Honor Council Chairperson's Report of an Academic Trial

A jury was convened at 1:00 PM on Dec. 20, 1981 to discuss the academic violation of \( X \), a friend of \( X \), participated in the discussion. \( X \) described the violation in his Astronomy 101 class for the jury, with minor comments from the Honor Council Chairperson. The exam in question was the second three-hour take home exam for the course. It was due Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving. A friend and fellow classmate gave \( X \) his exam on the Sunday before the exam was due and asked \( X \) to hand it in for him since the friend was leaving campus a few days before Wednesday. \( X \) took the exam and promised to hand it in. \( X \) put off the taking of his own exam until Wednesday when he planned to take it early in the morning. On Wednesday morning he tried to take the exam, he started late and found it more challenging than he had expected. At this point he opened his friend's exam and copied, nearly verbatim, his friend's answers in time to hand the exam in at the end of the Wednesday class period, the deadline for the handing in of the exam. (He remarked at this point that he had been taking the course pass/fail and was in no danger of failing). "Basically" \( X \) said "I folded under pressure." In grading the exam Prof. Keith Despain noticed the similarity between the exams of Tom and his friend. On the Wednesday of the week (the last week of classes) Keith talked with \( X \) 's friend telling him he had questions about the exams. The friend told \( X \) who then talked to an Honor Council member that night and claimed he had not done anything wrong. He claimed he had taken his exam early, before his friend. On Thursday \( X \) repeated the story to the Honor Council Chairperson and again to the Chairperson in the presence of Prof. Despain. Prof. Despain did not find the explanation satisfactory since the exams were so closely related. Later that evening \( X \) admitted to the professor, his dean, and the Honor Council Chairperson, in separate telephone calls, that he had copied the exam on Wednesday morning.

Having established that a violation occurred the jury then proceeded to question \( X \) about the conditions under which it occurred. Questioning revealed that \( X \) was taking the course pass/fail and that had caused him to assume a very lackadaisical
attitude toward the finishing of this exam. Upon reflection stated he should either have done the exam earlier or would have gone to Bruce Partridge, one of the professors for the course, and told him that his exam was going to be late. He said he had had lots of experience with take home exams and the discipline needed to take them. He just broke under pressure. He also stated he had had no pressing work in other courses. He was in no danger of failing this class. He admitted that he did not think about how his actions had violated the code until the subject had been raised by Keith. His story about not cheating was basically a panic-reaction to the trouble he was in. He cited his obvious copying as a sign that the action was not pre-meditated. He only maintained his story for about 12 hours until he decided to tell the truth. He said lying to his friends and professors was something he was not comfortable with. He talked the matter over with Prof. Partridge, who is also a personal friend, and decided to drop the story.

At this point spoke about some pressures may have had from home. Henry stated he believed that was under not crushing pressure but at least was expected by his parents very much to achieve. His father is a lawyer, shares his interest in law and hence law-school, and it is important for parents that he do well.

confirmed this but pointed out that the pressure was more or less a "background" kind of thing, not something which dominated the relationship between and his parents. When asked what role he saw Haverford as having in his life and education he replied he had come to Haverford because he liked the atmosphere, because it was a good school academically and would provide him with the education he needed to get into a prestigious law school, and that it was a place he appreciated for itself, not necessarily because it was a good stepping stone to law school.

He said the code was pretty much parallel to the way he had been brought up and it reinforced many of the values of honesty he had been taught to value. He admitted that he had not thought much about his violation over Thanksgiving break and was not sure when and if he would have reported himself had the violation not occurred. He stated that he had now asked himself a number of important questions and that he and Prof. Partridge had talked about many of the code-related issues recently. At
this point the jury felt that it had enough information about the conditions under which the violation had occurred. The Honor Council Chairperson asked the jury if it felt it had enough information: for example, "would the jury like to speak with Prof. Partridge? Someone other than Henry who knew?" The jury replied in the negative to both questions.

The jury then turned to the matter of the resolution of the case. This part of the discussion was started by a jury member who asked Tom what he thought would be a good resolution. He said he felt a flunking of the course or a no credit would be appropriate.

