Abstract discussion will be held on Tuesday, November 17th at 6 PM in the Bryn Mawr Room in the DC as well as on Thursday, November 19th at 7 PM in the CPGC Café (Stokes 104).

The Knights of the Round Table: An Honor Council Joint Student/Administrative Panel 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. Four members of the confronted party consented to the release of the abstract. One member of the confronted party did not consent to the release of the abstract. While they all received the final version of the abstract, each party gave their consent or lack of consent before the letter from the panel members was added.

Key:
Sir Gareth - Confronting Party
Sir Tristan - Confronted Party
Sir Bedivere - Confronted Party
Sir Gawain - Confronted Party
Sir Caradoc - Confronted Party
Sir Percival - Confronted Party

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This case involved [Sir Gareth, Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival], a group of suitemates who entered into a prank war that culminated in an incident involving a hidden noisemaker, and the incident’s impact on one of the students, Sir Gareth. The noisemaker periodically made horror-movie inspired noises, including whispering “Can you hear me?” Sir Gareth has unilateral hearing loss, which exacerbated the negative impact that the noisemaker had on him. Throughout the trial, Sir Gareth emphasized the profound impact that the noisemaker had had on his physical and mental well-being.

The initial confrontation occurred at the beginning of the fall semester. Sir Gareth confronted his suitemates upon learning that the noises he had been hearing in his room had been caused by a noisemaker. He explained the extent to which the noises had affected his well-being and how upset he was. However, he felt this discussion was not enough because while his friends seemed to feel bad and they apologized to him, they did not seem to take responsibility for what
they had done. Therefore, he decided to bring the case to Honor Council.

Well over a month passed between Honor Council receiving the statements and the convening of the Joint Student-Administrative Panel (Joint Panel). Both the confronting and confronted parties found the time between the request for statements and the beginning of the Joint Panel incredibly stressful. The confronting party asked Council to let the members of the confronted party know that he did not want to discuss with them his decision to involve Council, as he did not yet feel ready for another dialogue with them.

Unfortunately, because of complications explained below, it took over a month for the trial to begin. The parties were heavily involved on campus in related activities, so attempting to avoid each other significantly affected their lives and ultimately proved impossible. Additional tension throughout the trial process came from the fact that several of the parties had been involved in an incident culminating in a physical altercation as a result of the case being brought to Honor Council. This incident was adjudicated outside of the Honor Council proceeding. In addition, the parties were part of a shared larger social circle on campus. Each party repeatedly blamed the other for breaking confidentiality to mutual friends. All of these conflicts greatly impacted the parties’ relationships with each other, and constituted relevant circumstantial information, but were beyond the direct scope of this Joint Panel.

Pre-Trial Complications:

Because of the apparent need for restorative dialogue between the parties, Honor Council initially sent the case to a Student Facilitation Panel (SFP), a mediation process that results in binding resolutions1. However, Sir Gareth was unwilling to participate in the procedure. He firmly believed that a mediation would not be productive. He argued that because a section of the Students’ Constitution suggested that cases involving disability should go to a Joint Panel, an SFP was inappropriate. He reiterated that he had been physically assaulted, socially ostracized, and had not had his confidentiality respected during the process.

After hearing this, Honor Council still felt that the procedures outlined in the SFP procedures were the best way to achieve the trial goals of restoration, education, and accountability. However, SFPs require consent of the parties to reach completion. Knowing Sir Gareth would not participate, but fearing that dropping the case would leave a breach in the community unresolved, Honor Council consented to send the case to a Joint Panel. The members of the confronted party were upset with Honor Council’s decision. They believed that if Honor Council had decided an SFP was the best procedure for the discussion then it should stay as an SFP. They also believed that Honor Council could not change its mind once it decided on a trial process. Finally, they argued that Honor Council was letting itself be inappropriately influenced by Sir Gareth’s refusal to participate in the trial process. These concerns continued to be a cause of contention throughout the panel.

1 http://honorcouncil.haverford.edu/procedures/types-of-trials/
A second point of contention throughout the process involved parties’ choices of support people and the role of these support people in the proceeding. In the procedure alluded to above concerning the physical altercation, a member of the faculty served as a support person for Sir Gareth. However, trial procedure indicates that only students are permitted to be support people for all other types of Honor Council proceedings. For this Joint Panel, the trial chair allowed this faculty member to serve as his support person during the panel. Several members of the confronted party felt that the presence of a faculty support person was both procedurally inappropriate and harmful to the process. Each member of the confronted party also had a support person attend the trial. Since many of these students were part of the larger friend group that the parties had shared, their presence may have added to the social consequences of the trial.

**Fact Finding:**

Sir Gareth began by telling his side of the story. He talked about his hearing disability and how the confronted party, as his friends, had been aware of it. In giving an account of the previous escalation of the prank war, he described a prank in which the other parties had hidden his keys until he got angry and demanded that they be returned. He explained that this incident was an example of a time he had let the other parties know they had gone too far.

Sir Gareth reported that, when he had started hearing the noisemaker in his room, he had asked his friends whether they heard it, which they denied. He said that when the noises didn’t stop and he couldn’t find the source, he began to worry that he was hearing noises that were not there. He told the panel that when others told him there were no sounds, he believed them because his disability makes it hard for him to trust his own hearing. During this period, Sir Gareth described experiencing deteriorating mental health. He had gained weight, wasn’t sleeping well, and sometimes felt unable to leave his room. He would wake up in the middle of the night to the noises, and would search through his room for the source.

Sir Gareth continued, recalling that it wasn’t until the summer after he moved out of the room that he began to feel better, and his health improved significantly over the summer. When he returned to Haverford in the fall, the noises came up in conversation with another friend, who was surprised that Sir Gareth still didn’t know about the noisemaker. Sir Gareth was appalled to learn that the confronted party had been the source of the noises to which he attributed much of his distress during the previous semester.

