

## **Report of the Honor Code Review Committee August 2012**

The Honor Code Review Committee was charged in fall 2011 with evaluating the revised Honor Code system, approved in 2006 by the Faculty, the Honor Commission and Student Senate, and scheduled for review in 2011-2012. The Honor Code Review Committee invited comments from the Gettysburg College community on the Honor Code and its adjudication processes, examined salient issues of the revised Code and recommendations for strengthening the Honor Code. The Review Committee held a series of open discussions with faculty, students and administrators, as well as discussions with the Honor Commission, Student Senate, Academic Advising, College Life and the Office of the Provost. The Review Committee also met with faculty, administrators and students who requested individual meetings and received written comments from members of the Gettysburg College Community. Finally, the Committee analyzed statistical data available for the review period and reviewed student reflections on their adjudication in the Preliminary Conference.

The Review Committee focused its investigation on Preliminary Conferences, Hearings, the Appeals Process, Penalty and Equity Issues, Student and Faculty Education about the Honor Code and its Processes, Honor Pledge Use, Faculty Compliance with the Honor Code, Reporting of Honor Code Cases, Student Reporting of Violations, Proctoring, Expulsion and Honor Commission Policies and Procedures. The Committee also explored the changed campus climate affecting the Honor Code.

### **Honor Code Review Committee**

Lisa Portmess , Co-Chair  
Kelsey McCormick, Co-Chair  
Kurt Andresen  
Caroline Nathan  
Laura Sheehan  
Helena Yang  
GailAnn Rickert

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Gettysburg College Revised Honor Code affirms the value of academic integrity for the Gettysburg College community and the expectation and resolve that all students and faculty will uphold the principles of the Honor Code both inside and out of the classroom. Article I of the Honor Code states: “The mission of Gettysburg College, which affirms the worth and dignity of all people and the limitless value of their intellectual potential, relies on mutual trust as its foundation. Honesty and integrity are the heart of this trust and crucial to a community in which intellectual achievement, scholarship, and character can flourish.” Two complementary yet distinct frameworks are embodied in the Honor Code: a retributive framework that charges the Honor Commission with authority to punish actions that breach the College’s principles of academic integrity and a restorative framework that charges the Honor Commission with affording students who have acted dishonestly the opportunity to examine their behavior, learn from their mistakes, and begin the process of repairing their breach of the community’s trust and academic values. Both retributive and restorative frameworks are reflected in the range of penalties available to the Honor Commission in responding to Honor Code violations and in the responsibility of the Honor Commission to help students address issues that contributed to academic dishonesty and repair breaches of conduct that have undermined trust and disrupted the academic process.

During the review period violations include but are not limited to cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, unauthorized aid, fabrication of evidence, forgery on academic forms and documents, lying to gain academic advantage, submitting previously graded work, and defacing library materials. These categories reflect broad types of violations with significant variation in individual cases. (See Appendix A, Table 4 for Violation Types)

The Honor Commission seeks to balance both retributive and restorative frameworks in appraising the seriousness of Honor Code violations, and the appropriateness of penalties. In its deliberations over breaches of the Honor Code, the Honor Commission evaluates the extent to which the act was planned or deliberate and damaged the overall integrity of the College community. The Honor Commission also considers the student’s understanding of the nature of his or her violation, his or her sincerity and his or her capacity to be restored to the

community (3.3). The Honor Commission seeks to balance both frameworks in its deliberations and penalty decisions as it weighs evidence and hears testimony.

The Honor Code Review Committee sought by its investigation to evaluate the success of the Honor Code in meeting the challenges to academic integrity in a changed campus environment and upholding both high standards of conduct as well as the promise of restoration to the community when such restoration is deserved.

