LENNY
Honor Council Abstract - Spring '95

Introduction:
Lenny contacted the chair of Honor Council concerning work he had done for two different courses. He explained that he had opened his book on a closed book exam and that he had copied two papers and presented them as his own. Honor Council reached consensus that a trial was necessary.

Fact Finding:
The jury met with Lenny to hear his account of what had happened. Lenny and Lenny's support person were present.
Lenny began by explaining the facts of the two different occasions. He stated that he had been granted an extension on his linguistics exam and had opened the book during the closed book exam. He then explained that during the next semester, he had downloaded two papers from the server, altered them slightly, and presented them as his own for a Political Science class. He stated that he had used "find" to locate the topics in temporary storage and had downloaded an entire folder that was pertinent to his topic. He then presented the papers as his own. Lenny, and his support person, then left, only to be called in for one final question concerning the extension. The jury asked why Lenny had received the extension. Lenny explained that he had personal problems which had forced him to leave in the middle of finals period. Lenny left once again and the jury began its deliberations.

Jury Deliberations:
The jury was given copies of the original papers and copies of Lenny's paper. After realizing that the majority of Lenny's paper had been copied word for word from the original, the jury quickly reached consensus on the following statements of violation:

2. Lenny violated the Honor Code, on two separate occasions, by plagiarizing the majority of another student's paper for his Political Science course.

Circumstantial
Lenny and his support person returned. The professors of the classes involved, Professor Carmine and Professor Laverne, wrote statements for the jury explaining their reaction to the violations.
Lenny began by explaining his family situation. He told the jury that there had been a number of family problems that had forced him to go home in the middle of finals period. With the consent of his dean and Professor Carmine, his linguistics professor, he returned at a later point and took his linguistics final. Lenny said that while he was home, he had a lot of responsibilities and had been unable to study for the exam. When he
returned to take the exam, he did as many problems as he could and finally opened his book to look up pertinent definitions. He then turned in the exam, which was worth 50% of his grade.

Lenny then went on to the circumstances surrounding the second violation. He had been put on academic probation for poor performance in an unrelated class the past semester and was under a lot of academic and family pressure. Professor Laverne, his Political Science professor, had assigned a paper with a relatively open topic, that was worth 25% of his grade. This semester, in addition to his Political Science class, he was taking a political theory course. He was failing the theory course and was consequently spending more time on that class than the others. Therefore, he had run out of time on his Political Science paper and was unable to ask for an extension because he was on academic probation. He decided to use “find” on a MAC computer and located the topic “Political Science” saved in temporary storage. He then downloaded the folder onto his disk. He explained that he didn’t have enough time to read through all of the different papers and decide which to use, and therefore had copied the entire folder. Later, he read through the papers and chose one of the papers to turn in as his own.

When the second paper was due, he attempted to work on it for some time, but was once again confronted with lack of time and turned in another paper from the folder. One juror asked if the fact that he had the folder containing the other paper affected his decision to plagiarize once more and he said that it hadn’t; that he had made an honest attempt to write the paper and at the last minute decided to use the folder.

Lenny mentioned that he had recently become more actively involved in his religion and had spoken to a friend, outside of the Bi-co community, about the violation. His friend, a member of his religious group, had convinced him to contact Honor Council and his professors.

Lenny first spoke to Professor Carmine. Professor Carmine felt that Lenny’s admission of his actions took an incredible amount of courage and outweighed the cheating itself. Prof. Carmine also mentioned that Lenny had only done marginally better on the final exam than on the other exams and therefore felt that he should not fail the class.

