Ferris Bueller’s Day Off:
An Honor Council Academic Trial
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Key:
Confronted Party: Ferris Bueller
Confronting Party: Professor Cameron Frye
Class: Truancy 200

Summary/Pre-Trial:
This case involves a student, Ferris Bueller, who was confronted by his professor, Cameron Frye. When completing his weekly problem set, Ferris googled one of the questions, and found and downloaded a solution set of a problem set containing the same question from the Moodle site of the Truancy 200 class from the previous semester. Ferris sent in his problem set late by email without asking for an extension from the professor. When trying to attach his problem set, he attached the solution set instead. Professor Frye noticed this and asked Ferris to bring himself to Honor Council. Both parties sent their statements to the Honor Council. The Honor Council consented to send this case to academic trial.

Fact Finding:
During the fact finding meeting, both parties were present. According to Ferris, he decided to do most of the problem set the night before it was due. Due to his heavy course load and time constraint, Ferris decided to look up this question on Google. Ferris claimed that his initial intention was to understand the wording of the problem rather than look for the solution. However, the solution set appeared as the first search result. Also, he indicated that he did not download the solution on purpose, but that it was an automatic download. According to Ferris, he looked at the solution for around 10 minutes and found it was not helpful, so he came up with his written solution for this problem on his own.

Professor Frye then shared his perspective of the event. He understood that Ferris was in a stressful situation, but he believed that Ferris had been aware of his violation of the class policy by using the unauthorized resources, as he found the solution set of the same problem set from the same class in the previous semester. Professor Frye also noted some inconsistency in Ferris’s
homework grade, which started low, increased dramatically at Homework 4, and peaked at Homework 6 - for which he had found the solution set - then dropped immediately after being confronted.

After both parties shared their views, the jury asked questions. One jury brought up the confusing email exchange between Ferris and Professor Frye. According to Professor Frye, problem sets for Truancy 200 were usually due at the beginning of the class. On the day Homework 6 was due, Ferris approached Professor Frye before class, saying that he needed more time to type up the problem set, which Professor Frye took to mean that he had finished the homework but just needed time to type it. Later, Professor Frye received an email from Ferris saying that he actually still needed to finish some of the problem set. Professor Frye requested Ferris to hand in the homework at the end of his office hours, but Ferris did not. Although Professor Frye sent more emails to Ferris asking him to turn in the homework, Ferris did not respond until that evening, when he sent in the solution set downloaded from the Moodle site for Truancy 200 from the previous semester.

According to Professor Frye, he and Ferris are on the same page in most other aspects, but disagree as to the severity of his potential Honor Code violation.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

After the parties left the jury began deliberations. All jurors agreed that Ferris had violated the Academic Honor Code. Deliberations centered around Ferris’s use of internet resources and his dishonesty and lack of communication with Professor Frye.

In regards to Ferris’s access of internet resources, one juror asked whether it would still be counted as a violation if Ferris had not actually used the downloaded solution set to solve the homework problem. However, other jurors answered that no matter whether Ferris had used it or not, the action of consulting online sources which the course syllabus indicated as not allowed was sufficient enough to count as a violation of the academic code.

As to Ferris’s communication with Professor Frye, all jurors agreed that Ferris lied to Professor Frye by saying he was just typing his problem set when he still had not completed it. Also, the jurors believed Ferris showed disrespect to Professor Frye and the graders of this class by not responding to Professor Frye’s emails and taking too long to hand in his homework without asking for an extension. In this regard, some jurors thought that Ferris had violated both the academic code and the social code, so the statement of violation should include both. However, the trial chair pointed out that if the jury reached a statement of social code violation, the case had to go through an independent social trial. Also, according to the Honor Code, the social trial would require a confronting party, who cannot be a professor. Another juror proposed the idea of drafting a general statement of violation of the Honor Code, rather than specifying the academic or social code. The jury decided to take this suggestion, and came up with the following statement of violation:
Statement of Violation:

[Ferris] violated the Honor Code by using unauthorized resources and more time than allotted while completing an assignment and by communicating dishonestly with the professor in the process.

Consensus: 8 jurors consent, 2 jurors stand outside in absentia

Circumstantial Portion:

During this meeting, Ferris explained the context in which this violation occurred and the reasons behind it. Ferris insisted that the violation was not intentional and that he was not thinking about cheating when he used the internet. Instead, he just wanted to understand the wording of the question and confirm that his tentative solution was on the right track. Also, he claimed he did not realize that internet itself was an unauthorized resource for the class according to the syllabus.

As to his communication with Professor Frye, Ferris stated that, contrary to his messages in the email chain, he really was typing up the problem set rather than finishing it. Ferris said he believed that one only hurts oneself by cheating, which led the jury to believe that he did not realize the severity of his violation, as a violation of the academic code is a breach of trust of the whole Haverford community.