The confronted party agreed with most of the facts provided by Sir Gareth. They went into more detail about the prank war, describing the pranks directed at each of them, some of which Sir Gareth had participated in. These pranks included turning mattresses upside down, covering rooms with post-it notes, and switching entire closets of clothes. They then described what happened with the noisemaker from their perspective. Sir Tristan had purchased the noisemaker and had slept with it in his own room for several nights in order to make sure that it would not interfere with sleeping. He then placed the noisemaker under the radiator in Sir Gareth’s room, and told the rest of the confronted party about it. The confronted party recalled
that after a few days, Sir Gareth had asked some of them about the noises in his room. Not wanting to spoil the prank too quickly, they told him they didn't hear the noises. They said that they soon forgot about the noisemaker, and Sir Gareth never brought it up to them again. They said that if they had known how much it was bothering him, they would have immediately removed the noisemaker.

One of the only major factual disagreements between the parties was about how long the noisemaker had been in Sir Gareth’s room. Sir Gareth was sure that the noises had started as early as February, and described his period of deteriorating mental health as having started then. He also mentioned that he remembered telling his girlfriend about the noises at that time. Sir Tristan, who purchased the noisemaker, presented receipts from Amazon that indicated that the device was purchased in early April. However, Sir Gareth believed that the noisemaker had been present for longer or that a second noisemaker had existed. While sensitive to Sir Gareth’s concerns, the panel believed that the members of the confronted party were openly disclosing all that they knew and worked within the following chronology:

- **Previous Fall** - Prank war begins with consent of all parties.
- **Winter break** - Sir Gawain and Sir Caradoc return from abroad, consensually join prank war.
- **Early April** - Noisemaker purchased and placed in Sir Gareth’s room by Sir Tristan.
- **Fall** - Sir Gareth learns of the presence of the noisemaker in his room during the previous semester. Case is sent to Council and trial begins.

**Panel Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

The panel attempted to establish the clearest possible picture of what occurred. They devoted tremendous effort to identifying the truth based on the accounts they heard from the parties and the information that they had access to. However, given the emotionally charged nature of the proceedings and the fact that the conflict had already gone on for several months, this was a complicated process.

The panel consented to the following statement of violation:

[Sir Tristan], [Sir Bedivere], [Sir Gawain], [Sir Caradoc], and [Sir Percival] violated the Honor Code in two ways:

First, in failing to uphold the community value of trust by repeatedly lying to [Sir Gareth] about a noisemaker. Second, in failing to demonstrate concern by not properly considering the ramifications of their actions on [Sir Gareth] as an individual.

**Circumstantial Portion:**

The confronted party began circumstantial by individually explaining their role in events of the previous semester. They also each took the opportunity to openly apologize to Sir Gareth.
Sir Tristan stated that he purchased the noisemaker and then tested it in his own room for several nights before placing it in Sir Gareth’s room. After it was placed, he had expected Sir Gareth to react and retaliate, but it had slipped from his memory when Sir Gareth did not respond to the prank. He said that he was prepared to do whatever was necessary to atone for his mistake.

Sir Percival spoke next, expressing remorse and devotion about the toll that the noisemaker had on Sir Gareth, noting that the intention of the prank was not malicious, but acknowledging that there was a shared responsibility for forgetting about the device. Moreover, he agreed that they should have been mindful of how their knowledge and inaction could affect Sir Gareth. He said that he had always put a lot of faith in Honor Council procedures, and that even though he felt uncomfortable with the way the proceedings were being handled, he was hopeful that it could be a restorative process rooted in Quaker values.

Sir Gawain expressed concerns about the how the process was being handled and felt that he was being treated unfairly given that the intent of the pranks was never malicious. He also argued that in some ways he was also suffering, by the social ostracization of the trial and the huge impact that it was having on all aspects of his life at Haverford. He added, however, that he regretted the effect the noisemaker had had on Sir Gareth.

Sir Bedivere acknowledged that he had known about the device and that Sir Gareth should have been informed about it or that it should have been removed shortly after it was placed. He explained, though, that he had not known that anything was wrong. He said that he wished Sir Gareth had told his friends about his emotional state, since even though they had all been close, none of them had even known that Sir Gareth had been unhappy.

Sir Caradoc felt as though the process had been disjointed and confusing up to this point and that their initial conversation had gone well, and so the case being brought before Honor Council felt sudden to him. He said that Sir Gareth had never spoken up about being bothered by noises, despite the fact that he was usually highly vocal and communicative. He then expressed that this was perhaps why the group had forgotten about the noisemaker, because they expected Sir Gareth would say something if he was bothered - when he didn’t, it drifted out of their minds.

Sir Gareth then expressed again the extent to which he believed the noisemaker had affected his life. His trust in the community had been broken because no one had told him about the noisemaker, despite the fact that multiple people had known about it. He felt as though concern for his well-being was neglected and that it was irresponsible for his suitemates to play this prank and then forget about the noisemaker, which the confronted party acknowledged was indeed the case. Furthermore, he felt that it was the responsibility of those who knew about the noisemaker to check in with him and to be conscious of its presence and potential effects, rather than to wait for him to confide in them that he was hearing a noise or having trouble sleeping. Lastly, since his unilateral hearing loss prevented him from locating the noisemaker easily, he was hurt by the fact that he was the target of this particular prank. He explained that at one point, within the first few days after the placement of the device, he asked Sir Bedivere if he heard a noise in his room, to which he responded that he did not. Sir Bedivere recalled this moment and
explained that he had lied because he did not want to give away the prank so soon. Sir Gareth then remarked that any amount of time that he was being lied to was too long, to which all parties agreed.

At the end of the circumstantial portion, it was the sense of the panel that the issue had arisen out of a potentially volatile situation, the prank war, and was exacerbated by the fact that the group did not check in with each other, monitor their actions, or reflect on the potential dangers of the situation and thus the noisemaker remained in place and Sir Gareth never learned of its presence.

