Jimmy Neutron:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
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Key:
- Cindy Vortex - confronted party
- Professor Fowl - confronting party
- Hovercraft Operation 110 - class
- Carl Wheezer - student in Hovercraft Operation 110
- Sheen Estevez - another student in Hovercraft Operation 110
- Finbar Calamitous - employee of IITS
- Dean Viacom - Cindy's dean at Bryn Mawr
- Brainblast - tutoring website

Summary:
This case involves [Cindy Vortex], a Bryn Mawr student in [Professor Fowl]’s [Hovercraft Operation 110] course. [Professor Fowl] became aware that a student in her class had posted questions from a midterm, several problem sets, and the final exam on [Brainblast], a tutoring website. With the help of [Finbar Calamitous] at IITS, she realized that [Cindy] had been violating exam and assignment instructions by using this outside help and using another’s work as her own. The academic trial resulted in separation for five semesters from Haverford and a grade of 0.0 in the course. The jury also decided to allow Bryn Mawr to review the case and decide for itself whether separation from Bryn Mawr was warranted.

Pre-Trial:
After completing and turning in his take-home final exam, [Carl Wheezer], a student in [Hovercraft Operation 110], went online and searched for the answers to some questions he had about the exam, where he found the exact exam questions posted on [Brainblast], a tutoring website. After consulting with his friend [Sheen Estevez], another student in the class, [Carl] brought the matter to [Professor Fowl], the course instructor. Since [Professor Fowl] had written the exam questions herself specifically for this course, she realized that one of her students had posted the exam online. She contacted Honor Council and [Finbar Calamitous], an employee of IITS, who helped her link the username on [Brainblast] to [Cindy Vortex], a Bryn Mawr student in her class.

After contacting [Dean Viacom], [Cindy]'s dean at Bryn Mawr, [Professor Fowl] confronted [Cindy], who denied that she had cheated and claimed that she had been a victim of identity theft and that her credit card had been stolen and used to pay for the [Brainblast] account. Because [Professor
Fowl] and [Finbar Calamitous] had evidence that this was not true, [Professor Fowl] told [Cindy] to bring herself to Honor Council.

Members of Honor Council reviewed statements from both parties and consented to send the case to a Summer Academic Trial, which was rescheduled to the fall due to unforeseen circumstances. Before meeting with the parties, the jury held a preliminary meeting to discuss the goals of the trial\(^1\) and review statements related to the case.

**Fact-Finding:**

The jury met with both parties for the fact-finding portion of the trial. The Trial Chair first asked [Professor Fowl] to explain her view of the events in question. [Professor Fowl] had created an extensive document detailing evidence of [Cindy]'s alleged violation and the chronology of events, which she walked the jury through.

[Professor Fowl]'s Statement

The final for her [Hovercraft Operation 110] course was a timed take-home exam with no books, notes, computer or Internet use, or other forms of assistance allowed. [Professor Fowl] explained that students were made aware of these instructions multiple times, both in class and on each page of the exam. Most of the questions on the exam were new and had not been used in previous years; [Professor Fowl] had written and drawn figures for them herself that semester.

During finals week, [Carl Wheezer] emailed [Professor Fowl], explaining that after he had completed and turned in his exam, he had Googled some of the exam questions to see if he had answered them correctly. He found a posting by someone called [Cin] on [Brainblast], a tutoring website, containing word-for-word copies of the final exam problems and photos of the figures that accompanied them, along with problems from the course’s second midterm and problem sets. The dates of these postings all fell within the current semester. Because some of the postings featured new questions that [Professor Fowl] had just written that semester, she knew that [Cin] had to be one of her current students in [Hovercraft Operations 110].

[Professor Fowl] then consulted the exam sign-out sheet and ruled out students who had not yet picked up their exams. She also consulted with [Finbar Calamitous] in IITS and shared with him [Cin]'s [Brainblast] postings which [Carl] had sent to her. [Finbar] created a [Brainblast] account and he, with [Professor Fowl’s] help, posted distinctive solutions to some of the final exam problems and notified [Cin] by email. Since the [Brainblast] postings had started with the second midterm, [Professor Fowl] reviewed the class’s grading spreadsheet. She identified two students who had scored much higher on the second midterm than on the first midterm. One student had used many resources to improve his performance, so it seemed unlikely that he was the [Cin] account holder.

