmth and gratitude for their help in shaping an essential part of the person I am today.

One of the most important lessons I have taken from this experience is the value of communicating with professors. Like the jury and the rest of the community, professors are understanding and care about the well-being of their students. As I suggested to Sir Topham Hatt and the Conductor, I believe all professors should clarify what their time limits truly mean. (e.g. Do bathroom breaks count as part of the allotted time? Can you finish your last thought or last question once the time has run out? Is there hypocrisy between in-class and take-home exam extra time?) Since there is no standardized policy for these gray areas (though perhaps there should be), I suggest that all professors tell their classes their personal expectations regarding timing.

The process started last summer; it peaked emotionally in the fall. It dragged on through the winter, and found resolution in the spring. By completing and sending this letter, the official process finally comes to an end. But the lessons have become a part of me and will live on. I am sorry for what I did freshman year, but I am grateful for how dealing with it has changed me. I want to thank my friends for being patient and understanding in all the moments I wanted to tell them what was going on but was afraid to break confidentiality. Thank you Percy and James; thank you Honor Council; thank you jury; and thank you Haverford for being a place where I can grow from my mistakes.

Sincerely,

Thomas