

**Report from the Faculty-Student Academic Integrity Report
Reconciliation Committee**

January 16, 2019

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I. Charge and Background

On October 17, 2018, Dean of the Faculty Sanjeev R. Kulkarni, Dean of the College Jill S. Dolan and Vice-President for Campus Life W. Rochelle Calhoun charged the members of the Faculty-Student Academic Integrity Report Reconciliation Committee with the task of reconciling two recent reports on academic integrity at Princeton: the Honor System Review Committee (HSRC) report of August 2018 and the Report of the Disciplinary Review Committee (DRC) of June 2017. Our committee was asked to review the full body of short- and long-term recommendations in both reports and present a final report and recommendations to Dean Kulkarni, Dean Dolan, and Vice President W. Rochelle Calhoun. The committee met five times between November 2018 and January 2019 and, after extensive discussions during these three months, we here respectfully present our recommendations.

The immediate background for the two reviews is detailed in the HSRC and DRC reports, which will not be repeated in this report. However, from the outset of our deliberations, our committee recognized the concerns students have expressed in recent years about the fairness and transparency of the Honor System as it is implemented at Princeton. We see this as an important inflection point in the Honor System’s history—an opportunity to consolidate these reviews of our academic integrity practices campus-wide, to better educate all stakeholders, and to make processes and penalties more consistent, intelligible, and equitable. Academic integrity is a bedrock value of the institution, and the systems created to uphold it should be dynamic and responsive to changes in student and faculty life in order to encourage the fullest awareness and participation. Our recommendations are aimed at increasing the health of the Honor System throughout the Princeton community.

The guiding principles of academic integrity on our campus, articulated at the beginning of the HSRC report, are worth reiterating as our essential framework:

- Academic integrity is one of our core values at Princeton.
- The Honor System is a covenant between students and faculty.
- Penalties for academic integrity violations should be appropriate to the violation.
- Processes for investigations and hearings should be as transparent as possible, while respecting students’ privacy.
- These processes should be fair and equitable.

To clarify the scope and nature of the proposals to be considered, we grouped the DRC and HSRC reports’ recommendations into the three categories of Education, Process, and Penalties, which were further broken down into short- and long-term recommendations, as seen in the attached table (Table 1). A particular recommendation to develop a “Guiding Principles” document for students and faculty that clarifies the relationship among students, faculty, and administrators in the Honor System, is presented separately below, since we see it as a necessary cornerstone for refining and maintaining the system as the student body and faculty change over time. Our understanding of a “Guiding Principles” document is that it would include the fundamentals of the academic integrity system at Princeton and a description of the jurisdictional lines for modifying the system. Students on the committee have already begun to draft this document and will continue to work with the Office of the Dean of the College and the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students in the spring semester to finalize it.

Our recommendations below follow this general outline. Some of our recommendations may require either a vote by the student body, the faculty, or both before being implemented. We anticipate that the relevant administration and student leadership will determine in which cases a vote is required.

II. Committee Membership

Rebecca Burdine, Associate Professor of Molecular Biology
Miguel Centeno, Professor of Sociology
Maria Garlock, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering
Dina Kuttab, Undergraduate Class of 2021
Justine Levine, Dean, Rockefeller College
Olivia Ott, Undergraduate Class of 2020
Benjamin Press, Undergraduate Class of 2020
Ling Ritter, Undergraduate Class of 2019
Anna Shields, Professor of East Asian Studies (committee chair)
Joyce Chen Shueh, Senior Associate Dean, Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students

III. Recommendations of the Committee

a. Development of a “Guiding Principles” document

One important outcome of the referenda process of December 2017 (described in detail in the HSRC report) was the recognition of the need for a “Guiding Principles” document. **In support of the recommendation of the HSRC report, we recommend that students, faculty, and administrators work together to craft a Guiding Principles document that would explain how the Honor System at Princeton exists as a pact between students and faculty and would clarify the implications of that pact in terms of modifying the system now and in the future.**

b. Education and research efforts

As noted above, we as a committee recognize the critical need for greater education about the specific processes and penalties of the Honor System among both students and faculty. Both the HSRC and DRC reports concur on this matter. But since knowledge of the system varies significantly between the student body and the faculty, we separate our recommendations into those two stakeholder categories.

i. For students

In order to better educate the student body about the Honor System, the committee recommends more intensive, proactive, and ongoing methods to inform students about

their responsibilities with regard to academic integrity, the processes of the Honor Committee, and the availability of resources to educate and support students.