**Panel Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The panel spent nearly 12 hours in these deliberations. The panel was primarily concerned for the well being of all parties involved, and recognized the traumatic nature of the whole experience. The parties were very involved on-campus, and their lives overlapped in a number of ways. Members of the confronted party had been in close collaboration with the confronting party in a variety of clubs and organizations. In the time before the trial, these shared responsibilities combined with a shared social circle had caused anguish in their daily lives.

Deliberating amidst this atmosphere was a challenge, and the panel recognized that they would not be able to repair the damage to the parties’ relationships with a simple set of resolutions. Therefore, the panel put its effort towards ensuring that all parties involved could comfortably finish their time at Haverford and begin to heal. They hoped that the resolutions would be a point at which the parties could begin to turn the situation around. However, the conflict involved six distinct experiences, and the resolutions addressed them as a group. While the panel recognized the importance of each individual to have their own healing process, the panel also sought to give the confronted party a support network and opportunities to focus on the particular relationships that were affected by this process, and therefore felt it best to address the confronted party collectively in several resolutions.

The panel sought to create a balance between giving both parties space in order to minimize conflict and giving them the opportunity to actively participate in the restoration process. In doing so, they weighed the various possible degrees of separation, including separation from the community, loss of on campus housing privileges, and social separation. For tentative resolutions, the panel decided to recommend that all members of the confronted party lose their on-campus housing privileges.

Lastly, the panel wanted to keep the list of resolutions concise and focused on what they knew about the situation. While the panel felt that they were somewhat aware of where these individuals were in their lives at this moment, panel members did not want to impose themselves too heavily on those lives with insufficient knowledge. They recognized that as a panel, their resolutions could only go so far in addressing the conflict. They sought to equip the parties with the support that they would need going forward, to write resolutions that would translate readily into actions, and to do their utmost to hear what everyone was saying and interpret that into a
The panel consented to the following set of tentative resolutions:

1. The panel recommends that [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] lose their on-campus housing privileges for the remainder of the [year omitted] academic year. This is intended to create a larger sense of security for all involved parties, while providing the confronted party the time and space to reflect on their violation. This resolution also provides a balance between the distance needed for individuals to regain their sense of security on campus and the proximity necessary to allow for eventual restoration.

2. The panel recommends that the individuals of the confronted party participate in separate mediated conversations. The timeline for these meetings will be determined by [Sir Gareth] based on his comfort level. These conversations are meant to serve as a foundation for group mediation by the end of the year.

3. [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] will create a robust resource repository and training guide addressing the risks of pranking, the need for sensitivity towards hidden disabilities, and the perils of groupthink. These resources should be designed for use in the Customs Program.

4. [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] will meet with professionals with expertise related to the topics referenced in Resolution #3. These meetings are intended to aid personal understanding and growth as well as inform the creation and implementation of Resolution #3.

5. [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] will each write a letter to the community reflecting on the violation and elaborating on how it will inform their lives moving forward.

6. The panel leaves [Sir Gareth] the option to write a letter to the community reflecting on how his experience can bring attention to pervasive social issues on campus.

(All panel members consented to the individual resolutions, and the resolutions as a whole.)

Finalizing Resolutions:

The panel took feedback from both the confronted and confronting parties on the resolutions. The confronted party objected to the financial cost of moving off campus, and argued that the resolution was purely punitive since it would not reduce the number or degree of tension of the interactions between them and Sir Gareth. Many of them offered instead to remove themselves from activities that they shared with the confronted party. The confronting party was upset that members of the confronted party had not been separated from the community.

After hearing these concerns, the jury decided to resolve that only Sir Tristan move off campus. This decision came both out of credence lent to the confronted party’s objections and a
sense that all of the parties had to be present in order for the restoration process to work. At the same time, the panel felt that it was important to consider Sir Gareth’s sense of security on campus. The relationship between Sir Gareth and Sir Tristan had appeared to deteriorate significantly, more so than the relationships between Sir Gareth and other members of the confronted party. In addition, the noisemaker was primarily Sir Tristan’s idea. Some members of the panel felt that Sir Tristan was not being held appropriately accountable, but consented with the addition of the final sentence in Resolution #3.

After discussion, the panel consented to the following set of finalized resolutions:

1. [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] will create a robust resource repository and training guide addressing the risks of pranking, the need for sensitivity towards hidden disabilities, and the perils of groupthink. These resources should be designed for use in the Customs Program and other forums. [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] will meet monthly with an appointed advisor to track progress and receive feedback. The repository should be completed to the satisfaction of this advisor by the end of the [year omitted] academic year.

2. [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] will meet with professionals with expertise related to the topics referenced in Resolution #1. These meetings are intended to aid personal understanding and growth as well as inform the creation and implementation of Resolution #1.

3. [Sir Tristan] will lose his on-campus housing privileges for the remainder of the [year omitted] academic year. This is intended to provide [Sir Tristan] the time and space to reflect on the impact of his actions. This resolution also provides a balance between the distance needed for reflection and the proximity necessary to allow for eventual restoration. The panel recommends immediate separation from the community if [Sir Tristan] commits another violation of the Honor Code.

4. In an effort to encourage individual reflection, the panel requires a change in housing for [Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival]. The four will work with the Office of Residential Life to find alternative housing, with the stipulation that no more than two of them live together. The logistical process will begin immediately, and the change must be in effect for the remainder of the [year omitted] academic year.

5. The panel recommends that [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] reconsider their community commitments shared with the confronting party. These decisions should take into account the need for distance and the efficacy of the community organizations.

6. The panel recommends that the individuals of the confronted party participate in separate mediated conversations with [Sir Gareth]. The timeline for these meetings will be determined by [Sir Gareth] based on his comfort level. These conversations are meant
to serve as a foundation for group mediation by the end of the year.

7. [Sir Tristan, Sir Bedivere, Sir Gawain, Sir Caradoc, and Sir Percival] will each write a letter to the community reflecting on the violation and elaborating on how it will inform their lives moving forward.

8. The panel leaves [Sir Gareth] the option to write a letter to the community reflecting on how his experience can bring attention to pervasive social issues on campus.