The other student was [Cindy Vortex], a Bryn Mawr student in [Hovercraft Operations 110]. [Cindy] had done poorly on the first midterm and asked for an extension on the second midterm, which [Professor Fowl] denied because she had not obtained a dean’s excuse. Still, [Cindy] had done significantly better on the second midterm. [Professor Fowl] then Googled the names of her students and the username Cin; she found a Facebook posting indicating that this was [Cindy Vortex]’s old nickname, and she found no other significant hits. Other than the fact that [Cindy] did not always come to lecture, [Professor Fowl] explained that she had no reason not to trust [Cindy] before the incident.

Meanwhile, [Finbar Calamitous] contacted [Brainblast] and its parent company, [Nickelodeon],

\(^1\) The goals of Honor Council trials are education, restoration, and accountability.
and requested that they take the site containing the exam down because other students still taking the exam could find it. After some time, the page was removed from [Brainblast]. Additionally, [Professor Fowl] told [Carl] that they had a definite suspect in mind for the postings, and [Carl] decided to let [Professor Fowl] confront this person.

[Professor Fowl] then received an email from [Cindy Vortex], asking what grade she would need to receive on the final exam in order to receive a 3.7 in the class, as “motivation to study.” [Professor Fowl] responded that [Cindy] could calculate this herself and asked when [Cindy] was planning to take the exam, explaining that she was trying to give [Cindy] a chance to show contrition or explain if she was in a bind. [Professor Fowl] stated that [Cindy] did not ask for an extension or any sort of final consideration for the exam. The same day, [Finbar Calamitous] later received word from [Brainblast] that the email address linked with [Cindy’s] account was [c.vortex100@gmail.com], and that the account had been paid for with a credit card.

[Professor Fowl] explained that she had been out of town when [Cindy] turned in the exam, but that two of her colleagues had inspected the exam and found strong evidence of cheating. In particular, the exam had been scribbled over or covered with corrective tape in places, but word-for-word copies of the solutions [Finbar] and [Professor Fowl] had posted on [Brainblast] were still visible. Since [Professor Fowl] was not on campus, a face-to-face confrontation was not possible, so [Dean Viacom], [Cindy]’s dean at Bryn Mawr, arranged a meeting with [Cindy] during which they telephoned [Professor Fowl]. [Professor Fowl] explained that she requested that [Cindy] bring herself to Honor Council because she had made inappropriate use of [Brainblast] on the final exam and other assignments in [Hovercraft Operation 110]. [Cindy] then said that she had been a victim of identity theft and someone had opened the [Brainblast] account using her stolen credit card number. [Professor Fowl] pointed out that this was an odd response because she had not yet mentioned that the [Brainblast] account was a paid membership.

At this point, [Professor Fowl] told [Cindy] that there was nothing more for them to discuss and advised her to bring herself to Honor Council. [Professor Fowl] then explained the evidence to [Dean Viacom], who agreed to attempt to persuade [Cindy] to take responsibility for her actions. She then received word the next day that [Cindy] had contacted Honor Council.

[Cindy]’s Statement

At this point the Trial Chair asked [Cindy] if there was anything she wanted to tell the jury. At first [Cindy] stated that she had not cheated and reiterated that she had been the victim of identity theft. However, when the jury began to question her, citing the evidence that [Professor Fowl] had provided, [Cindy] changed her story. She explained that while she had posted exam materials on [Brainblast], she had not looked at the answers until after she handed in the test. She explained she had posted on [Brainblast] because [Professor Fowl] had been late handing back exams for the last midterm, which [Professor Fowl] told the jury was because one of the students had been seriously ill that semester and had to take the exam later than the rest of the class. [Professor Fowl] said that [Cindy]’s explanation upset her since [Cindy] knew of the reason why the exam had been handed back late.

Jurors continued to ask [Cindy] questions about the exam she had turned in, pointing to the changed answers and the evidence that [Professor Fowl] had provided. After some time [Cindy] admitted that she had looked at the answers, but that it did not affect her grade, as she had still done poorly on the exam. Members of the jury explained that even if this was true her actions still might have broken the Honor Code. The exam instructions specifically forbade her from seeking outside help for any reason.
Fact-Finding Deliberations:

The jury quickly agreed that [Cindy] had violated the Honor Code and consented to the spirit of a statement of violation. After agreeing to specific wording, the jury consented to the following statement of violation (all jurors consented, none stood outside):

[Cindy] violated the Honor Code by
1) Deliberately seeking and then receiving aid through the use of her [Brainblast] account (3.04a).
2) Representing "another person's ideas or scholarship as his/her own" (ibid).
3) Violating the professors instructions including using the internet and exceeding the time limit (ibid).
4) Potentially providing aid to another student by posting the exam questions in the public domain (ibid).

