Abstract discussion TBD.

Madam Secretary:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
Released Fall 2017

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 parties consented to the release of the abstract.

Key:
Matt: Confronted party
Jay: Confronted party
Professor McCord: Confronting party
Foreign Policy 101: Course in which the violation occurred

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This trial concerned two students, Jay and Matt, who inappropriately collaborated on a midterm exam. Jay had already taken the exam, but gave Matt help on his exam when asked for it. Both students approached the trial process honestly and the jury’s discussion focused on whether their honesty should impact its handling of the case. The jury’s resolutions paid special attention to education and restoration. Due to a heavy caseload at the time, this trial was run with nine jurors and was chaired by an experienced member of Honor Council, rather than a Co-Chair.

Fact Finding:
Both confronted and confronting parties were present for this meeting. Professor McCord noted that her suspicion had first been aroused when she was grading the take home midterms and saw that Matt’s answer to question 3 did not make sense. She further found that Matt had written a complete (but incorrect) answer to question 4 before crossing it out and writing the correct answer. She then noticed that both Matt and Jay had gotten a surprisingly identical wrong answer to question 5. Professor McCord met with Matt and he initially denied violating the code. After brief discussion Professor McCord offered him a chance to reconsider his denial. Matt came clean and recounted what had happened.

Matt described how he had been taking the exam in his room when Jay had walked in, not knowing that Matt was taking the exam. Matt had already completed questions 2-5,
asked Jay about question 5. Jay offered Matt a verbal hint about a different approach than the one he had used. For question 6, Jay and Matt discussed the right way to tackle the question and Jay confirmed which pieces of Matt’s work were on the right track. Matt said that he was not trying to hide the collaboration, and was very regretful of the whole situation. Jay agreed that he hadn’t initially known Matt was working on the exam, that he had experienced a lapse in judgment in the moment of assisting. Immediately after helping Matt, Jay realized he had done something wrong. He mentioned that he felt the confrontation with Professor McCord had been constructive.

A member of the jury asked what had caused the lapse in judgment. Jay replied that it had been spontaneous. He elaborated that he and Matt are close friends and live together, and that he didn’t want to violate the community and Matt’s trust. Jay also felt he had broken Matt’s trust by helping him. Even though Matt had asked him for help, he felt somewhat responsible for the overall act of cheating. Matt replied that his own lapse in judgment resulted from extreme nervousness in the moment of taking the exam. He realized he had put Jay in a tough position and wanted to take responsibility for that. He expressed an understanding that receiving a bad grade is part of the academic process and regretted that this knowledge eluded him at the time.

A juror asked Matt about his initial denial of any violation. Matt said that this was another lapse in judgment, and was due to a lot of nerves and, in his word, “stupidity,” and that he had wanted to protect Jay. When Professor McCord elaborated on the inconsistencies, Matt started weighing the ramifications of his actions and eventually admitted what happened. He tried to explain how truly sorry he was and that he knew it was a breach of trust with his professor and classmates.

The jury then spoke separately to Professor McCord. She informed the jury that the exam was worth 25% of the final class grade, and the two questions were worth 40% of the exam, or 10% of the final class grade. She proposed that Matt receive a 0 on both questions and that Jay receive a deduction of 30% on the exam. The professor described these two grade changes as equivalent despite their slightly different nature. While the jury was slightly confused, they accepted the professor’s assessment of these two grade changes as equal. Professor McCord then said that it was important that Matt and Jay realize the impact of what they had done.

**Jury Deliberations and Statement of Violation:**

Every juror felt that inappropriate collaboration had occurred and came to the following statement of violation:

[Matt] and [Jay] violated the honor code by inappropriately collaborating on a take home midterm. This collaboration occurred when [Matt] asked for and received verbal help from [Jay]. (9 jurors consent)

**Circumstantial Portion:**

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One juror was unable to attend this meeting. Both confronted parties were present. Matt began by speaking about parental and daily pressures, as well as the impact of the recent presidential election. Matt had planned to take the exam earlier, but had pushed it back because of a lack of time and stress. These factors left him feeling distressed and ill-prepared by the final day the exam could be taken. Jay talked about how he had let his friendship with Matt cloud his judgment, and how he thought of the Honor Code as being “friend to friend, but also self to self.” One juror conjectured that Jay may have been referring both to disappointing his friend and to disappointing himself.