Based on our discussions, the committee recommends:

- Expanding the educational tools regarding academic integrity for first-year students;
- Using email, websites, and dining hall communications to inform students of their rights and responsibilities with respect to the Honor System;
- Improving the Honor Committee website to better address student questions regarding HC procedures and timeline;
- Conducting research on the types of training that disciplinary bodies at peer institutions receive, with the goal of improving HC and COD training.

To address the specific recommendations from the DRC and HSRC reports, our committee recommends:

- Creating an online Academic Integrity module and quiz that students are required to complete every two academic years. The module should be different for first year students and juniors. For example, first-years could be introduced to the Honor Code and the ways that violations are handled, while juniors could be reminded of academic integrity concerns in independent work. This module should be tailored to address the kinds of violations most commonly seen by the HC and COD and should replace the current summer module.
- Requiring an “Academic Integrity Refresher Program” for students found responsible for violations handled by the Honor System, which is a current COD requirement;
- Requesting that the HC collaborate with the Committee on Teaching and Learning (CTL) to standardize communication regarding examination policies; for example, standardizing how time is called in an exam;
- Publicizing the number of HC cases and their outcomes to the student body to create more transparency about HC case outcomes for students (this kind of dissemination has already begun);
- Conducting research on student experiences after violations and separation from the university and, on the basis of that research, working to improve their potential as learning experiences.

Some of these measures are already underway, and most can be implemented with the help of ODOC, ODUS, and the McGraw Center.

To characterize our full set of student-oriented recommendations more broadly, we would urge that students be given more dynamic and direct engagement with the principles of academic integrity during their time at Princeton. They should receive more education about their rights, responsibilities *and* the details of the Honor System itself regularly, beginning in the first semester on campus. They should have multiple resources to consult if charged with an academic integrity violation so that they are better informed about procedures and possible outcomes. And they should be assessed during and after the experience if found responsible to help the HC, the COD, and the administration better understand the consequences of different penalties and the impact of separation from the university. We firmly believe that increasing students’ awareness and understanding of the Honor System will have measurable benefits, including a greater willingness to

participate fully in upholding academic integrity on campus in both examinations and out-of-class assignments.

ii. For faculty

The Honor System at Princeton was created as a pact between faculty and students. However, one clear finding of the HSRC and DRC reviews, as well as of our committee discussions, was that faculty are in general poorly educated about the Honor System, the Honor Committee in particular, and the processes of investigating academic integrity violations. Unless a faculty member is personally involved in the reporting or investigation of a violation, he or she seems to have little incentive to be knowledgeable about the system. Since we affirm that academic integrity is one of the core values of our institution, this situation must be improved. **Just as we propose multiple efforts to improve student understanding, our committee recommends more robust efforts to educate faculty about consistent syllabus, examination, and student collaboration policies and more generally about the workings of the Honor System at Princeton.**

The responsibility for educating faculty would presumably be shared by the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, ODOC and the McGraw Center, but it could also be assisted by individual department chairs, who can act as key communication links between the administration and the faculty. As with the efforts to improve student awareness of Honor System procedures, some of our recommended educational measures are already underway.

To address the recommendations of the DRC and HSRC reports, we recommend:

- Educating all faculty, lecturers, and preceptors (not just new faculty members) on a regular basis about the Honor System through mandatory measures such as online modules;
- Using informational measures such as reference cards (after the model of CPS) and presentations during orientations and faculty meetings;
- Establishing standard language for syllabi regarding examination procedures, and possibly disseminating templates with that language for syllabi within departments or divisions;
- Developing, in conjunction with CTL and the HC, standardized language for calling time in exams.

Some important long-term goals of educating faculty about the Honor System would be: to create greater consistency regarding examination and out-of-class assignment expectations across courses and departments; to ensure that faculty understand the consequences that students face for academic integrity violations, so that they can make their practices regarding assignments as clear as possible; and to guarantee that the “pact between students and faculty” is being upheld across campus.

c. Changes to processes

i. General recommendations

With respect to processes, the Reconciliation Committee recommendations are in certain cases different from those put forward in the HSRC report. **On one critical point we are in full agreement: that the spirit and letter of the Honor System should be maintained by leaving**

examinations unproctored. This practice serves a vital function and is also a source of enormous pride among many current and past Princeton students, and our committee, like the HSRC, saw no need to recommend a change.