Then the jury started to question what factors led to Ferris having such limited time to finish this problem set, which was a primary cause of the violation. Ferris said he felt uncomfortable reaching out for help or asking for an extension. He also said he had bad time management and planning skills, but thought planning would just waste more time since he would spend time planning rather than actually doing assignments. Therefore he believed that getting help from the OAR may not be the best for him.

For a potential tentative resolution, one juror asked Ferris what he would think of a restorative resolution of writing a letter to the community. Ferris said he would rather not do it although he understood his action may cause the professor to trust students less in the future. He said he would rather reflect on himself.

Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:

In this meeting, the jurors met up to come up with tentative resolutions based on what Ferris had said during the Circumstantial Portion.

To address the education goal of the trial, the jury believed Ferris needed to improve his time management skills and learn to ask for support and extensions when he needed to. Also, Ferris should fully understand the course syllabi for every single class he takes. Therefore the jury came up with the resolutions of Ferris meeting once every two weeks with his dean and the OAR, as well as signing a note stating that he has read the syllabi and understood them for all
classes he takes in the future.

To address the restoration goal of the trial, the jury believed it would be necessary for Ferris to realize the severity of his violation and understand it as a breach of trust not only to him, but also to the whole community. Also, the jury believed Ferris needed to reflect more on his disrespect toward Professor Frye throughout the whole communication process, and his somewhat disrespectful behavior toward the jury in the last few meetings. Therefore, the jury came up with the resolutions of asking Ferris to write a letter to the community and having an additional meeting with two jury members.

The trial goal of accountability was the most controversial among the jury. All jury members agreed with the resolution proposed by Professor Frye, who gave Ferris a zero on the problem set for which he had consulted the unauthorized online resource, and did not use it as his lowest assignment grade to be dropped from the overall grade. Professor Frye, although absent at the meeting, communicated through the email that he would not oppose any resolutions the jury made. Since Ferris did not seem to understand the severity of his violation, and since some members of the jury felt that Ferris should take more accountability for his actions, one juror proposed a resolution of a one step reduction in Ferris’s overall grade in the course in addition to the zero he had already received on the homework. Some of the jury supported this resolution, as they believed Ferris should take more accountability for his actions. Some jurors felt that it was unfair for Ferris to receive the same grade as a student in the same class who did not hand in two problem sets but did not violate the Honor Code in any way. However, other members of the jury believed this grade change was too punitive, especially considering how small a percentage the problem set made up of the overall grade. These jurors believed it was unfair for Ferris’s grade to be affected apart from the problem set, and the attitude of disrespect and lack of understanding of the significance of his violation should be addressed in the education and restoration resolutions. Jurors debated this for a long time, and eventually the majority supported the grade change.

Having concluded these discussions, the jury came up with the following tentative resolutions:

**Tentative Resolutions**

1.  **[Ferris] will receive a 0.0 on the assignment he used unauthorized resources for.** (10 jurors consent)
2.  **Provided that this will not cause him to fail the course or lose credit toward his major, [Ferris] will receive a 0.3 (one step) reduction in his overall course grade (e.g. 4.0 to 3.7, etc.).** (8 jurors consent, 2 jurors stand outside)
3.  **[Ferris] will meet with his dean once every two weeks to discuss the significance of his violation, the importance of reaching out for support if he needs to, and his general academic situation at that point. These meetings will continue as long as the dean deems this appropriate (at least until the end of [semester]).** (10 jurors consent)
4. [Ferris] will meet with the OAR once every two weeks to work on his planning skills. These meetings will continue as least as long as his dean deems this appropriate (at least until the end of [semester]). The jury encourages him to continue beyond this as long as it is helpful. (10 jurors consent)

5. For at least [two semesters], after he finalizes his course selection, [Ferris] will sign the statement “I have read the syllabi for all of my classes. I have understood everything and have been given opportunities to ask questions.” and send it to his Dean for approval. (10 jurors consent)

6. [Ferris] will write a letter to the community, which will be published in the abstract, including:
   a) Acknowledging how his violation affects the professor, the graders and the classmates of his [Truancy 200] class, as well as the greater Haverford community;
   b) His understanding of the importance of the syllabus to a class
   c) His understanding of the Honor Code and its importance to the community.
   This letter will be completed by [date]. (10 jurors consent)

7. [Ferris] will meet with two jurors of this trial, one Honor Council juror and one community juror, to discuss the importance of the Honor Code, the severity of his violation, as well as his attitude towards the jury throughout the process. This meeting will take place by [date]. (8 jurors consent, 2 jurors stand outside)

Resolutions as a whole: 9 jurors consent, 1 juror stands outside

Statement on reporting:  
The jury recommends that this case will not be reported to higher institutions of learning unless [Ferris] violates the Honor Code again. (10 jurors consent)

Finalizing Resolutions:  
Both Ferris and Professor Frye were present at this meeting. They went through the tentative resolutions with the jury one by one and proposed their questions and concerns.

