Abstract discussion will be held the week of November 30, 2015.

Mary Poppins:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2015

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. Due to the time elapsed since this trial, neither party was able to be contacted for consensus.

Key:
Michael Banks – Confronted Party
Jane Banks – Classmate
Professor Mary Poppins – Confronting Party
Professor Bert – Faculty Support Person
Techniques in Chimney Sweeping - 100 level course

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This case involves potential inappropriate collaboration on an extra credit assignment by a student, [Michael]. After extensive fact-finding meetings, the jury believed that Michael had copied from a classmate’s assignment even though the student denied that any copying had occurred. Resolutions included a potential separation contingent on the jury’s assessment of Michael’s completion of certain resolutions. After a successful mediation with the professor in which Michael ultimately took responsibility for the violation, the jury decided that Michael would not be separated.

Unfortunately, a large amount of information has been lost due to the amount of time that has elapsed since this case. In the time since this trial occurred, Honor Council has worked to implement better record keeping systems such that we are confident that current cases will not suffer a similar loss of information.

Fact Finding Part 1:
The jury met with Michael, Professor [Poppins], and Professor [Bert]. Professor Bert was present because he was Professor Poppins’ assigned mentor since Professor Poppins was a new faculty member at Haverford.
Michael explained to the jury that he had had an extra credit assignment consisting of two questions due for his [Techniques in Chimney Sweeping] course. He had decided to email his tutor to ask for help on the assignment, and the tutor emailed tips, which Michael used to work out the problem. The problems were due by the ‘end of the day’ (11:59 pm) on Thursday in a folder outside of Professor Poppins’ office.

Professor Poppins told the jury that she had graded the extra credit assignments herself, and found the wording and structure of Michael’s first problem to be strikingly similar to that of another student, Jane, to the point that upon grading her, she thought it was the same problem set that she had already graded. When she looked at the second problem, she saw that the order in which the steps of the [sweeping maneuvers] were performed and the layouts of those [maneuvers] were nearly identical in Jane and Michael’s assignments. In consulting her colleague, Professor Bert, he also noticed that Michael had made an error in one of his [sweeping maneuvers] but still arrived at a [clean chimney] regardless, which made the professors suspicious that this error was made while copying down Jane’s solution.

Although Michael was friends with Jane, he said that they had never worked together. He also said that the tutor he consulted would not have seen the solutions to the assignment. Professor Poppins explained that she had considered also bringing Jane to Honor Council on the basis that she let Michael see her work. However, Jane explained that she had completed the assignment 3 days before the deadline because she had received help from a [Chimney Sweeping] TA.

Michael then explained that he had tried to do the problem but found it difficult and wasn’t sure about his thought process since he wasn’t confident in his [Chimney Sweeping] ability. Even after asking for a hint, he wasn’t sure whether or not his final answer was correct, but wanted to turn in the assignment anyway in case it was.

Professor Poppins later called both students into her office separately and asked them to re-do the problem on the board. Jane was able to reproduce the main points, however Michael was not, saying that he didn’t look at the problem to prepare because he thought that would have been dishonest.

Michael and Professor Poppins had discussed whether Michael usually had issues with [basic sweeping techniques], to which he said he did not, and this problem was just conceptually more advanced than previous problems. Michael claimed to have thrown away his first draft of the problem.

Professor Bert had suggested Professor Poppins look at other students’ responses in order to understand the similarity between Michael and Jane’s. Professor Bert stated that this similarity could only have arisen through copying, and since Jane has a better standing in the class she would have no motivation to copy. Also, her paper was neater than Michael’s. It was unclear as to when exactly Jane turned her assignment in, but Michael had received help over email from his tutor on Thursday at noon and therefore did the problem the day it was due.
Professor Poppins brought in the extra credit assignments from every student in the class so that the jury could see the similarity between Michael’s and Jane’s answers in contrast to the answers of the other students.

Fact Finding Part 2:
The jury reconvened with only Michael present to review Michael and Jane’s assignments. Michael recounted the open-ended hint that the tutor had given him for problem #1 and asserted that he did problem #2 on his own.

Michael said that he didn’t always do the extra credit, but had done poorly on the most recent exam and wanted to get extra points. He also mentioned that his tutor had equipped him with the proper tools to tackle the problem. The jury noted that Michael seemed frustrated with himself; he admitted that he had a problem with remembering how to do problems, and got annoyed with himself when he struggled to remember it later.

Fact Finding Part 3:
Jane met with the jury and explained the timeline of her completion of the problem set. She completed the extra credit on Monday in the [Chimney Sweeping Help Center] with help from the TAs and did the second problem there on her own, but she couldn’t remember whether she turned it in the day it was due or the day before.

Jane also recalled that she had received a hint in order to get started on the problem, which she recounted to the jury. Jane explained that she had never collaborated with Michael and agreed that the assignments looked very similar, but also confirmed that Michael wasn’t in the [Chimney Sweeping Help Center] at the same time that she was. Jane said that [Chimney Sweeping] didn’t come easily to her but that she had an easy time remembering problems she’d done before. She hadn’t seen anyone else’s work or talked to any classmates about it. She had kept her assignment in her bag until the due date and didn’t think Michael could have copied it then; it would have to have been after she turned it in. She added that there were other assignments already turned in by the time she put hers there.

