

Report of the AAC Subcouncil on Academic Integrity

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Proposal

The AAC Subcouncil on Academic Integrity recommends to the Academic Affairs Council the appended Union College Honor Code/Honor Council for implementation as soon as practical. The Subcouncil also recommends its own continuation during the implementation period to assist and advise in the implementation of the Honor Code/Council, to collect data, and to recommend possible revisions to Council procedures or to the text of the Honor Code.

Academic Honor Code

Union College

May 11, 2011

Preamble

Union College recognizes the need to create an environment of mutual trust as part of its educational mission. Trust among students ensures that no student has an unfair advantage over another; trust between faculty and students ensures that the effort both parties put into preparation and evaluation of assigned work is not wasted, but can truly advance understanding and learning for students. Creation of this environment of trust is the responsibility of the entire academic community: faculty, staff and students. It requires that students submit work that is prepared in accordance with the course instructor's requirements and that faculty foster an environment of academic honesty. Toward this end, professors will uphold the high ethical standards of their discipline, provide to their students clear guidance on the policy and practice of academic integrity, and fairly evaluate students' work. To help establish mutual assurance of intellectual honesty, Union College expects students to sign the Honor Code Affirmation. Matriculation at the College is taken to signify implicit agreement with the Code.

Academic Integrity

Responsible participation in an academic community requires respect not only for oneself, but also for the thoughts and work of others, whether expressed in the present or in some distant time and place. If you owe an intellectual debt, the principles of academic honesty and integrity require that you acknowledge it. Academic dishonesty is a rejection of the very purposes and ideals for which the College stands: personal integrity, independence of thought, critical understanding, and responsibility for one's own work.

Academic dishonesty can take many forms, including, but not limited to:

A. Plagiarism

Plagiarism has been variously defined, but nearly all definitions have in common the idea that plagiarism is a form of theft. One author describes plagiarism as “the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another's mind, and presenting it as one's own” (Alexander Lindey, *Plagiarism and Originality*. New York: Harper, 1952: 2). Plagiarism involves at least two elements: (1) taking something produced or created by someone else; (2) failing to give proper indication that you have done this. Further information and additional examples may be found in the Union College *Statement on Plagiarism*.

B. Cheating

Cheating is the improper use of study aids (notes, study guides, and other outside information) in examinations or on other graded materials, or the taking of information from a source not specifically authorized. Collaboration, whether acknowledged or not, on work that is supposed to be one's own is also considered cheating. The amount of permissible collaboration will vary from class to class; students should consult with their instructors to find out how much collaboration is permitted. Students should err on the side of caution, and not assume that collaboration is permitted.

C. Falsification of data or evidence

Falsification of data or evidence is altering or fabricating any information, data, or citation that may mislead those reading an assignment.

D. Submitting work you have done for another class as though it were new

An assignment submitted for a particular course is assumed to be done solely for that course. Submitting the same or similar document previously completed for another course without the instructor's approval is considered to be misconduct.

E. Helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty, e.g., knowingly allowing someone to copy from one's paper during an examination or test; knowingly allowing someone to submit your lab report or homework as their own.

F. Forgery on Academic Documents, e.g. forging a faculty signature on a declaration of major form or course withdrawal form.

II. Student Responsibility

By joining the Union College community, every student agrees to understand and abide by the Honor Code and Affirmation that is hereby set forth. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that submitted work is his or her own and does not involve any form of academic misconduct. Students need to exercise common sense in making decisions regarding their academic conduct in and outside of the classroom. All students are expected and encouraged to ask their course instructor for any clarification regarding, but not limited to, collaboration, citations, and plagiarism.

III. Faculty Responsibility

At the beginning of each trimester, faculty members are requested to include in their syllabus the College's code regarding academic conduct, or at least a reference to it.

Every member of the faculty is responsible for explaining how the academic integrity code applies to his or her specific course. This includes examinations (which may be proctored or not), the degree to which students may collaborate in work submitted for a grade, and the expectations with respect to the use of outside sources in submitted work.

IV. Additional Questions

Additional questions concerning the Academic Honor Code may be addressed to the Chair of the Honor Council.

The Honor Code Affirmation

As a student at Union College, I am part of a community that values intellectual effort, curiosity and discovery. I understand that in order to truly claim my educational and academic achievements, I am obligated to act with academic integrity. Therefore, I affirm that I will carry out my academic endeavors with full academic honesty, and I rely on my fellow students to do the same.

Honor Council Procedural Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to provide participants in Honor Council proceedings with a guide to the rights enjoyed by participants and to what they may expect as normal procedure. Please note that the Honor Council is not a court and an Honor Council hearing is not a trial. These procedures constitute a guide to expected behavior, but the council and its officers are free to act

flexibly in ways consistent with fairness, and minor variations should not be considered violations of procedure. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) confidentiality safeguards apply to all Honor Council procedures.