The jury then spoke to the parties separately. Matt talked about how he and Jay had both done something wrong. Immediately following the initial confrontation, Jay felt there was some tension between the two, but Matt had immediately apologized to him, putting them back on good terms. He had no doubt that they could move forward as friends. Matt also reflected on his experience with the Customs program, and the manner in which HCOs critically think about the Honor Code through their Customs work, and that perhaps other Customs members should discuss the Code on a more regular basis.

At this point, Matt left the room and Jay returned. A juror asked about his friendship with Matt. Jay responded that because they were both at fault and had both made mistakes, coming through this restorative process together might actually make them closer. A juror asked Jay why he had felt compelled to help Matt. He talked about how Matt had really struggled because of the recent presidential election. He had known that Matt knew the material, saw the anguish in his face of knowing the answer on a test but not being able to complete it, and wanted to help.

Matt returned and the jury asked whether the parties had any resolutions they wanted to suggest. Jay proposed attending abstract discussions. Matt suggested a formal written apology to the professor and a meeting to apologize. He also suggested that they both write a letter to the community, that he personally meet with deans or the OAR to discuss compartmentalizing stress after the election, that they attend three abstract discussions, that they re-read the honor code, and that he take exams somewhere other than his room in the future. Matt also reiterated support for the grade deductions that they had agreed upon. The professor had written an email also endorsing the agreed-upon grade change.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The parties took their leave and the jury deliberated on the tentative resolutions. A juror noted how respectful and reflective these parties had been. Jurors expressed that the resolutions Jay and Matt had proposed seemed reasonable and agreed to use their suggestions.

One juror recommended Jay and Matt talk to a dean or advisor, a suggestion met by general agreement. The jury decided meeting with the professor, in addition to writing letters, would also be beneficial. The jury felt that the letters should be written over the next break to give Matt and Jay time to reflect before they the met with Professor McCord.
With regard to the grade change, the jury felt that the changes agreed upon by the confronting and confronted parties would address the trial goal of accountability well. They agreed that Matt would not receive credit for the two questions and Jay would receive a 30% deduction on the exam. It was at this point that the jury discussed whether these two grade changes were equivalent. In the end, the jury agreed to trust the professor’s assertion that they were equal in magnitude.

The jury then crafted a statement on reporting. While jurors were conflicted, with some feeling that this might have been disciplinary at other institutions, the weight of the jury felt that it would not have been, and thus leaned against reporting. The jury then consented to the following resolutions and statement.

**Tentative Resolutions:**

1. The jury supports the agreement made between the confronted and confronting parties, for [Matt] and [Jay] to both receive a 30% deduction on the exam. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

2. [Matt and Jay] will each write a letter to the community by the start of the [next semester]. These letters will be appended to this abstract. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

3. [Matt] and [Jay] will meet with [Professor McCord], if she is willing, in order to formally apologize and restore the breach of trust. This meeting will take place by [date]. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

4. [Matt] and [Jay] will each attend three abstract discussions by the end of the [semester]. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

5. [Matt] and [Jay] will each re-read the honor code before taking their final exams for the [semester]. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

6. The jury suggests that [Matt] meet with his dean in order to establish a relationship. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

7. The jury encourages [Matt] to meet with a representative of the OAR to discuss methods of compartmentalizing stress. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

On resolutions as a whole: 8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia

**Tentative Statement on Reporting to Other Institutions of Higher Learning:**

While the jury thinks this case may have been handled differently at other institutions, most of the jury does not believe that the case as it was brought to us constitutes a disciplinary proceeding, and should not be reported as such. Some jurors felt conflicted on this matter. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

**Finalizing Resolutions:**
The jury met with Matt and Jay, both of whom expressed their support for the resolutions and asked some clarifying questions. The professor expressed via email that she was okay with the resolutions, but that meeting with Matt and Jay was unnecessary. The jury discussed this and decided to keep the resolution because they thought it could still be restorative for all parties involved. The jury then discussed minor changes to the resolutions, and consented on final resolutions.