(All panel members consented to the individual resolutions, and the resolutions as a whole.)

Post-Trial:

The panel resolutions were appealed by both Sir Tristan and Sir Gareth on substantive and procedural grounds. Additionally, all of the confronted party made an unofficial appeal to make clear their issues with some aspects of how the trial was run. Sir Gareth still believed that the resolutions were too lenient, and his appeal pushed for separation from the community. Sir Tristan appealed the final sentence of Resolution #3, worried that Sir Gareth would look for any opportunity to bring him to Honor Council and he would be immediately separated.

The President of the College recused himself from hearing the appeal, and it was instead heard by members of Haverford’s Board of Managers. Ultimately, Resolution 3 was changed by removing the clause recommending immediate separation if Sir Tristan committed another violation of the Honor Code. The appeals group believed that the trial process ought to be fully restorative, and trusted that Honor Council would handle any future violation correctly. No changes were made as a result of Sir Gareth’s appeal - the remaining resolutions were not altered.

Sir Tristan’s Letter to the Community:
Looking back on the trial, as well as on the events leading up to it, I cannot help but feel a sense of regret as to how it all unfolded. So much seemed avoidable – on both sides – and I strongly believe that things would have worked out very differently if emotions had not been as high as they were, due to which I believe that a lot was missed that in hindsight would have helped us all to understand what had happened, and why it had seemingly escalated so rapidly.

I regret that I did not handle myself better throughout, but I still find myself struggling to understand how the situation worsened so quickly. Perhaps there was something that I missed, perhaps I should have known better, but it is easy to look back in hindsight. I know now that I should have been more aware of the hidden disability of my peer, and that my behavior was irresponsible.

The one valuable insight that I gained from this experience is an awareness of the fragility of friendships, and how quickly something that you believe to be secure can prove to be more
tenuous than you had imagined. Friendships need work, and they need to be maintained, otherwise misunderstandings can creep in, and a rift might emerge that, in the absence of proper communication, can become unbridgeable.

In many close friendships we tend to become overly familiar, and ignore the hidden disabilities of others. We forget, as I forgot, that some of our friends are struggling with issues that we cannot fully comprehend, no matter what their efforts to help us to comprehend them, and we must always be aware of their struggle. We must work hard to maintain the trust inherent in such a friendship, show concern for the well-being of our peers, as well as respect their individual struggles.

Looking back, it is clear to me that I did not show an appropriate amount of concern for the well-being of [Sir Gareth], and by showing an inadvertent lack of respect for his hidden disability I betrayed his trust in me. I should have been more careful, and I should have thought long and hard before pulling such a juvenile prank. I know now that my behavior was inappropriate, and I apologize for my role in all of this.

**Sir Bedivere’s Letter to the Community:**

To the members of Haverford College,

I was involved in a prank war living in a suite with three friends I had been in a Customs group with freshman year, and it turned out to be the biggest mistake I made at Haverford. No one could have foreseen the events that transpired following the placement of a noisemaker in one of our suitemate’s rooms. I truly am sorry for the way this noisemaker affected one of my best friends at the time, however, a lot was learned from the experience.

The most important lesson I learned is that everybody is different and thus no two people will react the same exact way to a prank. I may not have reacted to the noisemaker the way [Sir Gareth] did, but it was my responsibility to take into account how he might react. What I learned is that you can never assume that others will respond to something in the same way you might. We thought we were taking precautions because the noisemaker would not have bothered [Sir Percival], [Sir Tristan] or me. Really, though, we were just being ignorant in not understanding that [Sir Gareth] might react differently. So the lesson I take away from this trial is that everybody is different, a simple but vital component in treating everybody with respect.

It is my hope that fellow students at Haverford for years to come will be exposed to our story and learn from it. I hope that nobody at Haverford ever has to go through the experience that the six of us endured during this situation and eventual trial. It was a time filled with feelings of betrayal, alienation, confusion and reflection. Due to the size of the college and the number of
people involved in the prank, confidentiality became a huge issue and people were forced to choose sides. The period from confrontation to the trial trial in itself was a violation of the Honor Code, a code that needs to be revamped to fit Haverford’s current needs.

Before this incident I was not a student who knew or cared much about the social Honor Code. After going through this incident, I am a student who does not believe the social Honor Code should exist. This code promotes students using Honor Council to confront someone, instead of trying to have an open dialogue first. Students have begun to use confrontation as a scare tactic because everyone knows going through an Honor Council trial can change your life dramatically and cause extreme stress.

Every day students violate this code and it has just been used to get students in trouble instead of resolving issues. The school, specifically the deans, seem to only care about what is written in the Students’ Constitution when it suits them. Our trial was originally supposed to be a Student Facilitation Panel but then the deans changed it at the request of [Sir Gareth] to a Joint Student Administrative Panel, which was a violation of the Honor Code. Additionally, [Sir Gareth] had a faculty member as his support person during the trial, a clear violation of the Constitution as it states in Section 7.02-d-ii: “Faculty members will not attend the trial proceedings as support people.” The rules seemed to be broken whenever it was more convenient for the deans and Honor Council, which does not seem like the “Haverford way.”

All in all, this was a hard time for everyone involved in the trial. I want to reiterate my sincerest apology for the large mistake I made in not understanding how something would harmfully affect one of my closest friends. I wish we could have resolved our issues without going through a trial, but that is the only venue he felt safe in. I hope everyone in the community learns from this trial and Haverford goes on to be a better place. I will always cherish my time at Haverford, but I am leaving with a sickening taste in my mouth.