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## **III. PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE**

The Revised Honor Code established that a Preliminary Conference will be convened by the Dean of Academic Advising to address all self-reported violations or suspected violations of the College's standards of academic honesty. According to the revised Honor Code "The purpose

and value of a Preliminary Conference is to support expeditious investigation of complaints; to afford students who have been wrongly accused an opportunity to be vindicated; and to afford students who have acted dishonestly an opportunity to examine their behavior, learn from their mistakes, and begin the process of repairing their breach of our community's trust and academic values." (3.3) "Penalties ranging in severity up to and including failure in the course may be assigned through the Preliminary Conference. The imposition of more severe penalties requires the determinations of a Hearing Board. The Chair of the Honor Commission (or designee) shall suggest an appropriate range of penalties for the present circumstance." (3.7)

The Preliminary Conference resolved 208 cases (86%) out of a total of 241 cases during the five year review period, 2006-2011. The remaining cases, 33 (14%) were not resolved at the Preliminary Conference level and proceeded to a Hearing or required a Hearing because they were possible second violations (See Appendix A, Table 1). 74% of violations in 2006-2011 involved male students (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> violations) and 26% involved female students (Appendix A, Table 2). For the summary of violations by class year see Appendices A & B, Table 3. See Appendix A & B, Table 7 for a summary of complaints brought forward by Departments and Programs. 18% of complaints in 2006-2011 occurred in 300 or 400 level courses. 23% of complaints in 2011-2012 occurred in 300 level classes (Appendix A & B, Table 7).

Faculty, student and administrators expressed broad support for the Conference system as the primary process for addressing complaints. The fact that 86% of cases are resolved through the Preliminary Conference indicates the success of the Preliminary Conference in addressing complaints. Faculty who have participated in Preliminary Conferences value the direct discussion of the complaint and the behavior that underlies cheating and dishonesty. Faculty express particular satisfaction in having a role in deciding the outcome of cases. In many cases faculty view the Preliminary Conference as a first step in reestablishing a relationship with an offending student. Faculty who have experienced a Preliminary Conference largely express satisfaction in the outcome of deliberations. While concern has been expressed by some faculty about variable penalties, the ability of faculty (and Honor Commission members) to agree to variable penalties is a key feature of the Revised Honor Code that faculty involved in Preliminary Conferences appreciate. The reflective essays written by students who have experienced adjudication in the Preliminary Conference nearly universally commend the process as fair and valuable to them in confronting their own academic dishonesty.

Recommendations of the Review Committee regarding the Preliminary Conference focus on the importance of providing guidelines for penalties to address penalty inconsistencies, written guidelines of responsibilities for advisors who accompany students in the Preliminary Conference, and written guidelines about Preliminary Conference procedures for faculty in whose course the violation occurred and for others who bring complaints.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Penalty Range (3.7, 4.2, 4.4):** The task of the Chair of the Honor Commission to suggest an appropriate range of penalties should be based on guidelines that indicate a rationale for greater and lesser penalties;
2. **The Role of the Faculty or Others Bringing the Complaint:** Written guidelines should be given to faculty members making the complaint before the Preliminary Conference. Some faculty have expressed uncertainty about Preliminary Conference procedures and their role in deliberations, which can be addressed by providing written guidelines before the Preliminary Conference in addition to the conversations with Academic Advising that already occur;
3. **Training of Honor Commission Co-Chairs:** The Honor Commission Chair of the Preliminary Conference should be trained specifically in how to handle penalty discussions in light of the penalty guidelines;
4. **Penalty Discussion:** Students and faculty should be made aware that at any point in the Conference, a break can be requested in which the faculty member of the course in which the violation occurred or the student can speak to the Honor Commission Chair and/or the Academic Advising Dean about any concerns or questions.
5. **For cases unresolved at the Preliminary Conference and referred to a Hearing Board:** if a student comes forward and admits to the violation or agrees to the recommended penalty before the Hearing Board is convened, the Dean of Academic Advising shall have discretion to consult with Preliminary Conference members to resolve the case without a hearing. If a consensus is not resolved by the Preliminary Conference members, the case will proceed to a hearing.

## IV. HEARING BOARDS AND PROCEDURES

According to the Revised Honor Code, "The Chair of the Honor Commission will convene a Hearing Board to resolve all cases not resolved through the Preliminary Conference." (5.1)  
"Hearing Boards can determine penalties from the full range available as they deem appropriate. Hearing Boards, like Preliminary Conferences, have as one of their goals helping students to address whatever deficiencies contributed to their breach of our principles." (5.11)  
The accused student is encouraged to have a current member of the Gettysburg College community present as an advisor during a Hearing (5.2).