Lenny then contacted Professor Laverne. Professor Laverne was shocked and angry at Lenny’s confession. She had also been helping Lenny in his Political Theory course and felt that there had been a serious breach of trust. Professor Laverne expressed her disillusionment with Lenny’s performance in her statement to the jury. She stated that “writing and rewriting papers is the primary mechanism in the course. To avoid this task is to choose intellectual weakness over strength.” She felt especially hurt because the focus in her class had been to teach the students to think autonomously and Lenny, in her opinion, had violated this task. Likewise, she was disillusioned because the plagiarism in her class had not been an isolated incident. Professor Laverne felt that Lenny, therefore, should fail the class.
Lenny commented on Professor Laverne’s reaction. Although Lenny understood the professor’s anger, Lenny felt that he saw the class in more practical terms. Because he was on academic probation, he felt the pressure of doing well above the pressure of “learning” and internalizing the material. Lenny also stated that the Political Science class discussions had been very idealistic and that he had felt very isolated from the rest of the class. He had become more cynical about the ideals expressed at Haverford and attributed this partially to his family and economic background. Lenny was responsible for his tuition and was one of the first members of his family to go to college. He felt that many students did not understand his socio-economic background and therefore he felt alienated from members of the community. Although he understood Professor Laverne’s point, due to his financial and academic responsibilities to his family and at Haverford, he was unable to live up to her expectations. He expressed regret and stated that he wasn’t at any point trying to justify his actions, only explain them in light of his circumstances. He said that at the time of the incidents, he had not thought about how his actions would affect his relationship with the professor, but after turning in the papers, he realized that he had damaged his relationship with her. Lenny felt that he should fail the classes and said that he had resolved himself to being separated. He added that separation could possibly also be beneficial and allow him time to put his life into order. At this point, Lenny left and the jury began its discussion.

Deliberations

The members of the jury expressed admiration for Lenny’s continuing honesty and willingness to account for his actions. The jury began talking about possible resolutions, keeping in mind the goals of resolutions:

1) Education- of the individual and the community
2) Repairing the breach of trust- between the individuals directly involved and the individual and the community
3) Accountability

Most of the jury members felt that Lenny should fail his linguistics exam, despite Professor Carmine’s recommendation, because he had cheated on the final exam, a culmination of all the material taught in the class. One jury member stated that if Lenny were not to fail, it would not be fair to students who had failed the final exam and hadn’t cheated on the final. Some students were concerned that by failing Lenny in the class, the jury was not taking into account his circumstances. Ultimately, the jury reached consensus that there were other ways to take into account his circumstances and Lenny should fail the linguistics class.

As for the Political Science papers, the jury felt that the obvious acts of plagiarism warranted failure of the Political Science class, as well as separation. According to the Honor Code, "a gross act of plagiarism...will
normally result in separation from the community." Therefore, the jury would have to find unusual circumstances for Lenny not to be separated. The question of the length of the separation came up, with some jury members anxious that Lenny not lose touch with the community and should therefore be separated only for a semester, while others felt that because there were so many violations, less than a year would be inadequate. After debating this point, the jury felt that because Lenny had come forward and was beginning to take responsibility for his actions, he should only be separated for a semester. Ultimately, the jury felt that normally the gravity of the violations would result in a year of separation, but Lenny's thought on the subject, as well as his family circumstances seemed to warrant only a semester of separation.

As for Lenny's relationship with Professor Laverne, jurors stated that Lenny may be better able to communicate his circumstances and emotions to Professor Laverne in written form. Jurors also felt that Lenny should address the classism he felt in the community. One juror suggested that he write a letter to the community, explaining his reflections on the code as well as his views on the economic diversity at Haverford. Another juror suggested that Lenny rewrite his Political Science paper, including his thoughts on the Honor Code. The jury felt that by resubmitting his paper and working on the paper with Professor Laverne, he would be taking responsibility for his actions and repairing the breach of trust with Professor Laverne.

The question of the identity of the student whose papers Lenny had copied came up. The jury felt that Lenny had created a breach of trust with this student, specifically, by submitting the student's work as his own. The jury agreed that Lenny should write a letter of apology to the student. If the student felt that this was not sufficient to repair the breach of trust, the jury felt that Lenny should speak directly to the student.

Finally, the jury reached consensus on the following resolutions which they presented to Lenny, Professor Carmine and Professor Laverne.

Resolutions:

Lenny will write a letter to the community discussing his experiences with the Honor Code to be attached to the abstract. While the jury will discuss possible topics for this letter with Lenny, the content of the letter is ultimately up to Lenny.

The jury recommends that Lenny fail his Political Science class.

The jury recommends that Lenny fail his Linguistics class.

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1Honor Code, Article III, Section A, Part 1, this paragraph
The severity of Lenny’s violations warrants a year of separation. However, since Lenny has begun to take responsibility for his actions, this separation will only last for one semester beginning at the end of this semester.