Best,
[Sir Bedivere]

**Sir Gawain’s Letter to the Community:**

Dear Haverford,

I have written and re-written this letter countless times in the past nine months, and each time I find myself horrified with and disappointed in Honor Council and the way in which it has chosen to uphold the honor code. I wish I could say that I am walking away from this experience having grown, feeling restored with the community and restored in a friendship that I considered a close one. But in fact, I feel distanced from the community in ways I never thought possible.
I chose Haverford for its honor code. A set of guidelines put in place to create a community that cared for one another, that respected one another, and that looked out for one another. And yet, when I found myself in the thick of it, this could not be further from the truth. As my friends and I implored Honor Council, the administration, and the panel to read what was actually in the code, to allow it to be the document that it is meant to be, and to recognize the injustice of what was happening in front of them, we were ignored and told to allow the process to go as intended. As we were mistreated and as we watched the rules be bent for another, one thing became vastly apparent. This was not the code that I applied to Haverford under. And this was certainly not the interpretation of the code that I signed upon matriculating.

The honor code, Honor Council, and the way in which both are enforced and upheld are broken and desperately in need of attention. This was clear during my semester on council, this was clear when the honor code failed, and it was certainly clear as my friends and I spent fifteen weeks tried under a code that was not one that we had ever agreed to. A code that could be bent and maneuvered to appease a particular party, where support people could be selected from wherever one saw fit, where confronted parties were seen as guilty from the moment they were first reported, where trial types could be selected and reselected as the confronting party saw fit, and in which instead of restoration, the name of the game quickly became appeasement.

For where I stand, you have quite a bit of work to do Haverford.

Sincerely,

[Sir Gawain]

**Sir Caradoc’s Letter to the Community:**

Dear Haverford Community,

Without a doubt, this trial and its outcomes have had an overwhelming effect on my year and Haverford experience at large. The events of this year and the actions of the parties involved with this trial, including Honor Council, have made me so incredibly disillusioned with Haverford and the Honor Code. While the violation in itself was significant in a number of ways and merits reflection on its own accord, the process that I went through this year is definitively broken and must be addressed before Haverford can truly be a community that values and supports all its members.

I never intended to be involved in the prank war between my friends that began while I was abroad during the fall of my junior year. During the semester I was away and the semester I returned, however, I was regularly informed of the pranks that occurred and enjoyed laughing
with everyone about them. When [Sir Tristan] came to me and told me about the noisemaker I
found it humorous, just as I had with all the other pranks. I knew how deep the bonds of
friendship were between all of us, and I didn’t think for a second that the prank could be taken
badly or any differently than any of the other pranks that had occurred. I continued to go about
my life, unaware that anyone could possibly take what was going on as anything other than a
friendly addition to a prank war already underway.

Unfortunately, as we all know now, that was not the case. Of course, in retrospect, I will be
forever sorry that an action that I was a part of led to such negative consequences for everyone
involved. I have wracked my brain as to what I could have done differently and how I could have
been more sensitive to [Sir Gareth] and his needs. I feel regret that I didn’t question our actions
more closely and show more empathy. For [Sir Gareth]’s hurt and the dissolution of our
friendship I will always be sorry. Realistically, though, I question how much I could have done
differently. In dealing with any sort of hidden disability and the effects of that, the individual
with the handicap must be willing to share any needs or particular sensitivities they have. This
burden is without a doubt unfair, but without [Sir Gareth] opening up to me I never could have
known how to be more aware. I’ll certainly remember this need for open communication moving
forward, and be sure to find ways to ask about and support my friends’ and coworkers’
individual needs.

My biggest take-aways from the trial and surrounding events, however, were far more negative.
My friends’ and my needs, opinions and feelings were completely ignored and trampled over
throughout this experience. Over and over, I saw examples of people with power and influence
getting what they wanted to the detriment of others. Honor Council and [Sir Gareth] repeatedly
ignored the Honor Code and practices associated with it. After the case was originally sent to a
Student Facilitation Panel, [Sir Gareth] refused to participate, at which point it should have been
dropped. Instead, the deans pushed us to take part in a Joint Student Administrative Panel, a type
of trial most often used for infractions similar to drug dealing. [Sir Gareth] also brought a faculty
member as a support person, which is explicitly forbidden in the Honor Code and something we
were not informed about ahead of time. [Sir Gareth] repeatedly spoke to deans and senior
administrators, telling them his erroneous version of events; these administrators than failed to
give us an opportunity to share our version until we insisted. Our quality of life, emotional safety
and the truth were continuously ignored throughout this process, as it seemed over and over
again that the school was more interested in protecting itself from a lawsuit than truly helping
any of its students.

The Social Honor Code is nice idea – we should all strive to live by values of trust, concern and
respect – but somewhat of a farce in practice. We are all adults, and should be trusted to take
responsibility for our own actions. Losing a close friend should be punishment enough for my
actions, which might have been ignorant and poorly thought out, yes, but not malicious. A system that, on paper, is intended to create an environment that is welcoming and supportive for all its members, failed me, it failed my friends, and ultimately failed [Sir Gareth] and the entire community as well. Rather than helping me find a restorative resolution, I left this experience feeling angry, disillusioned and disappointed with the school and community I devoted so much of myself to over the past four years.

Sincerely,
[Sir Caradoc]

Sir Percival’s Letter to the Community:
To the Members of the Haverford Community,

The most important thing I will take away from this experience is that you never know how someone will react to something. I was completely unaware that [Sir Gareth]’s hearing loss plays such a role in his life, even though we were very close friends and I thought I knew his history and sensitivities. [Sir Gareth]’s hearing loss never entered my mind when the noisemaker was put into his room. If I had ever known how it was affecting him over the five weeks it was there I would have insisted on its immediate removal. I am so, so sorry that he suffered as a result, and I regret so much that I was unable to think more critically about the prank, which was never really central to my consciousness. I will go forward with an increased awareness of how my actions (or, in this case, inaction) might affect others in ways that I might not immediately anticipate.

I have also come to realize that I am the only person who has to live with myself. Through some correspondence with [Sir Gareth] over the second semester, it became clear that he simply does not believe that I told the truth during the trial. That someone who I thought knew me so well believed me to be such a horrible person broke my heart and made me doubt myself, as well as my relationships with those around me. I began, however, to understand that agonizing over this was futile. I told the truth and made every effort to repair our relationship and feel comfort in that, no matter what others think about it.