Hearing Boards, like the Preliminary Conference, have both restorative and retributive functions. When a student has been found to have violated the Honor Code, the Hearing Board has as one of its goals helping that student address whatever deficiencies contributed to

his or her breach. According to the specific case, a Board may make appropriate recommendations such as utilizing Peer Tutoring, the Writing Center or participating in FY orientation with the Honor Commission.

Penalty variability in Hearing Board decisions is a salient concern that appeared during the Review process (Appendix A & B, Table 5). The Review Committee recommends that concern over penalty variability be addressed by newly created penalty guidelines that the Chair of the Honor Commission will introduce during penalty discussions. The Review also recommends that explicit consideration of equity of penalty occur in Hearing Board deliberations. Although we do not recommend fixed penalties that allow no regard for specific circumstances, we believe that penalty guidelines can mitigate penalty variability issues.

A second serious issue is the failure of accused students in some hearings to make use of the Dean of Academic Advising assigned to them as an advisor prior to the Hearing (5.5) or to secure an advisor for the Hearing from the campus community. Even with strong encouragement students sometimes do not take advantage of advising prior to the Hearing, nor invite a member of the community to be present with them in the Hearing. Students who do not have an advisor tend to be underprepared, less able to understand the seriousness of what is at stake in the Hearing, and more likely not to present evidence and arguments most beneficial to their case.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Penalty Range (3.7, 4.2, 4.4) Penalty guidelines should be developed and used in Hearing Board deliberations to help address inconsistencies in penalties. The Chairperson should ensure that the Appeal Board consider equity in deliberating penalties, based on guidelines that delineate penalties according to the seriousness of violations as well as the capacity of the student to be restored to the academic community;**
- 2. Training of Honor Commission Co-Chairs: The Honor Commission Co-Chair should be trained specifically in how to handle penalty discussions in light of penalty guidelines;**
- 3. Advisors for Accused Students: Article V: Hearing Boards and Procedures encourages accused students to have a current member of the Gettysburg College community present as an advisor during a Hearing, in addition to having a Dean of Academic Advising assigned as an advisor (5.4, 5.5) Students should be strongly encouraged to have an advisor in the Hearing and should be assisted by Academic Advising in finding an adviser if they cannot secure one. A Hearing should occur**

**only after the student has had the opportunity to meet with one of the Academic Advising Deans;**

- 4. The Hearing Board should be made aware of the option to have both student and faculty member present concurrently at the Hearing;**
- 5. The Hearing Board in its penalty discussions should give serious weight to lying that is found to have occurred at the Preliminary Conference.**
- 6. All expulsion decisions should be reviewed by the Provost before becoming effective;<sup>1</sup>**
- 7. Faculty who participate as Faculty Advisors for the Hearing and faculty or other members of the community who participate as Advisors to the Accused Student should be provided written guidelines for their role.**

## **V. APPEALS PROCESS**

During the review period 2006-2011, 8 Appeal Boards were requested and 5 were granted by the Provost. Three Appeal Boards upheld the violation finding and the penalty. One Appeal Board reduced the penalty and one reduced the violation finding and the penalty (See Appendix A, Table 6). For 2011-2012 four Appeal Boards were requested and granted by the Provost. All four upheld the violation and the penalty (Appendix B, Table 6).

According to the Revised Honor Code, "A student found to have violated the Honor Code can appeal the outcome of a Hearing by writing a statement outlining the grounds for appealing to the Provost of the College within three class days of the Hearing. Grounds for appeal are as follows: substantial new evidence, procedural violations that substantially affected the outcome of the hearing, or no reasonable evidence to support the outcome of the hearing." (6.1, 6.2)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The Provost should inform the Appeal Board in writing of the reasons for granting the Appeal;**

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<sup>1</sup> Requires amendment to the Honor Code. Such review is consistent with the introductory paragraph of the Honor Code that states: ". . . With these measures, the Faculty delegated to the Honor Commission responsibility for the regulation of student academic conduct. The final responsibility for the regulation of student conduct remains with the Faculty." It is consistent also with Appeals decisions in Student Conduct Review cases in which the Vice President for College Life and Dean of Students or his/her designee has final authority in reviewing conduct cases, including appropriateness of penalty, and with recommendations by the Faculty Personnel Committee in tenure decisions in which the President has final authority.