1. The jury supports the agreement made between the confronted and confronting parties, in which [Matt] and [Jay] will each receive a 30% deduction on the exam. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
2. [Matt] and [Jay] will each write a letter to the community by the start of the [next semester]. These letters will be appended to this abstract. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
3. [Matt] and [Jay] will meet with [Professor McCord], if she is willing, in order to formally apologize and restore the breach of trust. This meeting will take place by [date]. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
4. [Matt] and [Jay] will each attend three abstract discussions by the end of the [semester]. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
5. [Matt] and [Jay] will each re-read the honor code before taking their final exams for the [semester]. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
6. The jury suggests that [Matt] meet with his dean in order to establish a relationship upon which he can rely in future times of stress. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)
7. The jury encourages [Matt] to meet with a representative of the OAR to discuss methods of handling stress. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Resolutions as a whole: 8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia

Statement on Reporting:

While the jury thinks this case may have been handled differently at other institutions, most of the jury does not believe that the case as it was brought to us constitutes a disciplinary proceeding, and should not be reported as such. Some jurors felt conflicted on this matter. (8 jurors consent, 1 stands outside in absentia)

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Jay’s Letter:
The Haverford Community,
I apologize for my actions during this past [date redacted] when I violated the Honor Code during my [Foreign Policy] class last semester. I realize that the Haverford community is one that is based on trust. While going through the trial proceedings, I was able to reflect on my actions and I realized that while I thought I was helping my friend, I was, in fact, hurting [Matt] by helping him on the midterm. I also violated the trust of Professor [McCord], who entrusted a take-home midterm to us, as well as the rest of my class. All in all, I have learned from my mistake, and hope to turn a negative decision into a positive, learning experience.

**Matt’s Letter:**
To the Haverford Honor Council and Haverford Community,

This past semester, I breached the Honor Code by collaborating with another student in my class on two questions of a take-home exam. I used abhorrent judgment in this case and used the Honor Code in a completely unacceptable way. I breached the trust inherent in the Honor Code and entrusted to students during a take-home exam and for this I sincerely apologize.

As members of this Haverford community, each of us must hold ourselves to the highest standard. This is where I have failed. I have let down the very standards that I hold so dear. For this, I am extremely sorry. The weeks leading up to this exam were exceptionally difficult for me, and in the moment I exhibited weakness and a lack of good judgment. I was nervous, unsure and concerned for my friend when I should have been extremely upfront and trustworthy.

Additionally, I understand the commitment I made to the school and community, when I decided to enroll here upon admission. When I wrote my application supplement on the meaning of the Honor Code, I spent substantial time reflecting on the gravity of this social and academic contract¹. I understand that missteps such as mine undermine the trust inherent in the code. I have broken this trust and for that I hold only myself responsible. Nonetheless, after the whole Honor Council process, I have taken full responsibility for the situation and only plan to grow from it. The members of my Honor Council trial acted with professionalism and conducted a fair, constructive and straightforward. I am extremely thankful for their careful deliberation throughout the process. Once again, I would like to sincerely apologize to the entire Haverford community. Please know that I will use this experience to become a more active and diligent member of the community.

Sincerely,

[Matt]

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Does the manner in which confronted parties approach the trial process matter in consideration of resolutions? Specifically, should the manner in which confronted parties take responsibility impact juries’ methods of seeking accountability and restoration?

¹ There was an additional sentence here that was removed at the request of the party because it contained potentially identifying information.
2. If confronted and confronting parties have made agreements about a grade change should Honor Council make any changes to such agreements?

3. What should we do when our desire to help our friends conflicts with the academic standards of the community?

4. Do you see a difference between giving and receiving help? What are these differences and should the trial reflect that?