I have also come to believe there are huge structural problems with Honor Council. The process was incredibly emotionally and academically stressful and was prolonged for an unreasonable amount of time. There was an ever-present, dull sense of dread in the pit of my stomach from the first week of classes until the beginning of finals week. I was constantly anxious and couldn’t concentrate on writing because I was anticipating the next email from Honor Council, the decision after decision, stretching out for months. I was unable to be a productive member of the social and academic communities, but felt as though I could not and should not have to leave.
Regardless, however, of my own time and emotional energy spent on the matter, the time required of Honor Council co-chairs (and to a lesser extent, panel members) is completely unrealistic. This is no longer a workable system and we need an alternative, for many more reasons than just this one. I am too exhausted at this point to break down what I see as the problems, or suggest any solutions, but I wish the best of luck to the community going forward.

Sir Gareth’s Letter to the Community:
I think this experience, as confusing, upsetting, and challenging as it was for me, has taught me a lot about different social issues that we encounter both at and outside of Haverford. These issues range from the impact of pranks, lying, and groupthink on personal relations, to Haverford’s Honor Code, Honor Council, and notion of confrontation.

Pranks, while initially fun or funny, are in the long run immature and obviously (as this trial illustrates) have the potential to negatively impact strong bonds of friendship. Pranks can quickly escalate beyond practical jokes to become aggressive, competitive, harmful, and discriminatory acts.

Haverford College promotes pranks, even as early as Customs Week. Throughout my entire experience at Haverford I witnessed, participated in, and experienced a wide range of pranks. Some of them were fun, but in retrospect many of them were incredibly disrespectful and insensitive. Pranks are a part of Haverford’s culture and college culture in general, but I wonder to what extent pranks actually fit with the ideals espoused in the Honor Code; for instance, is it really appropriate that the College condones lying about Honor Code quizzes during Customs Week?

When I was in the middle of this trial, a friend of mine, who had no idea that this trial was going on, walked into my room visibly upset. Someone had hacked his Facebook and changed his status, while simultaneously, but unrelated, another person had chosen to send obnoxious texts from his cellphone. He felt tremendously demoralized by these two events. It is hard to judge how individual people will respond to a supposed prank. Pranks can easily go awry and I think that the Haverford community needs to seriously evaluate whether pranks are consistent with the Honor Code and the culture of Haverford College.

When I reflect on this experience, I often regret having even agreed to a “prank war.” There were many other things we could have all been doing with our time. I think that this “prank war” contributed to a serious deterioration in our friendships as a group. When I think back to the second semester of the “prank war,” and the beginning of the Fall semester before I found out about the noisemaker, I can recall numerous fights, many tense conversations, and a distancing in all of our friendships. We all became removed from each other throughout the “prank war.”
I would say that after two or so months, the nature of the “pranks” that my suitemates carried out on me became more pernicious in nature. These ranged from using a sharpie to draw penises on my wall to repetitively flipping my bed over whenever they could get into my room. Perhaps it was because they had gotten bored with the lighthearted “pranks” that we had been engaged in. The important takeaway from this is that pranks get old after a while, unless you choose to escalate them further.

Despite the truly aggressive nature of the pranks I put up with during the second semester of this “prank war,” I never reported these pranks or felt compelled to go to Honor Council. I did not feel the need, because while these “pranks” were frustrating, they were visible, and obvious. I did express my frustration directly to my suitemates, but they often disagreed with me.

The “prank” that I felt the need to address through Honor Council was not a singular, visible, innocuous practical joke. Rather it was a prolonged, secretive, harmful act that enlisted upwards of 20 people who I did not even know were involved (I also had no idea that the two people who had come back from being abroad had been involved until I confronted them in the Fall). It also directly impacted and related to my hearing disability, which the confronted parties knew about prior to the “prank.” To me, placing a harassing audio device that whispers, “can you hear me” in the room of a person who is hearing impaired and lying about it is no different than rearranging the furniture of a blind person’s room, or writing anonymous racial, sexual, or ethnic slurs about a given individual on a wall.

More than anything, this illustrates the danger of playing pranks. At some point, someone is going to get carried away.

Compounding this “prank” was the role that lying played. The longer one waits to tell the truth, the more complex and entrenched the lie becomes. There was a 6-month period where any one of the confronted parties had numerous opportunities to reveal the “prank.” I asked them all about it many times, and each time they lied, the lie became closer to the truth for them. Even after I accidentally found out about the “prank,” some of the confronted parties continued to lie to me. Lying is antithetical to a community that views the value of trust as a foundational element. And frankly, one should never have to lie about a “prank”… otherwise it is simply not a prank. The whole idea of a practical joke is that it is short -term and revealed. The confronted parties planned to do this “prank” again, and I don’t think the confronted parties ever planned to reveal this “prank” to me. This, coupled with the depth of lying involved in this issue, made me seriously question the intention of the confronted parties.
When I first confronted everyone involved, about a week after I found out about the noisemaker, I had no intention of bringing this to Honor Council. Even though I put on a respectful demeanor during the confrontation, the initial confrontation left me feeling ashamed and humiliated. I spoke with CAPS and they recommended that I speak with the Dean of the College. The Dean of the College then referred me to Honor Council, and suggested that I avoid having any more conversations with the confronted parties. Hindsight is 20/20, and in retrospect this was a huge mistake. I could have had another conversation with the confronted parties before this went to a “trial.” I had no interest in punishing the confronted parties, but I wanted to meet with them in an environment where it wasn’t “5 on 1.” I think that this entire situation would have benefited from an administrator stepping in early to keep things under control. Instead the course of action prescribed by the Dean’s Office and Honor Council only escalated this issue.

Honor Council sent a letter to the confronted parties at 5pm on a Saturday, notifying them that I wanted to bring this issue forward to Honor Council. That was probably the worst possible time for Honor Council to send a request for a statement. Later that night I was physically assaulted, verbally threatened and barred from entering my dorm room by one of the confronted parties who was drunk, and that was the moment my mindset changed entirely. I was angry, upset, confused, and frustrated before I was assaulted, but having my life threatened completely and regrettably, altered the nature of this case.