2. **The Chairperson should ensure that in all but the most exceptional circumstances the Honor Commission Chair who presided at the original hearing should be called as a witness (6.7);**
3. **The Honor Commission and Academic Advising should decide clear policies in second offense cases for how much detail from the first violation should be subject to discussion and at what stage it is relevant to the deliberations of the Appeal Board (implemented as of 4/2012);**
4. **The Chairperson should ensure that the Appeal Board consider equity in deliberating penalties, based on guidelines that delineate penalties according to the seriousness of violations as well as the capacity of the student to be restored to the academic community;**
5. **The Appeal Board should have designated, trained administrators who conducts the Appeal Board hearing;**
6. **The Appeal Board should be constituted by six members, three faculty members and three Honor Commission members, and a non-voting administrator appointed by the Provost who shall act as chair. This existence of a non-voting chair is comparable to the membership of Hearing Boards (6.5)<sup>2</sup>;**
7. **All expulsion decisions should be reviewed by the Provost.<sup>3</sup>**

## **VI. PENALTIES**

In the review period 2006-2011 penalties ranged from grade reduction for an assignment to expulsion. The most frequently assigned penalties for first violations were 0 or F for the assignment or test, overall course grade reduction or failure in the course (See Appendices A & B, Table 5). For second violations during the review period of 2006-2011 and during 2011-2012 penalties ranged from 0 or F for the assignment (with grade reduction) to expulsion (See Appendix C).

The Honor Code grants authority to the Honor Commission in Preliminary Conferences and Hearings to consider the full range of penalties in responding to particular violations (3.7, 5.11). Furthermore, Article IV Penalties outlines penalties for breaches of the Honor Code that lie outside as well as within the purview of a particular course:

4.1 For breaches not directly within the purview of a particular course, the possible penalties include: restitution, if appropriate and academic suspension alert. If the student is already on academic suspension alert, the matter goes to a Hearing Board for resolution.”

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<sup>2</sup> Requires amendment of the Honor Code (6.4).

<sup>3</sup> Requires amendment of the Honor Code.



4.2 For breaches within the purview of particular courses, the possible penalties include: reduction of the assignment grade (including to 0), reduction of the course grade (including to F), suspension for 1 or 2 semesters, and expulsion.

4.5 Normally, the penalty for a second offense shall be expulsion.

Two further clauses delineate significant considerations in reaching penalty decisions:

5.3 Consideration of the students' sincerity and understanding of the nature of his or her breach of the College's principles of academic integrity, and consideration of the extent to which the act was planned or deliberate and damaged the overall integrity of the College community, should inform decisions about appropriate penalties.

5.4 Although Hearing Boards have the authority to consider and impose a penalty from the full range of penalties available and penalties ranging in severity up to and including failure in the course may be assigned through the Preliminary Conference, the normal penalty for first-time breaches of the Honor Code occurring within the purview of a particular course is failure in the course.

Although Preliminary Conferences and Hearing Boards have the authority to consider and impose a penalty from the full range of penalties available, and penalties ranging in severity up to and including failure in the course may be assigned, the Revised Honor Code retains reference in 4.4 and 4.5. to "the normal penalty" of failure in the course for first-time breaches of the Honor Code and expulsion for second offenses. Retention of the term "the normal penalty" has been and remains a problematic feature of the Revised Honor Code in administering the Honor Code. The term "the normal penalty" is inconsistent with the greater flexibility of the Revised Code in providing a wide range of penalty options (4.2, 5.11) to recognize violations of different magnitude. In practice the normal penalty is neither failure in the course for first offenses, nor expulsion in second offense cases. The Honor Commission has attempted to reconcile this inconsistency by considering "the normal penalty" as the starting point for penalty discussions. In practice (as a result of recommendations of faculty in the Preliminary Conference and by Hearing Boards) the range of penalties the Revised Code allows is widely used to mark degrees of severity in violations. If "the normal penalty" has any function at all in guiding practice it is in rejecting it not affirming it. The continued presence in the Revised Honor Code of the language of "the normal penalty" exists uneasily with wide support for (and use of) the range of penalties the new Code allows.