Fact Finding Part 4:
Both professors met again with the jury. Professor Poppins felt that the strongest evidence in favor of a violation was Michael’s lack of ability to reproduce the solution, indicating he submitted a solution without understanding it. Professor Bert also felt confident it was Michael who had to have copied, especially since Michael was below average in the class. Professor Poppins explained that each student had received the same hint that Jane had, and that with that hint, the problem wasn’t so hard as it followed a specified format. Professor Bert also called the jury’s attention to some ways in which Jane’s solutions included details that were absent from Michael’s.
Professor Poppins added that she had spoken with the professor of the course’s [applied chimney sweeping] portion, who had separately noticed similarity in the work of two students, one of whom was Michael.

When asked for proposed resolutions, Professor Poppins suggested that the points for the extra credit assignment be withheld. She also stated that she no longer felt comfortable leaving problem sets turned in early out in the open for other people to take, but didn’t think that any resolution would impact the future since she did not feel that Michael would do this again.

Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:

The jury first consented to the spirit of a violation, with one juror standing outside. The jury subsequently reconvened and consented on the following statement of violation:

“Michael violated the Honor Code by turning in work that was not completely his own in [Techniques in Chimney Sweeping]”

At this point, the jury felt that it needed to meet with Michael again to ask him whether or not he had copied the assignment. The jury also expressed interest in meeting with the professor of the [Applied Chimney Sweeping] portion to ascertain whether an additional violation had occurred in that portion of the course.

NOTE: Records from the subsequent trial meetings have since been almost completely lost. The information in the following sections in part represents the recollections of jury members several years later. Honor Council has since implemented improved record-keeping systems to prevent similar losses of information in the future. Despite our limited records of this trial, we believe that this abstract is important for its unconventional trial procedure and unique perspective on the idea of taking responsibility for one’s actions.

Fact Finding Part 5:

The jury met with Michael to ask him about the violation. Since most of the jury felt that Michael had copied the assignment, they wanted to give Michael one more opportunity to admit to doing so. One juror recalled that the conversation had not seemed to be going anywhere, and that Michael definitely was not going to admit to anything, so the meeting ended up being relatively short.

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1 This matter was sent to an additional academic trial for which the notes have been subsequently lost. This unfortunate and complete loss of information occurred for similar reasons given for the loss of information in this case.
Circumstantial Portion:

The jury met briefly with Michael. They asked about what he could do to prevent a similar situation in the future as well as about his time management.

Tentative Resolutions:

The tentative resolutions included potential separation which would be evaluated on the basis of Micheal completing a set of resolutions. These included Michael attending three abstract discussions, having multiple meetings with Professor Poppins, and writing a reflection on the Honor Code. The jury would reconvene after Michael had completed these in order to assess whether or not he would be separated for the following semester.

Finalizing Resolutions:

The jury reconsorted to the set of tentative resolutions. While Michael still did not admit to having violated the Code, he told the jury that he understood why he must complete these resolutions.

Final Resolutions:

1. 0.0 on both assignments (recommendation)
2. Two meetings with Professor [Poppins], may request a mediator (completed)
3. Attend 3 abstract discussions this semester followed by meetings with a jury member.
4. Letter to the community from [Michael] reflecting on the violation and process (2 pages)
5. Separation contingent upon outcome of meetings

Mediation:

After an unsuccessful meeting with Professor Poppins, Michael requested a mediator to help facilitate a more meaningful discussion, as recommended by the resolutions. An Honor Council member who had served on the jury was selected to mediate the following meeting between the parties.

Both parties had felt that the previous meeting had been unsuccessful since they were unsure of the goals of the meeting and what they were supposed to talk about. The mediator then explained the trial goals of education, restoration, and accountability and asked the parties which of these goals they felt were important to the meetings. Professor Poppins felt that all three were important, emphasizing that she felt that Michael was avoiding taking full accountability for his actions.

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2 This list approximates the final set of resolutions consented to by the jury.
The mediator explained the idea of separation as a restorative measure and that taking ownership of one’s actions is a huge step in terms of restoration and would only benefit him in the jury’s final decision on separation, Michael admitted to the violation and expressed regret at not having taken more ownership thus far. The professor expressed appreciation for Michael’s openness and that he was finally talking about the incident in the first person. The mediator then asked whether Michael thought that the trial setup had been intimidating and not conducive to opening up about a serious issue. Michael felt that he felt a little intimidated because the jury was a group of his peers who he would see around campus. Both parties, however, thought that the trial process and setup in general work really well.

Professor Poppins added that the incident was confusing for her as a relatively new professor, but also felt that that the process has opened up her options as a professor in terms of exams and assignments and trusting her students. She noted that she didn’t want this one case to define her perspective.

Michael then explained that the abstracts he had read had brought up issues that he hadn’t thought about, and that he felt more educated, especially from seeing people take responsibility in their letters to the community. Michael added that he felt a lot better taking ownership of his violation, and thought it should be emphasized to the community that trial meetings are a safe space.

After hearing from Michael, Professor Poppins told Michael that she would be his main advocate for no separation.

Post-Trial

After Michael completed the required resolutions, the jury decided that he would not be separated. They respected his taking ownership for the violation during the mediation with Professor Poppins and felt that he simply needed support and education surrounding the violation.

Discussion Questions:
1) How should the jury proceed in the case where the confronted party does not take ownership, but the jury is convinced that a violation has occurred?
2) How should a jury consider a confronted party’s admitting to a violation late in the trial process?