This illustrates a couple of important points about confrontation and Haverford’s Honor Council process.

First, confrontation, in the Haverford sense, is not easy and requires a lot of honesty, courage, and openness to understanding other people’s perspectives, which all six of us struggled with when we spoke about the “prank.” I wasn’t as honest about my feelings as I could have been and I was afraid to speak up, and the confronted parties were afraid to take responsibility and admit that what they had done had hurt me. We all had a really hard time reaching out to each other’s perspective and we all did a really poor job communicating with each other.

Second, Haverford’s Honor Council process, as it currently stands, is inefficient and poorly executed. This is because it is primarily run by students who simply do not have the time to both run Honor Council and also be students at Haverford. This significantly complicated the trial process. The protracted and poorly handled nature of this trial created a bitter and oppositional experience. Rather than taking any action to diffuse this situation, Haverford’s administration sat back and failed to provide guidance and education. They were committed to sticking with a “process” that is poorly designed and poorly instituted.
Moreover, this “process,” also failed to provide an appropriate medium for educating the confronted parties about the impact of their “prank” on my hearing impairment. I was asked by the panel to explain my hearing impairment, why it qualifies as a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and how the “prank” related to my hearing impairment. Legally, I should not have been explaining these things. I’m neither a legal nor medical expert in unilateral hearing impairments.

I entered this “process” trusting Haverford and Honor Council, and I came away from it realizing that Honor Council is an ineffective, and at times destructive institution that needs to be significantly reformed. Haverford should make a commitment to better instill and apply the Honor Code and evaluate the appropriateness of the scope of the Honor Council mandate. I have formally requested through the EEO (equal employment office) that the administration no longer allow cases involving harassment of a disability (or other protected classes such as race or gender) to be handled by Honor Council. Haverford’s Honor Council members neither receive adequate training or guidance to manage all types of confrontations nor do they have the skills or the time to devote to the nuances of disabilities, civil rights, and harassment. Right now, the way Haverford implements the Honor Code is nothing more than a superficial advertising slogan. I hope that Haverford will make an authentic effort to stand by the values it promotes.

Pranks, while part of Haverford’s culture, have a tendency to undermine the central components of “trust, concern, and respect” that we all talk about at Haverford. When you prank someone, are you supposed to be concerned about his or her wellbeing? How do pranks relate to Haverford’s notion of respect and should individuals who are “pranked” maintain their trust in the people who prank them? At a basic level, pranks can be fun, innocuous, and well intentioned, but they have a high potential for ruining relationships. Pranks gone awry have the capacity to undermine and irreversibly alter the culture and emotional dynamics of Haverford’s environment.
When Honor Council was considering the release of this abstract, they felt there were pieces of the story that were missing from the abstract as it stood. They decided to ask members of the panel to write a letter to the community giving their perspective on the events surrounding this proceeding.

Letter to the Community from Student Chair of the Panel and a Student Panel Member:

There are many ways in which this abstract fails to fully capture the gravity and emotion of this Honor Council process. The job of an abstract is to describe what happened in a trial. In this particular case, we believe it is also important to understand what happened outside of the trial. In this letter, we hope to weave together the narrative in a way that makes sense and spurs productive conversation in the community around the Social Honor Code.

The Honor Code, when serving its intended function, allows individuals to come together as a community despite conflict, disagreements, and differences. In order to do so, it requires us to display understanding, empathy, and respect. It also requires us to remember that every community member, and every human being, has the capacity to display those qualities. Living up to these standards, and expecting others to live up to them, becomes even more difficult when we feel unable to trust one another. This case and its related repercussions were felt throughout the community. We believe that its divisive nature stemmed from deteriorating trust between the two parties.

Honor Council first became aware of an issue involving [Sir Gareth] and his suite when [Sir Gareth] reached out to the Co-Chairs with a plea for advice. He told them that he just discovered that some of his closest friends had been responsible for an experience that sent him spiraling into depression. It was clear in that conversation that what [Sir Gareth] really wanted was help in making his friends understand the depths of the harm they had caused him. He felt as though they failed to empathize when he first confronted them about it, and had instead been defensive and upset with him. His goal was restoration, he said multiple times, and he asked if the Co-Chairs thought he should bring this to Honor Council. Assured by the chairs that Honor Council was willing and capable to help him with this, he decided to send them a statement the following week.

The night that Honor Council asked [Sir Tristan], [Sir Bedivere], [Sir Gawain], [Sir Caradoc], and [Sir Percival] for statements, the situation spiraled out of control. The confronted party was blindsided by Honor Council’s request for statements. They were devastated by the idea that [Sir Gareth] would drag his closest friends through a trial instead of working things through with them. The shock and anger, exacerbated by the addition of alcohol later that night, caused the confronted party to react emotionally and powerfully. [Sir Percival], in front of his
and [Sir Gareth]'s mutual friends, began crying to the point that he had difficulty breathing. Later, outside their suite, [Sir Tristan] confronted [Sir Gareth], in the non-Haverfordian sense, and told [Sir Gareth] that he was dead to him and should never come back to the dorm.

The reactions of his friends drove a wedge between [Sir Gareth] and the confronted party that would continue to expand until weeks later when they would finally meet in front of Honor Council. By that time, the breach had grown so wide that the panel would feel helpless to fully heal it in the time they had. [Sir Tristan]'s words and the overall response of the confronted party confirmed, in [Sir Gareth]'s eyes, that the noisemaker prank the previous semester had been malicious instead of careless, and that these people had never been the friends he thought they were. He felt fully isolated inside the community he had loved deeply for three years. His tone and intentions abruptly shifted from restoration to accountability. It changed from [Sir Gareth] wanting to be heard to [Sir Gareth] wanting justice.