Reference to expulsion as the normal penalty for a second offense (4.5) is made more problematic in cases where the first offense was comparatively minor but triggers expulsion as the normal penalty for the second offense in the same way that a major first offense would.

The penalty clauses of 4.3 and 4.4 were the focus of significant discussion by Honor Commission members and the Honor Code Review Committee in deliberating over crucial considerations in deciding penalties (the student's sincerity, capacity for restoration to the community and understanding of his or her breach in addition to consideration of the extent to which the act was planned or deliberate and damaged the overall integrity of the College community). Honor Commission members expressed concern that consideration of the student's sincerity allows too much leeway in penalties and too much room for personality to sway penalty decisions.

The Review Committee recognizes inconsistency in language retained in the Honor Code from the older Honor Code that speaks of "the normal penalty" in first-time breaches of the Honor Code occurring within a course being failure in the course (4.4), at the same time as the Revised Code affirms a range of possible penalties depending on the nature of the violation and the students' potential to be restored to the academic community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Guidelines for penalty decisions should be developed that will function both in training Honor Commission members and in deliberation over penalties in Preliminary Conferences, Hearings and Appeals.**
- 2. Guidelines should be developed that provide greater clarity in balancing consideration of the seriousness of the violation with consideration of the student's capacity for restoration to the community, his or her sincerity and understanding of the significance of his or her breach of the College's principles of academic integrity. Since interpretation of sincerity is difficult and sometimes unreliable, the interpretation of sincerity should always be considered in light of the gravity of the act and the potential of the student for restoration to the community.**
- 3. Reference to "the normal penalty" in 4.4 should be revised to reflect consistent practice ("failure in the assignment, grade reduction or failure in the course").<sup>4</sup>**
- 4. Reference to expulsion as the normal penalty for a second offense in 4.5 should be revised to reflect consistent practice ("suspension or expulsion").<sup>5</sup>**

## VII. SECOND OFFENSE AND EXPULSION CASES

During the five year review period 2006-2011 and the 2011-2012 academic year, the Honor Code handled a total of 21 second offense violations and one third offense. Second (and third) offense penalties ranged widely from a special assignment for a student who had already failed the

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<sup>4</sup> Requires amendment to the Honor Code (4.4).

<sup>5</sup> Requires amendment to the Honor Code (4.5).

course to expulsion. Three second offense cases resulted in a two-semester suspension; seven cases resulted in a one-semester suspension, six cases resulted in failure in the course, and one case resulted in a grade reduction (Appendix C). Of the 22 cases, four resulted in expulsion (Appendix C).

Before careful review of case data, the Review Committee expected the data would reveal clear differences in second offense cases that accounted for variable penalties, especially for expulsion. But this was not the case. Three cases of expulsion were marked by especially grievous behavior: an Honor Code violation that directly injured another student, fabrication of evidence, denial by the accused student at each stage than an Honor Code violation had been committed and complete disregard and disengagement from the Honor Code process. A fourth case involved a senior student whose second offense was comparable in severity to cases of students who were suspended or received even lesser penalties. We have now also had a third offense case (spring 2012) in which the Hearing Board reached a decision not to expel. Of the 22 second (and third) violation cases, six involved seniors who received only a one semester suspension. Four seniors received a lesser penalty of either failure in the test or assignment, a special assignment in the case of a senior who had already failed the course or an F in the course. The penalty in the case of the expelled senior also differed from 10 other seniors who were guilty of a second (or third) violation and received penalties less than expulsion (Appendix C).

The data suggest reason for concern about inequitable penalties in expulsion cases. In penalties that result in suspension, discrepancies in penalties do not risk permanent and deep damage to a student's life to the same extent that expulsion does. The penalty of expulsion has much greater potential for life disruption and grievous injustice and should be subject to very careful scrutiny to ensure fairness. For this reason the Review Committee argues for the importance of penalty guidelines and equity discussion in all cases where suspension and expulsion are at stake (See IV. Hearing Boards and Procedures, V. Appeals Process and VI. Penalty Recommendations), in addition to a process by which all expulsion decisions are reviewed for equity and appropriateness of penalty by the Provost. (See IV. Hearing Boards and Procedures and V. Appeals Process.)