Composition of Honor Council

The Honor Council shall normally consist of 12 students, the Dean of Studies and 3 faculty members. New members of the Council will be selected and seated in the Spring Term of every year. Students serving on the Honor Council must be in good standing.

Students will serve as Chair and Vice-Chair (who will serve if the Chair is not present), Secretary and Alternate Secretary (who will serve if the Secretary is not present) of the Honor Council. Student representatives to the Honor Council will be nominated through the Committee on Committees. The application will include an essay explaining the relevance of the applicant's experience and why the applicant seeks a position on the Honor Council. As part of the application process, the President of Student Forum and (except in the first year) the Chair of the Honor Council shall interview all candidates and make recommendations to the Committee on Committees, which shall decide which students to appoint to the Honor Council. Except in the first year, the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Alternate Secretary are reserved for students who have had prior experience on an honor council, or on the Committee on Standing of Students. Students will serve one year terms with a possibility of renewal.

Faculty representatives to the Council will be elected following current faculty governance procedures for other elected positions. Faculty members will serve three year terms. Among the faculty representatives, one will be from Center I (Social Science and Humanities faculty), one will be from Center II (Science and Engineering faculty), and one will be at-large.

Reporting of Violations/Screening Process

Any suspected violations of the Honor Code must be reported to the Honor Council and no other party; accusers must submit evidence in support of the allegation. Suspected violations of the Honor Code cannot be resolved outside of the Honor Council process. Alleged violations of the Honor Code will normally be reported to the student Chair of the Honor Council in writing through the secure mailbox in the Dean of Studies Office. Alternatively the accuser may report the violation to the Dean of Studies. The Chair and the Dean of Studies will review the

allegation and its accompanying evidence. If both the Chair and the Dean of Studies agree that the evidence warrants a preliminary discussion, they may arrange a meeting with the accuser and/or the accused, or other parties. If both the Chair of the Honor Council and the Dean of Studies agree that the evidence does not indicate that a violation has occurred, the case will be dismissed. This decision is final. When a case is dismissed at this stage, the accused student will not be notified that an allegation of academic dishonesty was made against him or her and no official records will be kept.

If either the Chair of the Honor Council or the Dean of Studies believes that the evidence warrants a hearing to determine whether a violation of the Honor Code did occur, the case will be referred to the Honor Council. The Chair will then notify the accused student in writing, through the Dean of Studies Office. This notice will also inform the accused student that he/she may request a Chair-Dean Review of the case instead of an Honor Council hearing, if applicable.

Chair-Dean Review

The accused student may request a Chair-Dean Review of the case under the following three conditions:

- the accused student admits a violation of the Honor Code, and
- the accused student waives the right to an Honor Council hearing, and
- the violation is the accused student's first.

The Chair and Dean of Studies will decide whether to approve the request for a Chair-Dean Review based on these three conditions. A decision by the Chair and the Dean of Studies to deny a Chair-Dean Review request cannot be appealed.

If the request is approved, the Chair-Dean Review must be held promptly. The accused student, the accuser, the Dean of Studies, and the Chair will be present at the Chair-Dean Review meeting. After the meeting, the Chair and Dean of Studies will determine the sanction. Written notification of the sanction will be delivered to the accused student and the faculty member(s) responsible for teaching the course involved. They will summarize results of Chair-Dean Reviews to the Honor Council at least once per term with student names omitted.

Honor Council Hearing Procedures

Honor Council hearings must be held promptly. Each case will be heard by a panel. The hearing panel will consist of 5 members of the Honor Council. A hearing panel will include both faculty and students, at least 3 of which will be students. These 5 members will have a vote in the hearing. If the Vice-Chair and Alternate Secretary are not needed to serve in place of, respectively, the Chair and Secretary, as members of the Honor Council, they may serve on the hearing panel. Three non-voting members will also attend every hearing: the Chair, the Secretary and the Dean of Studies. The Chair will moderate the hearing and the Secretary will take the minutes of the hearing. Members of the Honor Council shall disclose any prior connections or relationships with the accuser or the accused to the Chair and the Dean of Studies. If either believes that these relationships might impair, or appear to impair, the objectivity of a council member in this case, the council member shall be asked to recuse himself or herself.

The accused student and the accuser must be present at the hearing. If the accuser is a student, the course instructor can be invited to attend the hearing, at the discretion of the Chair. If the accused student fails to appear on the date and at the time and place specified in the notice, the Council may take the testimony from the accuser and reach a decision on the basis of that information. In the unlikely event that the accuser does not appear, the hearing will be rescheduled. If the accused student is unable to appear on the date specified in the notice, he or she should notify the chair of the Council. If the Council determines that good cause exists for the absence of the accused student, it may set a new date for the hearing.