Then the discussion turned to the matter of what the jury saw as its function. Most members agreed that the well-being of Tom was their first consideration and that consideration for the community was second. One member pointed out that the two concepts were not diametrically opposed. Secondly they agreed that the code was not a punitive document so that a resolution should be in terms of what is good for the individual. The Chairperson pointed out that the jury, even though each case is handled separately, also sets the standards for the community in its resolutions.

was asked what he thought about being asked to take time off. replied that he thought taking time off would not make a difference in the consideration of what he had done. He stated he felt that it would be better if he examined his actions in the atmosphere of the code, not removed from it. A member of the jury who had taken time off pointed out that he had found it very helpful in determining his expectations of his education but admitted that Tom seemed to have a clear idea of the goals he had for his education.

At this point the Honor Council Chairperson suggested that take an unspecified amount of time off. He said he felt that this was not punitive but allowed Tom to do a number of things. First, had stated that he did not think about his action in terms of the code until the violation had been spotted. Did the jury wish to say it was okay to have someone who allowed desire for academic achievement to outweigh consideration of his actions under the code stay in the community? The time would allow set his own priorities. Secondly, had really committed two
violations: the copying of the exam and the lying about it afterwards. Also \( \times \) had expressed a desire to settle the matter while still maintaining his false story. Asking \( \times \) to take time off would show that the presence in the community of someone who cheated and then lied about it was not something that the jury saw as beneficial to the community.

Every other member of the jury saw this as being too harsh. Two members, who did not know \( \times \) personally, had seen him in class and the computer room helping people. They felt that \( \times \) was someone who, except for this violation, was helpful to the community. A third stated that he felt \( \times \) had been significantly affected by the trial. The lie had been briefly maintained (for a day) and was a panic-reaction to the situation. Once he had given it thought \( \times \) had told the truth and seemed to have thought about his actions since then.

The Chairperson then asked the jury what kind of violation would call for asking a person to leave the community? An Honor Council member said that it would take a series of violations, evidence of a repeated lack of concern about the code. Most jury members concurred and added that this was not such a case. The Chairperson asked was not \( \times \)'s violation, his admitted lack of concern about the violation until confronted and his lying once confronted such a series? Most jury members replied that it was not such a case. Most said that they saw the whole case as one affair not a protracted series.

The Chairperson then asked what about the standards that the jury would like to set in terms of what is expected of each student in the community? A senior jury member stated that he felt separation was a punitive matter. He also stated that the individual was more important than the community. Another jury member concurred saying that he felt that students do not look at Honor Council cases before cheating and take a calculated risk. An Honor Council member pointed out that most of the academic cases he had seen were the result of panic, not leniency in past Honor Council resolutions. The Chairperson stated that there was still value in setting and describing expectations of acceptable behavior even if people did not base their decisions to cheat on Honor Council resolutions. Most members of the jury said that in \( \times \)'s case they felt secure that \( \times \) should not be asked to leave the community just for "standards" or "expectations."
Other cases may warrant such action but this was a case in which the consideration of the individual outweighed the community. The Chairperson was the only member of the jury to disagree with this philosophy, consequently he withdrew from participation in the consensus, believing that the jury's stand was well reasoned but not the same as his own. A lengthy discussion of the above issue was thus ended.

The jury then turned to the non-separation options open to them. Those suggested were: failure on the exam, failure in the course or no-credit in the course. Many members of the jury felt that a no-credit should be given. Proponents of the exam failure pointed out that it was obvious × should receive a failing on the exam, but that it was a one time occurrence. They felt × had gone through much self-examination and, through his discussions with Prof. Partridge, had shown he was seeking help outside of himself. A failure in the course was viewed as punitive, something which the jury had agreed was not appropriate.

Proponents of the no-credit pointed out that what × had done was serious but that failing the exam was punitive. A no-credit would show that the jury felt that ×'s action should in no way be condoned. In effect the no-credit would invalidate ×'s efforts throughout the semester which would serve as a constructive reminder of the seriousness of the violation. A failure in the course would affect his GPA and, in effect, deflate his performance in other courses in which he had not cheated. The no-credit would allow × to put the matter behind him and concentrate on doing his best in the future. The no-credit, the invalidation of a semester's work, would serve as a clear enough message to any would-be cheaters. The chance that a person would cheat just to get a course dropped, they felt, was slight.

After a brief discussion the other members of the jury agreed to the no-credit option. Therefore:

THE JURY RECOMMENDS; with one abstention from consensus, that × receive a no-credit for his Astronomy 101 course. Also, since × had done most of the work for the course, the jury recommends that × be barred from taking the course again. The jury also encouraged × to continue his discussions with Prof. Partridge and other.