## **VIII. THE HONOR COMMISSION**

The Honor Commission, with the support of Academic Advising, has significant responsibility for the adjudication procedures of the Honor Code and depends on both faculty advising and Academic Advising to discharge its responsibilities. Training of new Honor Commission members is an essential task of the Honor Commission that occurs at the beginning of each new academic year. New faculty advisors to the Honor Commission are also appointed at the start

of each academic year, but only in time acquire requisite experience. The Honor Commission and Academic Advising face continuing challenges in securing faculty advisors for Hearings and Appeals Boards and having a sufficient number of faculty advisors to assure time for careful observation and training by new faculty advisors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The Honor Commission has begun the process of developing a Constitution and internal procedures that will evolve with time and articulate principles that guide Honor Commission practices: the importance of integrity and honesty, the centrality of restorative principles, a commitment to treating all individuals with fairness, respecting their dignity and worth, a commitment to confidentiality, and respect for evidence and fair deliberation. The Review Committee commends Honor Commission work on the Constitution and recommends that it have a significant role in training new members.**
2. **The Honor Commission should emphasize the importance of comportment and professionalism in all matters pertaining to Honor Commission work;**
3. **The Honor Code specifies that it is the responsibility of the faculty, through their governance system, to provide an adequate number of faculty to serve as advisors to the Honor Commission, to consult with other faculty as requested, and to assist in the orientation of new students and faculty regarding these principles and practices concerning academic integrity (2.9). Faculty Governance must ensure that an adequate number of faculty be provided for efficient handling of Honor Commission cases;**
4. **Guidelines for the role of Academic Advisors in preparing students for the Preliminary Conference and for Hearings should be developed that engage issues of how best to encourage student responsibility for preparation while recognizing the need for careful advising.**
5. **The Honor Commission should designate a regular weekly time for hearings to allow for greater ease in planning by Honor Commission members and Faculty Advisors.**

## IX. STUDENT AND FACULTY EDUCATION ABOUT THE HONOR CODE

**Student Education** Student education at the stage of matriculation is thorough. Incoming students are required to complete a tutorial to promote their understanding of the Honor Code. During Orientation they meet with members of the Honor Commission to discuss the Honor Code and its principles. In the extended orientation that occurs throughout the first semester, students are exposed to further education about the Honor Code. After the first year, students

have no further formal discussion of academic integrity beyond discussions by faculty in individual classes. Because many faculty do not require the Honor Pledge on submitted work students acknowledge that they sometimes forget the exact wording of the pledge and have little direct knowledge of Honor Code procedures and processes. The 2011 Senior Survey data indicates the frequency of these discussions: 25% of seniors reported some faculty discussed academic honesty, 40% reported most of them discussed academic honesty, 34% reported that all of their faculty discussed academic honesty and 1% reported that none of their discussed academic honesty. In response to the question of whether writing the Honor Code Pledge in any form on assignments/tests encourages abiding by the Honor Code, 37% reported "Yes," 43% reported "No" and 20% reported "Not Sure."

In Article II students and faculty are enjoined to determine with their instructors classroom practices to be observed for supporting one another in promoting academic honesty and clarifying with the instructor any ambiguities they perceive in instructions for assignments (2.3). Few students feel empowered to fulfill these responsibilities when faculty do not ensure such discussions, which highlights the essential role of faculty and students discussing academic honesty and the practices that will help support it in each classroom, laboratory or other academic setting.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Sustained education of students beyond the first year about academic integrity and the Honor Code, their responsibilities in upholding it and continued reaffirmation of the Honor Pledge, are vital to a campus culture in which academic integrity is respected;**
- 2. In all orientation and training about the Honor Code students should be made aware of their responsibility to actively promote the principles of the Honor Code, including "preventing or interfering with acts of dishonesty, preferably, as they are occurring rather than afterward."**
- 3. The Honor Code and the Honor Pledge should be affirmed in College publications, and made visible in signage in classrooms;**