Additionally [Cindy] violated the Honor Code by:
1) Disregarding the community standard of "trust, concern, and respect" by being dishonest with the professor and the jury (3.03).
2) Disregarding community standards concerning her professor's intellectual property by posting the professor's original exam questions online (ibid).

Circumstantial:

The jury met individually with the two parties for the circumstantial portion of the trial due in part to scheduling issues and in part because of the unease [Professor Fowl] and [Cindy] both expressed at having to meet again.

[Professor Fowl]'s Meeting

The jury met with [Professor Fowl] first. She had prepared tentative resolutions for the jury to consider. The first was that [Cindy] fail [Hovercraft Operations 110] and receive a grade of zero for all work starting with the second midterm. She also suggested that [Cindy] be separated from taking classes at Haverford using language similar to the Amelia Earhart case, so that the opportunity to return was not completely closed off but allowed only under very specific terms. [Professor Fowl] also suggested a resolution requiring [Cindy] to give Honor Council details of any similar actions she had taken in other courses at Haverford and Bryn Mawr.

[Professor Fowl] went on to say that [Cindy]'s actions could affect the grades of other students in the class, especially when the class graded on a curve. In addition, she saw separation as a positive experience for students who used the time well.

[Cindy]'s Meeting

[Cindy] began by stating that she took full responsibility for her actions. When asked about her experience with the Code, [Cindy] admitted to not having read the Haverford or Bryn Mawr Honor Codes. A juror asked about her use of [Brainblast] for her major classes in Robot Dog Repair. [Cindy] responded that she had used [Brainblast] the same way for her work in other classes and that it was no

2 "Amelia Earhart" was an Honor Council abstract released prior to this case. It dealt with a student who plagiarized and cheated in many of her courses over several years. [Amelia] was separated from Haverford for a number of years with her return being contingent on several requirements.
different from bringing an assignment to the Writing Center.

When asked what she thought the outcome of her trial should be, [Cindy] stated that she expected to fail the class. She explained that as an international student, separation would make it difficult for her to stay in the U.S. because her financial aid and visa would expire. She also told the jury that her grandmother had died during finals and she could barely study because she was so stressed. When asked why she didn’t consult her dean for help, [Cindy] said that she found both [Dean Viacom] and [Professor Fowl] unhelpful in getting extensions. After the jurors’ questions were answered, [Cindy] left and the jury began deliberations.

Circumstantial Deliberations:

The jury spent a considerable period of time coming up with the resolutions. The jury first discussed [Cindy]’s grade in the course and agreed that the amount of cheating [Cindy] had done warranted a grade of a 0.0 in [Hovercraft Operations 110]. They then discussed the case’s similarity to the Amelia Earhart case, and whether or not it was an appropriate guide for what should be done in this case; however, that line of discussion proved unproductive, and the discussion moved to separation. While jurors largely agreed that separation was appropriate, there was disagreement about the duration. Some felt that a separation longer than four semesters was punitive, and others felt that a separation of six semesters was warranted.

The jury then discussed the viability of a mediation between the parties. Some jurors initially supported this idea, but others pointed out that it may be unproductive since it would have no set goal. After discussing the conditions that needed to be met for [Cindy] to rejoin the community, the jury consented to the following tentative resolutions:

1. [Cindy] will receive a 0.0 for [Hovercraft Operation 110]. (All jurors consented)
2. [Cindy] will be separated from Haverford College for four semesters. (One juror stood outside)
3. Before Honor Council discusses her rejoining the community, [Cindy] must complete the following: (all jurors consented)
   a. Write an essay that is at least 1500 words demonstrating her understanding of the Honor Code to be approved by 3 members of the jury.
   b. Meet with the two current Honor Council Co-Chairs and two jury members to discuss her readiness to reenter the community and the effect of her violations on the community.
   c. Work with a Haverford Dean to compile resources on what constitutes cyber cheating and intellectual property theft and how to avoid it, particularly within the context of Haverford. The project will then be made available to the community.
   d. Meet with [Professor Fowl] and a current member of Honor Council to discuss restoring her relationship with [Professor Fowl] and the Community as a whole.
4. Honor Council will consider the results of Resolution 3 to determine whether [Cindy] is ready to reenter the Haverford community. (All jurors consented)
5. The jury recommends that [Cindy] be separated from Bryn Mawr College for two semesters. (One juror stood outside)

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3 The word “current” here refers to the time at which [Cindy] seeks to return to Haverford.
Resolutions as a whole: All jurors consented.

