

Honor Council

H A V E R F O R D C O L L E G E

Abstract Discussion Minutes from September 22, 2009

Abstract: Tommy and Professor Zordon (Honor Council Academic Trial)

Present: Gabriel Schwarz, Sally Weathers, Casey Ross, Inez Suhardjo, Hope Hart, Emma Richards, Eleanor Huber, Anna Brockway, Emily Dix, Hannah Jaenicke, Harrison Haas, Robin Riskin

- 1) Moment of silence
- 2) Summary of events in the Tommy / Professor Zordon saga
 - a) Outline of how it came to Council, decided to send to an academic trial
 - b) Fact finding
 - c) Circumstantial
 - d) Tommy brought his own suggested resolutions
 - e) Jury deliberated and came up with the 5 resolutions
- 3) The question was asked: What was the rationale of the jury that it restores the breach of trust and is not punitive to change the grade?
 - a) Given how willing Tommy was to work with Honor Council, it seems punitive
 - b) Haverford Honor Code emphasizes that the purpose is to restore individual to the community without stigma
 - c) Perhaps the grade serves as a reminder of what has been done
 - d) Wants the individual to fully understand the severity of his or her actions
 - e) A community member was concerned
- 4) The role of precedent in Honor Council
 - a) HC does not specifically abide by precedent, but has been known to look to what has been done before
- 5) Reminder that all of Council's resolutions are recommendations, in this case the professor did choose to act on Council's recommendation
- 6) Some community members were uncomfortable with Council's decision
 - a) The point was brought up that it seemed counterproductive to have lowered his grade when Tommy tried so hard to do well in the class to restore that breach of trust
- 7) Why would Honor Council change grades?
- 8) The idea of restorative justice
 - a) A balance to be found between the restorative and the justice
 - b) The idea of facing unknown consequences
- 9) Discussion Questions:
 - a) Should Honor Council have the power to recommend changes in overall course grades?
 - i) One community member felt that it is one thing for a grade to be changed on work that was done dishonestly, and another for Council to change a grade that was gotten honestly

- (1) i.e. even after Tommy's test grade was changed to a zero, Council recommended a lowering of the overall course grade from 2.7 to 2.0
- ii) One member of Honor Council
 - (1) Perhaps lowering a course grade is an intermediary between the changing of a course grade and the separation of a student
 - (2) Can any action that affects a student negatively be understood as punitive?
- iii) Changing the grade as a reminder
- iv) One student felt that other ideas the jury had, etc., could have accomplished as a reminder better than changing the grade
 - (1) What about the idea of writing a letter and having it sent to him every year?
 - v) Would having that 2.0 make him bitter?
- 10) One community member asked whether punitive is necessarily a contradiction of restorative justice
 - a) What if something taken to be punitive accomplishes something toward the goal of restoration?
- 11) Under what conditions have people been separated from the community for an academic violation?
 - a) A recommendation was made in the Hera Case involving a Bryn Mawr student (abstract online) but this recommendation was not carried out in this instance.
- 12) Was it ever discussed to do something for the other student whose test had been taken?
 - a) Confidentiality issues
- 13) How much should status as a first-year freshman be considered?
 - a) Some people have better advisors than others
 - b) Some freshmen come in with a better academic preparation than others.
 - c) Yes, you should know better, but everyone makes mistakes
 - d) Most people seem in agreement that it should be taken into consideration to a certain extent
 - e) Also, didn't really understand that he could go to Professor and ask for an extension
- 14) Was Tommy's reflective essay a sufficient way to restore the breach of trust?
 - a) Are letters to the community becoming formulaic?
 - b) But it seems that many students find them helpful as a reflection on the process
 - c) Get a different take, helps people understand where he was coming from when he made his "initial ridiculously stupid mistake"
 - d) One student felt like it sounds like he moved past it without expressing enough remorse
 - e) But don't we want both sides to be able to move past it? There is a breach of trust on both sides
 - i) Does the fact that he moved passed it so quickly make people concerned that he may be more likely to break trust again?
 - ii) Also, can we really speculate that he is not remorseful?
- 15) Should professors help people understand better that there are accommodation options, that they may be able to get an extension?

- 16) Are there things we can do to train the freshmen about what to do when they become over-stressed?
- 17) Moment of Silence