**Faculty Education** With the demands of orientation, new faculty are given insufficient introduction to Honor Code policies and procedures and even long term faculty who have not had direct experience with the Honor Code know little of its policies and procedures. Departments as well as individual faculty vary in expectations and practices they allow, and, as data from the Senior Survey suggests, not all faculty carry out the discussions of academic integrity mandated by the revised Honor Code (2.3). Faculty and students alike acknowledge the existence of ambiguity in assignments, faculty who vary in what they want and allow,

differences in expectations, lack of clarity in communicating to students and variability within departments about allowable practices, all of which attest to the importance of each faculty member making clear the expectations and practices of his or her course.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. All faculty at the start of each course should renew their support for the College's principles regarding academic integrity and determine practices with students to promote academic honesty (2.3) Faculty and students alike are required by the Honor Code to determine together classroom practices to be observed for supporting one another in promoting academic honesty, including practices specific to assignments, exam room conditions, and practices both for interrupting while they are occurring or reporting afterwards actions, activities, or behaviors which appear to violate principles of academic honesty (2.3)**
- 2. All syllabi should include discussion of the Honor Code and make clear the expectations of the faculty for assignments (whether group work is permitted etc.);**
- 3. Training seminars on Honor Code principles, processes and procedures should be offered for all new faculty in the first year of their employment. Emphasis should be given to case studies, and to particular issues faculty are likely to encounter in their courses;**
- 4. Faculty and Department Chairs in departments where academic dishonesty is more prevalent, as well as all faculty and departments, should work to insure preventive strategies for deterrence.**

## X. THE HONOR PLEDGE

The Honor Code contains two pledges. The first is affirmed at opening Convocation:

*I affirm that I will uphold the highest principles of honesty and integrity in all my endeavors at Gettysburg College and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect within the beyond the classroom.*

The second pledge (termed the Assignment Pledge in Honor Code documents) binds students in all submitted course assignments whether or not they sign this pledge:

*I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code."*

The second Honor Code Pledge binds students in all submitted course assignments and contains "the witness clause" that obligates students to report violations of the Honor Code if witnessed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Although the Honor Pledge binds students in all submitted course assignments, faculty should encourage the signing of the full Honor Pledge on all assignments and should emphasize its significance both in course syllabi and in class discussions of the Honor Code;**
- 2. The Honor Pledge should be posted in key locations on campus;**
- 3. The Honor Code should be incorporated into discussions College Life has with students about integrity and honesty;**

## XI. REPORTING HONOR COMMISSION DECISIONS

Significant community and educational benefit comes from knowledge by the College community of how the Honor Commission functions. Each year a year-end summary is posted on the Honor Code webpage of the Gettysburg College website but discussion with members of the community and with Student Senate suggests that few faculty or students read the report or have substantive knowledge of the range of violations that occur, the incidence of violations, and the penalties given. The lack of awareness of how the Honor Code functions on campus heightens detachment and lack of commitment to the Honor Code, and the seriousness of violations of academic integrity that require campus vigilance.

The year-end summary detailing the prior year's violations and penalty decisions should be reported each fall to the Student Senate and the Faculty by the Co-Chairs of the Honor Commission. The yearly report respects the community's right to know violations of the Honor Code and penalties given. The educational value of the report is an essential element of campus awareness of the Honor Code, types of violations, penalty patterns and new challenges that some violations pose.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The year-end summary should be widely disseminated to the community, in the *Gettysburgian*, for example, in addition to being posted on the Honor Code webpage;**
- 2. The year-end summary should be reported each fall to the Student Senate and the Faculty by the Co-Chairs of the Honor Commission.**

## XII. CHANGED CAMPUS CLIMATE AFFECTING THE HONOR CODE

The increased challenge that technology poses in classrooms – particularly cell phone and texting use – has altered the campus climate affecting the Honor Code. Faculty express concern

about technology in the classroom and have devised various strategies in testing situations to limit technology use. Widespread use of the Internet and other technologies by students renders it a crucial element in many Honor Code violations, from use of uncited materials and fabrication of evidence to accessing documents or data during testing. Surveys of our own students indicate a significant pattern of cheating from high school through college (See Appendices D, E, F).