We do not support the HSRC recommendation to add faculty to the Honor Committee at this time, although we recognize the student concerns about fairness that lay behind that proposal. Instead, we propose other methods below for expanding the Honor Committee and providing additional support to students charged with violations.

The second recommendation of the HSRC report that our committee does not support at this time is the proposal to create one single body to handle all academic integrity violations, although this is a possibility that may be revisited in the future as the training, processes, and penalty structures of the two groups are brought into closer alignment. There are two reasons behind our decision: first and foremost is that the Honor Committee was created to be a student-run organization, and any combining of the COD and HC academic integrity procedures would require altering the principles on which each committee was founded. The second is that it became clear in the course of our discussions and review of both reports that the current workload of investigating academic integrity violations handled by the COD (which constitute the majority of the COD workload) and examination violations (the responsibility of the HC) would be simply impossible for a single student or student-faculty committee to manage during the regular academic year. Even under the current system, the HC leadership has reported spending dozens of hours per week on investigations and hearings, a burden that would be unmanageable if doubled. Some of our more specific recommendations are aimed at lessening this burden for HC members and clarifying the processes for students under investigation for violations.

One general recommendation we have for both the HC and the COD is more frequent, consistent, and ongoing collaboration in orientation and training. This will result in more informed, deliberative discussions that will create a robust body of new precedents for assessing appropriate penalties. Given that we support both the DRC and HSRC recommendations to expand the range of penalties available for violations, we recognize that this will require building a larger set of precedents on which to base penalties. Currently, the HC regularly consults with ODUS regarding these issues, but greater collaboration with the COD would help them build more precedents going forward.

Furthermore, by sharing knowledge more extensively and on a more regular basis, the HC and COD can work to ensure that their procedures *and* penalties are better standardized and aligned. Given that the violations the two committees investigate are different in nature (in-class vs. out-of-class), we understand that their procedures and penalty structure cannot be identical, but it is crucial that they move towards greater consistency. Moreover, the members of the HC would surely benefit from the more extensive education and training that COD provides its members.

ii. Recommendations for the Honor Committee

With respect to the Honor Committee processes, our overarching recommendation is to encourage the Honor Committee to make its investigatory procedures and communications as consistent, transparent, and expeditious as possible. This general recommendation is

intended to address what we have learned from the referenda experience and from student feedback in the past year about misunderstandings and negative perceptions of the Honor Committee. Here we provide some specific recommendations for the HC to address these perceptions, in support of the proposals of the HSRC report. (As with the education recommendations, some of these changes have already been adopted or are currently underway.) **We recommend that changes requiring amendment of the Honor Constitution be undertaken with all due speed.**

With respect to the composition and staffing of the HC, we recommend:

- Increasing elected student membership on the HC from four to six, with those members to be drawn from the USG Senate as outlined in the HSRC report (rather than requiring current and past class presidents to serve in these roles);
- In lieu of adding faculty to the HC, giving students under investigation the option of having a dean present or on call as a non-voting resource during a hearing, and as needed for the HC during deliberations;
- Using professional investigators (as COD does) paired with HC student investigators, in order to lighten some of the workload of HC members in the investigation phase. In this case, the HC should be empowered to determine the types of interviews that the professional investigators would conduct, permitting the professional investigators to conduct less critical or sensitive interviews and to return to the HC student members for review. This would keep the overall process under HC student members' responsibility while decreasing the time required for investigations.

We further recommend certain measures to improve students' experience of the Honor Committee processes when under investigation for a violation:

- Improving the timing and contents of the first contact email to students under investigation, outlining the option of having a dean be involved in the process, and also including the appeals process in the initial email;
- Eliminating character witnesses from HC hearings, as recommended in the HSRC report;
- In general, adopting less confrontational language in HC proceedings, a communications measure that will surely be assisted by further training with COD.

