Abstract discussion will be held on Thursday 11/12 at 7pm in the MCC (Stokes 106).

Anything Goes:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2015

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party did not respond to the request for consent.

Key:
Confronted Party: Reno Sweeney
Confronting Party: Professor Billy Crocker
Reno’s Support Person: Hope Harcourt
Department: Cruising

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This case involves [Reno Sweeney], a Bryn Mawr student in Professor [Billy Crocker]’s upper level [Cruising] class, who was confronted for plagiarizing parts of her final paper. The case was reviewed by Honor Council and, due to the timing, sent to a summer trial. At the trial’s preliminary meeting, the Bi-College liaison explained to the jury that Reno was a non-traditionally-aged college student.

Fact Finding:
Reno had brought her friend [Hope Harcourt] as her support person. The Trial Chair reviewed the importance of confidentiality. Reno asked how her status as a non-traditionally-aged college student could be preserved in an abstract, and the Trial Chair explained that the abstract could be delayed and that Honor Council would be in contact with her before the abstract’s release.

Professor Crocker then began by explaining why he suspected that an Honor Code violation had occurred. Reno was a student in his upper-level Cruising course, the final assignment of which was a research paper. When grading Reno’s paper, he noticed inconsistencies in language which suggested changes in authorship throughout the paper. After entering phrases from the paper into Google, he found twenty-three instances of potential
plagiarism in a sixteen page paper. He categorized them into three kinds of potential plagiarism - words directly copied and not quoted, some taken directly from an abstract and not quoted, and some from secondary sources which included citations of the primary source.

**Statement of Violation:**

The jury consented to the following statement of violation:

[Reno] violated the Honor Code by plagiarizing large portions of her final paper. (10 jurors consent)

**Circumstantial Portion:**

Reno was very apologetic about her plagiarism. She said that she did not realize she was plagiarizing, but respects Professor Crocker and if he said she did then she believes him. She said that she did not learn much about plagiarism prior to attending Bryn Mawr, including at the community college she had attended years before. She said she did know what it was, though, and that it was wrong. Reno gave little explanation as to how so much plagiarism could have entered the paper without her realizing it. She said she had talked to her therapist about it but still did not know.

Professor Crocker suggested that the paper receive a 0.0 and that anything else was up to the discretion of the jury. Reno was not sure what kind of resolutions would be appropriate, but expressed a strong interest in repairing the breach of trust with Professor Crocker.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury agreed that this was a particularly egregious instance of plagiarism. One juror thought that the jury ought to recommend failing the course, since a final paper represented the learning of a semester. Others were not sure that the jury should make any recommendations beyond a grade change on the assignment itself.

Many jurors felt that the idea of plagiarism normally resulting in separation was important and that the exceptional amount of plagiarism in the paper warranted separation. The jury quickly agreed to separate Reno from taking Haverford classes for a semester. However, because Reno was not a Haverford student, the jury discussed whether or not it ought to recommend that Bryn Mawr also separate her from the college. The jury was mixed on that issue, as the Bryn Mawr liaison indicated that at Bryn Mawr this kind of case might not normally result in separation but more on educational resolutions. Additionally, the fact that Reno was non-traditionally-aged complicated the jury’s decision, since Reno had financial obligations that would not apply to most college students. The jury ultimately agreed not to include separation from Bryn Mawr in the list of Tentative Resolutions, but to discuss it with Reno during Finalizing. It also discussed ways to educate Reno about plagiarism so as to prevent something similar from happening in the future. Finally, the jury supported Reno’s desire to repair her breach of trust with Professor Crocker.
The jury consented to the following resolutions:

1. The jury recommends that [Reno] receive a 0.0 on her final paper. (10 jurors consent)
2. [Reno] will meet with a writing partner for the remainder of her time at Bryn Mawr College. (10 jurors consent)
3. [Reno] will write a short research paper with proper citation on a topic of her choice. She will meet with a writing center tutor and a reference librarian to work on her research, note-taking, and writing processes. Professor [Crocker] will receive a copy of this paper. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)
4. The jury recommends that [Reno] write a letter of reflection to Professor [Crocker]. (10 jurors consent)
5. [Reno] will be separated from Haverford College for one semester. (9 jurors consent, 1 stands outside)
6. [Reno] will write a letter to the HC community about her relationship—past and present—with plagiarism as it pertains to academic standards and the code. (10 jurors consent)
7. The jury recommends that this incident be reported to other institutions of higher learning. (10 jurors consent)

Resolutions as a whole. (10 jurors consent)

Finalizing Resolutions:

The jury met again with Reno and explained the reasoning behind each of the resolutions. She noted that due to family circumstances, it would be difficult for her to complete the research paper prescribed in resolution #3 if the due date were too soon. Reno was pleased with the opportunity to restore her relationship with Professor Crocker since she had a lot of respect for him.

Reno also had major concerns about an abstract being released for the case. Because of her unique situation as a non-traditionally-aged college student, she felt that an abstract would inherently break her confidentiality. Additionally, Reno felt that 7 resolutions was a lot, and that the reporting to graduate schools would make it difficult for her to get into her preferred school, but accepted that she would have to do her best. Finally, the jury brought up the issue of separation from Bryn Mawr. Reno said that such a resolution would be a huge problem financially. The jury asked if she felt it would affect her financial aid and she said no, but it would delay her graduation and thus increase financial pressure at home.

The jury deliberated for a long time, particularly about separation from Bryn Mawr. Some jurors were in part concerned that Reno did not seem to be making an active effort to participate in the process and more seemed resigned to accept whatever the jury deemed appropriate so that she could move on. Because of this, it amended the letter to the community to
require that Reno read both of the Bi-Co Honor Codes before writing the letter.

The jury then returned to the discussion of separation from Bryn Mawr. On one hand, the jury was sensitive to the financial and emotional burden of separation, especially given Reno’s circumstances. Eventually, however, it resolved that a Haverford student in a similar situation would likely be separated from Haverford college and that Reno could benefit from taking time away to reflect on the plagiarism and her place as a student. It did not feel that the fact that Reno was a Bryn Mawr student would make separation from both schools a double-punishment, and thought that separation was appropriate for this level of an Honor Code violation.

The jury finally recommended that Bryn Mawr separate Reno for a semester as well, although they asked the trial chair to ensure that the Dean responsible for the final decision knew about the potential financial difficulties and could look into them if she deemed it relevant.

The jury consented to the following final resolutions:

1. [Reno] will receive a 0.0 on her final paper. (10 jurors consent)
2. [Reno] will meet with a reference librarian at least twice regarding her next research paper. The research librarian will work with her on research, note-taking, and citation. (10 jurors consent)
3. [Reno] will meet with a writing center tutor for the remainder of her time at Bryn Mawr. (10 jurors consent)
4. [Reno] will write a letter of reflection to Professor [Crocker]. (10 jurors consent)
5. [Reno] will be separated from Haverford College for one semester. (10 jurors consent)
6. The jury recommends that [Reno] be separated from Bryn Mawr College for one semester. (10 jurors consent)
7. [Reno] will read Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges’ Honor Codes. Before the end of her period of separation, [Reno] will write a letter to the Haverford Community to be released with the abstract. This letter will focus on her relationship—past and present—with plagiarism as it pertains to academic standards and the Codes. (10 jurors consent)
8. The jury recommends that this violation be reported to institutions of higher learning. (10 jurors consent)

Post-Trial:

The Dean of Students at Bryn Mawr upheld the jury’s decision to separate Reno from Bryn Mawr for a semester. The trial resolutions were not appealed. No letter from Reno has been received.

Discussion Questions:

1. To what extent should students be held accountable for plagiarism if they received little
plagiarism education in the past?

2. Under what circumstances can a Haverford jury recommend that a student be separated from Bryn Mawr?