Witnesses to the alleged violation will also be present at the hearing only while they are testifying. It is the responsibility of the person desiring the presence of a witness to ensure that the witness appears. Only in situations where the witness cannot reasonably be expected to be present at the Honor Council hearing may a witness submit a written statement. A written statement must be dated, signed by the person making it, and the signature witnessed by a Union College employee. The work of the Honor Council will not, as a general practice, be delayed due to the unavailability of a witness.

The accused student may have an advisor at the hearing. The advisor must be a member of the Union College community (as student, faculty, or staff). The advisor may consult with the student during the hearing but may not make any statements during the proceedings.

The Chair will begin the hearing by presenting the charges. The Chair will then ask the accuser to offer information to substantiate the charges. The accused is responsible for presenting his or her own case and may make a written or verbal statement. The accused and the accuser have the right to present witnesses. The accused, the accuser, and the witnesses will be subject to questions from the Council. The accused may question witnesses and the accuser in order to clarify statements during the hearing. The hearing may be recorded, at the request of the accused student. Records will be housed in the Office of the Dean of Studies.

Honor Council Decisions and Sanctions

After the hearing ends, an accused student will have been found to have committed academic misconduct if at least 4 of the 5 members of the panel, having duly deliberated, vote that the preponderance of evidence makes it more likely than not that the accused has violated the Honor Code.

The hearing panel members will decide on the sanctions for all students found to have committed academic misconduct. Sanctions will be decided by majority of voting members.

Normally, for a first violation of the Honor Code, a student would fail the course; however, given the circumstances of the case (e.g., the accused student's year or the severity of the violation) other sanctions might be levied, ranging from failure on the assignment to, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion from Union. For all first offenses, a letter will be placed in the student's file in the Dean of Studies office.

For a second violation of the Honor Code, it is generally expected that the student will be suspended or expelled from Union. The student's parents will be notified of the sanction. When the sanction includes suspension or expulsion from Union, a notation will appear on the student's transcript specifying that academic dishonesty was the reason for the suspension or expulsion. For all second offenses a letter will be placed in the student's permanent file.

Written notification of the decision and, if applicable, sanction will be delivered to the accused student, and the faculty member(s) responsible for teaching the course involved. The accused student may request a meeting with the Chair and the Dean of Studies for further clarification of the decision and/or sanction.

If an accused student is found not responsible for a violation of the honor code, the student may petition the Dean of Studies to drop the course without a “W” on their transcript, even if the withdrawal deadline has passed.

Revocation of Degrees

The College reserves the right under this code to revoke an awarded degree for serious academic integrity violations committed by a student prior to the student’s graduation.

Appeals Process

If a student has been found guilty of violating the Honor Code, the student may appeal the Council’s decision. For cases decided under a Chair-Dean Review, the student may appeal the sanction. All appeals will be heard by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The imposition of the sanction will remain in effect during the period of the appeal proceeding. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Vice President for Academic Affairs within ten days of written notification of the hearing results. When the appeal grounds include the availability of new evidence, the appeal must be submitted as soon as practicable after the new evidence has emerged. The grounds for appeal must be specified in the written statement, and evidence to support these grounds included. Appeals shall be considered based on the accused’s ability to demonstrate that:

- The hearing was materially inconsistent with the established judicial procedure; or
- Information is available that was unavailable at the time of the hearing, and the new information is relevant to the Council’s determination; or
- The sanction(s) is unreasonably harsh or inappropriate for the violation(s).

In addition to the letter of appeal, the Vice President will review the initial statement of accusation and accompanying evidence, and the letter to the accused student detailing the decision. The Vice President may, at her or his discretion, consult with the Chair of the Honor Council and/or the Dean of Studies or any other party and/or examine any other materials deemed relevant to the case.

The Vice President may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision and/or may eliminate, reduce, or increase the sanction, or may return the case to the Honor Council. Written notification of the decision of the Vice President will be delivered to the accused, the Chair of

the Council, the Dean of Studies, and the faculty member(s) responsible for teaching the course involved.

The outcome of the appeal is final.

Reporting of Decisions

At the beginning of each term, the Council will report summaries of the cases they heard as well as cases decided through Chair-Dean Review in the immediately prior term. These summaries will include the outcome of each case, and, if applicable, the sanction and a brief rationale for the decision. Class year of students may be reported, and this may be especially useful when describing the rationale. The Dean of Studies will review these summaries before they are reported publicly to ensure accuracy and anonymity.

Upon their release by the Council, the summaries will be distributed to the entire campus community via email and will be published in campus publications, such as *Concordiensis*.

Records

The following records will be kept in the Dean of Studies office for all cases decided through a Chair-Dean review or heard by the Council, in accordance with the College's record retention policy:

- The initial statement of accusation and accompanying evidence
- The written summary of the hearing or Chair-Dean review
- The letter to the accused student detailing the decision
- For cases that were appealed, the letter of appeal and the letter from the Vice President for Academic Affairs detailing his or her decision will also be kept.