Faculty have also expressed concern about non-compliance with the Honor Code by some faculty and an informal system of resolving Honor Code violations by individual faculty that subverts the formal Honor Code system. Widespread, systemic cheating in the Department of Health Sciences resulted in permission by the Honor Commission to proctor for the 2011-2012 academic year. In spring 2012 a faculty member in the Department of Organizational Management Science was given permission to proctor. The Honor Code does not endorse proctoring as a desirable or common practice (2.5) but provision is made in exceptional circumstances for a faculty member to request permission to proctor. "Should a faculty member, as a result of exceptional circumstances, wish to be present throughout an examination, the faculty member must communicate this intent and discuss its rationale both with the students in the class and with the Honor Commission, normally, at least a week prior to the examination. Through this consultation the instructor will assist the Honor Commission in understanding and addressing the underlying conditions prompting this action" (2.5).

These challenges to academic integrity in the campus culture make it imperative that faculty and students directly address issues of academic integrity in all courses and in advising, and that the community be regularly informed of the decisions and issues of the Honor Code as it meets these challenges. The Honor Code affirms that faculty and students jointly have responsibility to actively promote academic integrity and practices that will ensure academic honesty (2.3, 2.4) and together must work to ensure that the Honor Code system upholds high standards of academic integrity.

## CONCLUSION

**The Honor Code Review Committee has identified inequitable penalties as the most serious issue of its investigation. Penalties in suspension and expulsion cases were found to be particularly of concern, with like violations resulting in widely different penalties without consistent rationale (failure in the course, one to two semesters of suspension or expulsion). Any adjudication system which respects the authority of individual Conferences and Hearing Boards to make penalty decisions will have some variability in decisions across cases. This reflects strength of such systems, since it allows for Hearing Boards to consider mitigating or aggravating factors particular to individual cases and their implications for**



judgments about penalties. At the Preliminary Conference stage such variability is highly valued by faculty bringing complaints. But such latitude should be supported by settled standards that provide guidance for decision-making about penalties.

The actual practice of Preliminary Conferences and Hearing Boards (and Appeals Boards that uphold or reject the penalties of Hearing Boards) reflects greater latitude in responding to the full range of types of violations than the phrase “the normal penalty” suggests. The Revised Honor Code paradoxically retained reference to “the normal penalty” even while setting out a range of penalties to respond to very different degrees of intent and gravity in violations and requiring consideration of the student’s capacity for restoration to the academic community. Scrutiny by the Review Committee of the pattern of penalties since 2006 reflects an implicit rubric and implicit rationale for most penalties if not “the normal penalty” that suggests invariance. But penalty patterns also reveal severe penalties for like violations that received more lenient judgment in the same semester by different Hearing or Appeals Boards. The Honor Code Review Committee strongly endorses the development of a rubric for penalty decisions that addresses this issue, and recommends that the Honor Commission explicitly discuss equity in its training of new members. The Review Committee also recommends that the Chairperson of Hearings and Appeals Boards be responsible for ensuring discussion of equity in all penalty decisions. Such guidelines have the virtue of respecting the idea of a “normal penalty” in the sense of a penalty consistently given to like cases while giving latitude to decision-makers to consider gravity of violation and aggravating as well as capacity of the student to be restored to the community.

The Honor Commission and the College are subject in some cases to intense pressure from parents and lawyers. The development of a rubric that guides decision-making will help to give to penalty decisions greater authority and consistency consonant with a process that safeguards the value of deliberative process and individual decision-making. Such a rubric will help to assure that serious violations receive serious and consistent penalties, and that restorative principles guide decision-making.

The Revised Honor Code reflects an admirable balance between retributive and restorative frameworks for responding to breaches in academic integrity. The Honor Code also recognizes the range of acts that constitutes violations of the Honor Code. That Preliminary Conferences and Hearing Boards can determine penalties from the full range available as they deem appropriate (5.11) is highly valued by faculty and Honor Commission members. What we advocate is not constraint on this freedom, but greater recognition of the importance of considering equity as penalty decisions are made.

Perhaps even more important in the long run than penalty inequities that have a clear solution are the changed campus environment and the influence of new technologies that challenge academic integrity at the same time as they extend the wealth of resources available to students in their education. This changed campus climate, requests for proctoring by faculty, faculty non-compliance with the Honor Code and incoming student data that indicates widespread cheating habits suggest a vital need for reengagement with and affirmation of the principles of academic integrity and honesty embodied in the Honor Code.