For Resolution 1, Ferris suggested the jury to change to word “used” to “accessed”, since he maintained that he did not use the solution set to do his problem set.

For Resolution 2 regarding a grade change, Ferris was strongly opposed, since he felt that beyond the 0 on his problem set, he had met the trial goal of accountability through his participation in the entire honor council trial process, including spending time stressing about writing a statement and attending many meetings. From this statement, the jury believed he had misunderstood the process and goals of an Honor Council trial, especially when the jury had spent more time than Ferris sitting in meetings and helping hold him accountable and restoring him to the community. In response to this resolution, Professor Frye stated that he believed he
was not in the position to determine its appropriateness, but he understood the jury’s logic behind it and agreed that there needs to be a consequence for dishonesty.

Ferris also found Resolutions 3 and 4 unnecessary since he was already obligated to meet with his dean on a weekly basis because he was on academic probation, but the jury decided to keep these resolutions since they believed they were important to reach the education goal of the trial.

After Ferris left, the jury deliberated and consented to the following Finalized Resolutions:

**Finalized Resolutions**

1. **[Ferris] will receive a 0.0 on the assignment he accessed unauthorized resources for.** (10 jurors consent)

2. **Provided that this will not cause him to fail the course or lose credit toward his major, [Ferris] will receive a 0.3 (one step) reduction in his overall course grade (e.g. 4.0 to 3.7, etc.).** (8 jurors consent, 2 jurors stand outside)

3. **[Ferris] will meet with his dean once every two weeks to discuss the significance of his violation, the importance of reaching out for support if he needs to, and his general academic situation at that point. These meetings will continue as long as the dean deems this appropriate (at least until the end of [semester]).** (10 jurors consent)

4. **[Ferris] will meet with the OAR once every two weeks to work on his planning skills. These meetings will continue at least as long as his dean deems this appropriate (at least until the end of [semester]). The jury encourages him to continue beyond this as long as it is helpful.** (10 jurors consent)

5. **For at least [two semesters], after his dean approves his schedule, [Ferris] will sign the statement “I have read the syllabi for all of my classes. I have understood everything and have been given opportunities to ask questions.” and send it to his Dean for approval.** (10 jurors consent)

6. **[Ferris] will write a letter to the community, which will be published in the abstract, including:**
   a) Acknowledging how his violation affects the professor, the graders and the classmates of his [Truancy 200] class, as well as the greater Haverford community;
   b) His understanding of the importance of the syllabus to a class
   c) His understanding of the Honor Code and its importance to the community. This letter will be completed by [date]. (10 jurors consent)

7. **[Ferris] will meet with two jurors of this trial, one Honor Council juror and one community juror, to discuss the importance of the Honor Code and the severity of his violation, as well as his attitude towards the jury throughout the process. This meeting will take place by [date].** (10 jurors consent)
Resolutions as a whole: 9 jurors consent, 1 juror stands outside

Statement on reporting:
The jury recommends that this case not be reported to higher institutions of learning unless [Ferris] violates the Honor Code again. (10 jurors consent)

Post-Trial:
The resolutions were not appealed.

Discussion Questions:
1. How can resolutions with the goal of holding students accountable do so without seeming overly punitive? Is a grade change always overly punitive?
2. Can a jury seek a grade change that goes beyond the suggestion of the Professor?
3. Should a jury take into account whether or not a confronted party is on academic probation at the time of a trial? What resolutions can a jury reach that are not made redundant by the requirements of academic probation?
Letter to the Community

To the members of the Haverford community,

I believe that the Honor Code is a valuable part of the Haverford community, creating a sense of social responsibility amongst the students and encouraging the values of the institution to be exercised to their fullest capacity. I am also aware that the Syllabus for a course contains not only an outline, but also policies for proper resources, and collaboration. While I did not use the disallowed materials for producing my assignment, I did access them and am aware that the materials would not be allowed in any setting. Academic dishonesty does nothing to further an individual’s learning and voids the purpose of getting an education. Although I disagree with the Council’s verdict and believe that the punishment is disproportional to the violation, the members of the jury conducted themselves in a thoroughly professional manner throughout the ordeal.

I would now like to apologize in a formal sense for my actions with my professor. I am aware that my actions were misleading and make it less likely that professors will trust other students in the future. For this I am not only apologizing to the professor, but to the community at large, as I am aware that my actions could have an impact on more than just my relationship with the professor. I would also like to apologize to the graders in my class. Simply knowing that the materials that I was able to access exist may decrease their confidence that the students are in fact presenting their own original work making them (the graders) the watchdogs for academic integrity, which would distract from the intended goal of providing accurate feedback for other students. I would also like to apologize to the other students in my class. If any of them were in any way negatively affected by my actions, I have nothing but the deepest regret.