When Honor Council received the initial statements, they did not understand how far the wedge had driven the parties apart. Both sides seemed to want some type of mediation, but Council was suspicious that there may have been a violation of the Social Code involved that resolutions could help address. For these reasons, they decided to send the case to a Student Facilitation Panel: a blend of mediation and trial that seeks a common understanding and agreed upon resolutions from both parties and a neutral panel of students. However, by the time Honor Council met the week after the request was sent, the situation had changed dramatically.

The parties were not speaking to each other. This was in part because [Sir Gareth] had requested that the confronted party not discuss with him his decision to involve Honor Council. However, it proved impossible to avoid each other because they ran in the same circles, participated in the same extracurriculars, and attended a residential college of 1200 students. Even though the deans had stepped in and moved [Sir Gareth] to a different suite, interaction was inevitable—and inevitably bad. Both parties began sending in additional statements about small acts of aggression from the opposite side. Some complained about confidentiality, claiming that each side was telling their version of events to mutual friends. Some discussed the involvement of family members. Some spoke of struggles in participating in shared extracurriculars. All demonstrated just how isolated the parties were starting to feel from each other and from the community, and how complicated it would be for any panel to resolve the situation.

When [Sir Gareth] heard that Honor Council wanted to send the case to a Student Facilitation Panel, in which both parties are treated as equally responsible for resolving a breach of trust, he vehemently opposed the decision. He searched the Students’ Constitution for procedural ammunition and summarily refused to participate in the proceeding. The Co-Chairs met with him and felt the complete change in his attitude. He had become stressed to the point that they were actively concerned for his well-being. The meeting ended in a fit of extreme emotion from [Sir Gareth], and the Co-Chairs realized that attempting to convince him to actively participate in the designated course would be futile.
This, now, left Honor Council at a loss. Student Facilitation Panels could not be run as described by the Constitution without the participation of both sides. Further, even if some attempt was made to force it through that process it seemed likely to do more harm than good. However, Honor Council also realized that simply dropping the case in response to [Sir Gareth]’s refusal would do a disservice to both sides, as they now understood the gulf that was only continuing to grow between the parties. The only other avenue that fit the situation and had a chance at getting both parties in the same room seemed to be a Joint Student-Administrative Panel (JSAP). A JSAP is a jury of both students and administrators designed to handle cases with potential legal implications, including harassment on the basis of disability. The panel came at [Sir Gareth]’s request, as he had come to see the initial noisemaker prank as harassment in light of his unilateral hearing loss and the emotional and psychological impact that it had on him. Honor Council believed that for the purposes of the case, the outcome of the procedure took precedence over the name of the process. What mattered was getting the parties together so that they could finally achieve a level of mutual understanding and resolutions could be designed that would help heal the enormous breach of trust. Thus, the case was moved to a Joint Student-Administrative Panel.

The confronted party agreed to take part in the panel, although they were angry with Honor Council for the change in procedure and for initiating a new process that seemed more punitive than the original. In some ways the JSAP was successful. The panel saw a level of healing in the first few meetings that was incredible to witness. The confronted party each, individually, delivered a heartfelt apology to [Sir Gareth]. They went on to describe how this had been a deep and terrible experience from their perspective. They had lost [Sir Gareth] as a friend, felt ostracized from the community, and were hurt by [Sir Gareth]’s lack of trust and understanding. [Sir Gareth]’s hardened stance began to soften. When it came time for him to propose resolutions, he no longer saw enemies in the confronted party, and instead began to see them as the friends they had once been. While the meetings were tense, restoration was almost tangible. If it were not for some miscalculated and misunderstood remarks at the end of the circumstantial meeting that brought the wedge crashing back, the letters in this abstract would likely look very different. Sadly, their guards went back up, and the panel knew, from that point on, that restoration would take more time than the seniors had left at school.

The resolutions that you see in this abstract are not fully representative of what the panel wanted to do. Instead, they represent what the panel could do. They are a compromise, of sorts, between the two parties. They were intended to give each party the agency and space within the community that had been lost in the process. It was clear by the end of the panel that [Sir Gareth] and the confronted party would not graduate as friends. It was outside of the panel’s control, at that point, to do anything about it. What the panel could do was provide some level of closure. The parties had been jockeying for position and trying to procedurally one-up each other from the night the statements were requested to the night the appeal was concluded. The resolutions were designed not to cater to either side, but to be fair to both.
That is where the panel ended, and so where we end the story here. The narrative in this letter reflects the best understanding of its authors, rather than that of either party. Much of the trial was focused specifically on the noisemaker and its direct effects because that was the scope of the case brought to Council. However, we appreciate that Council asked us for our general perspective. We believe that the events leading up to the panel are necessary for a productive conversation about this abstract. While neither party intended to hurt the other, the mutual breaches of trust fed into a cycle. They both felt attacked and lashed out in defense. As anger grew, empathy faded, and the Social Honor Code ceased to inform the parties’ decisions.

The Social Honor Code gives us a framework to overcome these kinds of challenges through open communication and seeking mutual understanding. It is up to us as a community and as individuals to decide whether we believe in those ideals and can adhere to them even when things seem to be falling apart. We sincerely hope that this brings up productive conversations about the Honor Code, and that we can use the lessons learned here to make our community better, stronger, and more resilient in the future. Thank you for reading.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. When should Honor Council be involved in social confrontations, and how can the process be focused on restoring communication between the parties?
2. How does the idea of a prank war conflict with our Social Honor Code? Can this conflict be reconciled in any way (i.e. creating rules beforehand, signing a contract etc.) or are there no exceptions?
3. To what extent did groupthink play into the alienation and successive feelings of Sir Gareth? At what point can resolutions be individualized when there is a large group involved?
4. How could this case raise more awareness for disability issues on Haverford’s campus?
5. In what types of situations is it appropriate for procedural guidelines to be modified based on the needs of individual parties?
6. What resources do/should parties have if they feel that a case is not being handled appropriately by Honor Council?
7. When is it appropriate for a faculty member to serve as a support person?