

**Abstract Discussions: Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM and Thursday,  
April 28<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM in the Sunken Lounge of the Dining Center.**

# **Barney Rubble and Honor Council**

## **A Student Panel**

### **Released Spring 2005**

#### **Introduction:**

Barney Rubble, a member of Honor Council, suspected that an abstract had not been released on time, and confronted Honor Council about this suspected violation. When no one on Honor Council could verify that the abstract had been released, a student panel was convened. There was no contention, as both parties agreed that a student panel would be an effective way to remedy the situation and prevent future incidents.

#### **Fact Finding:**

##### *Barney Rubble's Statement:*

In September, Barney became aware that it was unclear whether or not the student involved in the aforementioned abstract had fulfilled his resolutions. Barney was going to confront the student, but could not find the abstract in his files or in any public records. He obtained a copy of the abstract from a former Honor Council member, and was convinced that he had not seen it before. An involved professor confirmed that one resolution had been fulfilled, but also said that the abstract for the case had not been released to the public. The involved student also confirmed that he had never seen the abstract for his trial, and the college archivist did not have the abstract on record. Barney then confronted Honor Council for failing to release an abstract within one year after completion of the trial.

##### *Honor Council's Statement:*

Honor Council acknowledged that the abstract was not released on time. Furthermore, they discovered sixteen abstracts in total that had never been recorded in Magill's Special Collections or in Honor Council's own files. They determined that there had been a significant breakdown of Council's institutional memory mechanism, and therefore considered themselves to be in violation of Constitutional procedure. Although the current Honor Council was not involved in any of these cases, they, as an institution, immediately began taking strides to remedy this situation, including the development of a new Honor Council librarian position. Honor Council asked the student panel to fairly consider the evidence brought forth in an effort to make constructive criticism. They hoped that the student panel would help them devise a better system for documenting and tracking Honor Council cases.

##### *Student Panel Questions:*

The panel had several questions about the specifics of the case, as well as about Honor Council and student panel procedures. It was clarified that the abstract in question was significantly beyond the deadline for release of 4 weeks or 1 year if a delay is requested by one of the parties. The panel asked Honor Council to clarify the steps that had been taken thus far to remedy the situation. Honor Council responded that they had not released the abstract in question upon discovering that it was never released because they wanted to await further instructions from the panel. They had, however, passed a resolution at Plenary to institute an Honor Council librarian. The precise role of the librarian had not yet been finalized. The panel asked Honor Council to clarify its current system of institutional memory. Honor Council then explained that there was no specified way of tracking the trial process or passing along information. One Council passed information on to the next in whatever fashion they chose, and the official records of trials was in the form of abstracts stored in the College's Special Collections archive and in Honor Council's own files. Finally, it was clarified that no member of the current Honor Council was responsible for the failure to release the abstract, thus those present were representing Honor Council as an institution, and were not being personally confronted.

### **Student Panel Deliberations:**

The panel discussed the facts presented to them and decided that failure to release an abstract was a violation of the Honor Code. The panel discussed the question of accountability at great length, and concluded that the problem must be addressed and that a student panel was a good way to do this. The present council was being very responsible and cooperative in this effort to improve their institutional memory, and the panel agreed that there should be a trial aimed at improving Honor Council as an institution and not at punishing any individual or group.

### **Statement of Violation:**

**By failing to release and maintain records of abstracts, Honor Council is in violation of the Honor Code, as described in Section 2 of the Honor Code: Responsibilities of Honor Council.**

### **Panel Deliberations:**

The panel decided that they needed resolutions to address the following:

- The late release of the abstract in question.
- How to inform the community of the problem.
- How to prevent future problems.

In order to maintain confidentiality, the panel decided that it was unnecessary and inappropriate to include a date on the newly released abstract. They also wished to ensure that the resolutions addressed Honor Council as an institution, without placing blame on any individual or group. The panel decided to work in conjunction with Honor Council to devise a plan to improve Honor Council's institutional memory.

### **Resolutions:**

- 1. Honor Council shall release the late abstract within 2 weeks with the following note attached:**

**“This abstract is late in being released. A student panel was held, the abstract for which will be forthcoming.”**

- 2. Within 1 month, Honor Council must update both abstract binders and online archives with all available abstracts.**
- 3. Honor Council shall develop a comprehensive system for tracking and managing trials and abstracts. This plan will include a full job description for librarian. Honor Council will present this plan to the student panel, which will subsequently approve its institution. The approved plan will be published to the community.**
- 4. Honor Council shall publish a letter to the community, to be included with this abstract, which will include their explanation of this particular situation along with their understanding of the systemic problems that allowed it to occur. Furthermore, Honor Council shall explain the importance of this issue.**

### **Suggestions:**

The panel also made the following suggestions to help Honor Council fulfill Resolution 3:

- Create a computer database for trials.
- Create a checklist/flow chart for trials and require someone to sign off at each step.
- Assign sequential numbers to cases for internal reference purposes, and to maintain anonymity.

### **Presentation of Resolutions:**

The resolutions were presented to members of Honor Council and the confronting party. The panel and Honor Council discussed the above suggestions, and stressed the importance of maintaining a system that can be passed on and altered from year to year. The panel then came to consensus on the above resolutions.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Who should be held accountable for the errors of past Honor Council members? Was it appropriate to try Honor Council as an institution in this case?
2. Was it appropriate to omit the original date from the abstract in question in order to maintain confidentiality of the involved parties, or is this crucial to the abstract?
3. How, as a community, do we balance the need for confidentiality with Honor Council's need to maintain detailed records? i.e. Should the librarian or more members of Honor Council be privy to confidential information?

To Haverford,

You have put great trust in us as your elected representatives, and Council apologizes for its failure to uphold that trust. We would like to thank the members of the student panel and the Deans who spent many hours working to help Council confront these issues.

Honor Council executive officers have had conflicting opinions on whether or not Carolina had been released to the community. Council had previously consented on its release, assigned discussion times and even prepared drafts for its printing. With the election of subsequent Councils, however, it became clear that Council members were not generally aware of the circumstances of the case. With a new team of officers responsible for enforcing the resolutions, questions arose as to if the abstract had ever finally been released to the community. As the officers began to investigate this question, Council learned that both the confronting and confronted party never saw the abstract. Their report was confirmed by the official college archives and other students on campus at the time the trial.

The executive officers' initial questions about Carolina lead to further questions about general record keeping. During our inspection, we discovered more than a dozen abstracts were missing from the official archives. With no record to confirm their release, the community lacked the only tool it had to observe Council and hold it accountable. Abstracts, essential in our processes, must be a dependable source of information.

Community members should be able to rely on Council to abide by the Constitution adopted every year at Plenary. As elected representatives, we have even greater responsibility to consider how our actions, or lack of action, may be detrimental to students and the college. We understand, then, that a violation of the constitution is also a violation of the Honor Code, the very document we pledge to uphold. We are actively seeking new systems to guarantee that this never happens again and so that we may repair this breach of trust.

Respectfully,  
Honor Council, by consensus