Post-Tentative Deliberations:
The Trial Chair emailed the tentative resolutions to [Professor Fowl] and [Cindy]. [Professor Fowl] responded that she would not attend the finalizing meeting, but stated that she disagreed with the jurors’ decision to separate [Cindy] for four semesters because she felt that six semesters would be more appropriate. The Trial Chair also consulted with a Haverford dean for guidance on how much the jury should take into account [Cindy]'s visa situation. The dean explained that it was not the jury’s job to worry about how the resolutions affected her visa, since this was not under the control of Haverford; instead, they should worry about the best resolutions for [Cindy].

Finalizing Resolutions:
The jury met with [Cindy] for the finalizing portion of the trial. The Trial Chair first relayed [Professor Fowl]’s concerns regarding the resolutions, then asked that [Cindy] tell the jury what she thought. [Cindy] stated that she was fine with the first resolution which resulted in her failing the class, but that she had a problem with resolution five, which recommended separating her from Bryn Mawr. She reiterated how difficult the process of going home and getting another visa to study in the United States both would be.

Finalizing Deliberations:
The jury first discussed the length of [Cindy]'s separation from Haverford. Many members of the jury felt that six semesters would be more appropriate than four, while others felt that the jury did not necessarily need to listen to [Professor Fowl], and four semesters served as a sufficient period of time. The Trial Chair eventually suggested five semesters as a compromise. After much further discussion the jury eventually agreed with one juror still standing outside believing that five was still too low.

The jury then discussed resolution five which recommended that [Cindy] be separated from Bryn Mawr. Since both [Professor Fowl] and [Cindy] had expressed disagreement with this resolution, the jury decided to modify it. Instead of just recommending [Cindy]'s separation from Bryn Mawr, the jury decided it would be best to give Bryn Mawr the chance to find out what happened and make the decision on their own.

The jury then consented to the following resolutions:

1. [Cindy] will receive a 0.0 in [Hovercraft Operation 110]. (All jurors consented)
2. [Cindy] will be separated from Haverford College for five semesters starting immediately. (One juror stood outside)
3. Before Honor Council discusses her rejoining the community [Cindy] must complete the following: (all jurors consented)
   a. Write an essay that is at least 1500 words demonstrating her understanding of the Honor Code to be approved by 3 members of the jury.
   b. [Cindy] will write a letter to the community addressing personal responsibility with regard to the Haverford Honor Code.
   c. Meet with the two current Honor Council Co-Chairs and two jury members to discuss her readiness to reenter the community and the effect her violations on the community.
d. Work with a Haverford dean, an administrative representative of the writing center, or one of the contemporary Co-Chairs to compile resources on what constitutes cyber cheating and intellectual property theft and how to avoid it, particularly within the context of Haverford. The project will then be made available to the community.

e. Meet with [Professor Fowl] and a current member of Council to discuss restoring her relationship with [Professor Fowl] and the community as a whole.

4. Honor Council will consider the results of Resolution 3 to determine whether [Cindy] is ready to reenter the Haverford Community. (All jurors consented)

5. The jury will appoint a representative from this body to make himself/herself available to the Bryn Mawr Honor Board to answer any questions with respect to this case. (All jurors consented)

Resolutions as a whole: All jurors consented.

Post-Trial:

A few months after the trial, [Cindy] contacted Honor Council about fulfilling the resolutions to be allowed to take classes in the Haverford community. After this, however, [Cindy] made no further contact with Honor Council.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it within the jurisdiction of the jury to recommend that Bryn Mawr separate a student who has violated the Haverford Honor Code?
2. How much should the jury have taken into account [Cindy]'s visa situation?
3. [Brainblast] is one of many websites that can be used to gain an advantage on assignments, often without a professor's permission. How can we be individually and collectively prepared to deal with the increasing temptation that technology brings? What are some measures that might be inappropriate?