Franklin

The trial began with the Chairperson reading excerpts from the Honor Code. A freshman named Franklin had "turned himself in" because of a possible violation on a take-home Physics exam.

Franklin began by explaining that the exam had a three and one half-hour time limit. However, afterwards there was unlimited time to recopy the exam. Franklin only took three hours to take the exam. He did not begin copying it over until 3 and 1/2 hours had elapsed. While he was copying over the exam, he noticed that he had mistakenly written "acceleration" instead of "velocity". He switched the terms and finished copying the test.

The professor was not able to attend the trial. The Chairperson stated that the professor had said that the switch in terms would not have changed Franklin's grade since the answer was wrong anyway.

This course included three of these exams over the course of the semester. Each student was allowed to drop one question from each exam. The jury also discussed the significance of the change: in the context of the question, "acceleration" was obviously wrong and written in haste. "Velocity" appeared to be the more logical answer.

Franklin admitted changing the words and that a violation had occurred. The Chairperson said that the professor had agreed that "technically" it was a violation. At this point, the jury decided to end the factual portion of the trial. Franklin left the room and the jury reached consensus that a violation had occurred.

The circumstantial portion of the trial began. Franklin discussed the thought process which caused him to turn himself in. The first incident which had caused him to reconsider his actions was the re-signing of the Honor Code card after Plenary. He said that he had decided that "technical errors" don't exist under the Honor Code, that students can't "break or bend the rules of an exam." He then revealed to the jury that another, earlier incident had clouded his view of the Honor Code. This "vision clouding" had occurred when he saw a student cheating on an exam. Franklin spoke to the professor, but the professor told him that the student was only hurting himself.

The jury then discussed the act of changing the word. A juror asked "Did he hesitate?" He replied "yes, just for a split second." Franklin had thought about the possible violation when he signed the exam but decided, as the professor had told him, that he was only cheating himself. When he changed the answer, he said he simply thought "you imbecile, you know that's wrong." Franklin had made the same mistake before and didn't want the
Physics professor to think he still didn't know the correct use of these terms. The jury then decided that it knew enough about the circumstances surrounding the violation.

The resolution portion began by asking Franklin for an appropriate resolution. He felt strongly that there should be no grade change because he had "turned himself in." He thought that by "turning himself in" he had kept the breach of the Honor Code from becoming complete. He wanted to write a letter to the community explaining his action. Franklin then left the room while the jurors discussed their feelings.

The first consideration was whether or not this resolution reflected the standards of the community. On the one hand, accepting it might seem to imply that students who turned themselves in would get off "easy." On the other hand, advocating grade change implied that honesty and good will should be treated with harshness.

The jurors were able to tentatively agree that Franklin's proposal of a letter to the community was appropriate along with an additional responsibility to speak with the professor about the rules. The jury recommended that Franklin help with next year's orientation for freshmen as well. The following day the discussion returned to an evaluation of the jurors' responsibility to the community as well as to the individual. One member of the jury felt strongly that the changing of the answer was analogous to stealing a small sum of money, therefore restoration was still very important. The juror felt that the grade should be changed. However, the rest of the jury did not feel that a grade change was appropriate. The dissenting juror agreed to stand outside of consensus. The final resolution was that Franklin would write a letter to the community discussing his case; write another letter to Honor Council as to why he didn't want a grade change; assist with the Honor Code retreat planned for sometime this year; and review exam rules with his Physics professor.