Lenny will work with Professor Laverne to write a paper. The topic of this paper will be decided upon by both Professor Laverne and Lenny. The jury suggests that this paper deal with Lenny’s experiences with the Honor Code as they relate to the issues raised in the Political Science class. This paper will be completed by the end of next semester.

Lenny will write a letter of apology to the student who wrote the original papers. Further dialogue will occur if the student feels that this is necessary to repair the breach of trust.

Presentation of Resolutions

After the jury came to consensus on these resolutions, Lenny was given a written copy of the resolutions. After being given adequate time to prepare a response to these resolutions, Lenny met with the jury to clear up any questions and to respond to the resolutions. Lenny had a few technical questions concerning the letters and his work with Professor Laverne. Lenny expressed his gratitude to the jury for its deliberation and seemed content with the statements of violation and resolution. Lenny, glad that the process was over, agreed that separation was not only an appropriate response to the violations, but would also help him to get his life back into order. Then, after the jury wished Lenny good luck, he left.

The final jury deliberation was short. The jury was content with the resolutions and were encouraged by Lenny’s response to these resolutions. Finally, the jury came to final consensus and the trial ended.

Questions:
1. Do you feel that Lenny should have been separated for a year? If so, how important are Lenny’s coming forward and extenuating circumstances?

2. Do you feel that it is helpful for Lenny to rewrite his Political Science paper? How does this fulfill Lenny’s need to repair the breach of trust with Professor Laverne?
To the community,

I don’t know what to write to you. All summer, I have been thinking what should I, could I write. I could write what I think you want to hear, but that is not fair to what me or you in the long run. Basically, you know what I have done if you have read the abstract. Over the summer, I have done a lot of thinking. I am not proud of what I did. I know that there are many of you out there that have broken the honor code. I hope that I have been an example to you. To those of you who haven’t broken the code, I hope that you learn something from my mistake as well. It is reasonable easy to take advantage of the system if you really want to. I applaud you for resisting the temptation. I wasn’t strong enough, so I hold at those who do in high regard. Many people have asked me if I think it was worth it. Was it worth it to cheat? No. As the time to return to school draws nearer, I am reminiscent. Throughout the summer, I really didn’t think of how I would feel once school started again. Out of sight, out of mind as one would say. I think that this coming semester of my separation will be difficult for me. I have to be at school in order to work on the project with my professor, but I will be separated from all of the students by the fact that I am not able to live on campus and am not able to take classes. I won’t be able to relate to all of my friends who will be talking about their classes, but the worst thing is that I will not be able to graduate on time with my class. That leaves me abandoned with another class; a group of people that I don’t know.

I know that my separation was the best thing that could have happened to me. I have become more sensitive to a greater multitude of people because of my situation. I would never have realized how others perceive things differently from me. For example, I would never have gotten an opportunity to obtain a professor’s viewpoint on anything, or a real perception of how education should be. It is amazing how similar the views are of our society and Aristotle’s views. I am so amazed to consider that Aristotle says education completely depends on the
student. Aristotle says that if a student attempts to study before being emotionally, physically, or spiritually ready, his study will be in vain and profitless. Previously, I would never have thought of that in my everyday studies at Haverford. I am so grateful to have had this semester off from school. It has definitely helped me to mature, get the abilities to discern many things, and to reflect on numerous things such as my errors, my classes, my future, my character. I have had a great amount of time to critically think about myself.

But was it worth it to turn myself in? Absolutely! I had a guilty conscience, and the weight of my sins were a tremendous burden. I was very glad to turn myself in because it ended the doubting. I was doubting if I could actually handle Haverford. If I had not turned myself in, I would have doubted for the rest of my life. I would have doubted if I even deserved my degree, and since my life would have been built on a lie, I would have doubted any job that I had gotten because of my degree. I would have doubted if I really could have gotten into medical school, or if I really deserved to have any of the jobs that I would have had. I would have lived my life as a fake. Another benefit of turning myself in was that I was let free. I was no longer trapped by the fear of someone finding out, or someone telling on me.

All summer I have felt resigned to what the jury had decided. The situation was out of my control, so why worry about it. I feel that I definitely acquired a considerable amount of enlightenment from the entire experience, but it is just a different type of knowledge. Life will teach you something no matter what situation you are in. Even though much was gained from the entire experience, the cost was greater. The days of work that I saved through my procrastination by copying, ended up costing me a whole year.