We believe that increasing HC and COD coordination and training will improve the HC processes and reputation for fairness on campus. It would also help better align the two bodies, both philosophically and procedurally. The assistance of professional investigators will alleviate the substantial workload that accompanies a case before the HC. Finally, with clearer and less confrontational communication to students under investigation and the availability of a dean to consult and support students in that process, students in general are less likely to believe the process biased or unfair.

d. Changes to Penalty Structure

Our committee resoundingly endorses the recommendation of both reports to revise the penalty structure for both the Honor Committee and the Committee on Discipline, in order to create a wider range of available penalties for violations. Within this broad recommendation, we have three specific proposals that follow on the discussions and recommendations of the DRC

and HSRC reports. In light of these recommended changes, we would urge the HC to move away from its language of “standard penalty” and towards a graduated penalty description in the Honor Constitution. Additionally, we strongly recommend that ODOC, ODUS, and the residential college deans collaborate on methods to help students who commit any kind of academic integrity violation learn from their experience, whether through an Academic Integrity Refresher Course (currently not required for HC violations) or other means. In line with the HSRC report, we also recommend that the HC and COD regularly monitor the practices of our peer institutions, to better understand how other institutions approach similar violations.

We recommend the following three specific changes to the penalty structure available to both the HC and COD for academic integrity violations:

- Establishing a “Reprimand” for minor first offenses, in particular for most first overtime violations. The reprimand would not appear on the student’s disciplinary record unless the student committed an additional infraction. At that point, the penalty for the second infraction would depend on the nature and severity of the infraction—with the expectation that both the HC and COD would be building a body of precedents to guide these adjudications and would mutually share that knowledge. Finally, a reprimand must include a teaching moment for the student, generally in the form of a face-to-face meeting with his or her dean or director of studies, so that the student can learn from the experience.
- Increasing the range of probationary periods that can be given as penalty, adopting the “months” standard rather than semester standard (with a range of 3-48 months), to bring the HC into alignment with COD and Residential College Disciplinary Board practice.
- Establishing a one-semester suspension as a possible penalty for violations of academic integrity adjudicated by the COD or HC. We anticipate that many cases currently resulting in one-year suspensions could instead result in one-semester suspensions. The members of our committee fully understand the logistical and academic complexity of this recommendation, which we discussed at length. Although inflexibility in the curriculum may prevent a one-term suspension from being universally available to all students at this time depending on their concentration and progress toward degree, we strongly believe that the issues of equity raised by separation from campus for a full year require the relevant administrative and academic stakeholders to develop this as soon as possible. Until this one-semester suspension is made feasible for all students, we propose that using this penalty could entail a one-semester suspension followed by one semester of leave in cases where students’ academic requirements will not permit a one-semester separation from the university.

To conclude our recommendations regarding the penalty structure, we as a committee emphasize that we are recommending a broader range of penalties for violations of academic integrity at Princeton in order to allow fairer and more commensurate responses to the range of violations that have evolved over time. Along with considering the recommendations of the DRC and HSRC reports, the committee kept students’ views, as demonstrated by the referenda and the past year of discussions regarding the Honor System, central to our deliberations and recommendations. We recognize that broadening the penalty range will require a great deal of work on the part of the HC and COD to develop a body of precedents for making appropriate distinctions among violations, but we also believe that this work is essential to reinforcing student trust in the Honor System and making the system more transparent and equitable for all.

IV. Conclusions

As a committee, we would like to recognize the many students, faculty, and administrators who have spent significant time and effort in the past few years to improve the health of academic integrity at Princeton. In particular, we express our appreciation to the members of the Discipline Review Committee and the Honor System Review Committee for their thorough reports on the challenges of maintaining a fair, consistent system for dealing with violations of academic integrity at Princeton. Our recommendations build on theirs in most cases, and we as a committee learned much from their reports that was helpful in our deliberations. We believe that the recommendations submitted here will significantly improve the Honor System and increase student and faculty commitment to upholding it fully. We also anticipate that these efforts to clarify and strengthen the system supporting academic integrity will be ongoing. We look forward to discussing our recommendations with Deans Kulkarni and Dolan, Vice-President Calhoun, and other members of the senior leadership at Princeton, and to having conversations with the wider campus community in the coming months. Finally, we hope that these recommendations can be implemented in a timely manner in the year ahead.