

Report from the Honor System Review Committee

September 4, 2018

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1 Executive summary of recommendations

The Honor System at Princeton University was established in 1893 as a covenant between students and faculty that applies to all in-class examinations, test, and quizzes. Under the Honor System, faculty do not proctor exams, and students have a twofold obligation: to uphold a high standard of personal integrity, and to hold others accountable to this same high standard. Our committee, the Honor System Review Committee, was charged with examining aspects of the Honor System and recommending changes that might improve the way the system functions. The Honor System Review Committee is comprised of a diverse group of students and faculty, and we met weekly from January through May, 2018.

In the course of our meetings, we agreed on several guiding principles, which shaped our recommendations:

- Academic integrity is one of our core values.
- 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.

Our recommendations are grouped into short-term recommendations, which we believe could be implemented in the next year; and long-term recommendations, which would require further deliberation before being implemented. This report explains our recommendations and the reasoning behind them in detail, but below is a summary.

Several of our recommendations are based around reaffirming the Honor System as a pact between faculty and students, and increasing faculty involvement in the Honor System. A starting point is to better educate faculty and preceptors about the Honor System, and to establish standardized procedures for examinations, for instance for specifying what materials are permitted, and declaring when time is up. We recommend creating a “guiding principles” document that reaffirms the Honor System as a pact between students and faculty, and gives students greater clarity about what their actual authority is, for instance to make changes to the Honor System. Our longer-term recommendations are more radical: we recommend reconfiguring the Honor Committee to include both faculty and students, perhaps mirroring the structure of the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline, which handles most disciplinary violations other than in-class exams (e.g., plagiarism, take-home exams, behavioral violations). Furthermore, we recommend considering transferring all academic integrity violations to a single committee comprised of students and faculty, so that violations during in-class exams and take-home exams would be considered by the same body.

We recommend implementing a finer gradation of penalties for Honor System violations. At present, the range of penalties recommended by the Honor Committee includes probation until graduation, suspension for a period of one to three years, and expulsion. We recommend instituting a “reprimand” penalty in the list of available penalties, as was recommended last year by the committee that reviewed the discipline system. This penalty could be used for minor violations (e.g., overtime). Reprimands would not appear on a student's permanent record unless a second violation occurred. We also recommend that the Honor Committee allow shorter probationary periods appropriate to the violation.

For serious cases of academic fraud (during in-class exams or otherwise), the long-standing policy is that the penalty is separation from the University, typically suspension for one year for a first violation, and expulsion for a second violation. These penalties reflect the seriousness of such violations, and are consistent with penalties used by our peer institutions. Required leaves of absence are not only punitive: they can also be rehabilitative, as they can give students time to reflect upon their actions, and they can provide a relief of pressure in what is often an intensely stressful environment that has led the student to make poor choices out of a feeling of desperation. Because students come from a variety of backgrounds, suspensions affect different students in different ways, and we recommend providing resources for students who are suspended, to help them use their time away as needed, for instance by providing assistance in finding employment, or access to mental health resources. We further recommend requiring the “Academic Integrity Refresher Program” for students returning from leaves, as is currently required for students who have been found responsible for academic integrity violations handled by the Committee on Discipline. As a longer-term recommendation, we recommend studying the positive and negative effects of leaves of absence, and implementing a one-semester suspension in lieu of a one-year suspension for a standard Honor Code violation.

Finally, we recommend a number of specific changes to Honor Committee procedures, designed to improve transparency and fairness. Some of these changes are superficial, such as improving the communication with students under investigation, removing the character witness from Honor Committee hearings, and revising terminology used in Honor Committee proceedings to be less confrontational. Others are more significant: for instance, we recommend increasing the number of elected members of the Honor Committee from four to six. At present, the Honor Committee consists of fifteen members, including four elected members (the current and former presidents of the sophomore and junior classes), and eleven appointed members who apply directly to the Honor Committee. We recommend increasing the number of Honor Committee members from the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) from four to six, keeping the total membership of the Honor Committee at fifteen people. Of these six USG members, three would be senators and three would be U-councilors, and they would serve for a one-year term. This recommendation would give students a greater voice in the makeup of the Honor Committee, and would relieve pressure on class presidents, who are often too busy to take on the additional responsibilities of Honor Committee investigations and hearings. As a longer-term recommendation, we recommend appointing professional investigators to pair with student investigators and assist with various matters such as interviews, preparing memoranda of Honor Committee decisions, and pre-hearing preparation or post-hearing support.

2 Background

The Honor System at Princeton University is a covenant between students and faculty that applies to all in-class examinations, tests, and quizzes. Under the Honor System, the faculty do not proctor in-class examinations, and students have a twofold obligation: to uphold a high standard of academic integrity for themselves; and to hold others accountable to the same high standard.

2.1 Overview of the Honor System

The details of the Honor System are described in the Constitution of the Honor System (“Honor Constitution”), which was adopted by the undergraduates in 1895 [3]. The Honor Constitution establishes a student committee (the Honor Committee) “who shall represent the student body and deal with all cases involving suspected violations of the Honor System.” The makeup of the Honor Committee has varied over the years, and at present the Honor Committee consists of fifteen student members: the current and former presidents of the sophomore and junior classes, two members of the first-year class, and additional members appointed from the student body. The Honor Committee is responsible for handling investigations, conducting hearings, and recommending penalties for students found responsible for violations of the Honor System. The Honor Constitution also describes the typical penalties imposed for various violations.

Committee on Discipline. The Honor System applies to all in-class examinations. All other academic integrity violations, including plagiarism and cheating on take-home exams, are handled by the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline. The Committee on Discipline is comprised of six members of the faculty, eight undergraduate students, the deputy dean of the college, assistant and associate deans of undergraduate students, who serve as secretary, and the dean of undergraduate students, who serves as chair. In addition to these academic integrity violations, the Committee on Discipline also handles serious non-academic violations of University policy, as described in *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities* (in particular, all violations that do not fall under the Title IX process and could result in separation for the student).

Honor System Review Committee

Our committee, the Honor System Review Committee, was charged with examining aspects of the Honor System, and recommending changes that might improve the way the system functions. Our committee is comprised of undergraduates and faculty: a list of committee members is given in Appendix A, and the charge to our committee is included in Appendix B.

A related committee met during the 2016-17 academic year to review the policies and procedures of the Committee on Discipline and the Residential College Disciplinary Board. While that report has not yet been publicly released as of this writing, our committee had access to the report, and it influenced our discussions of the Honor System.

The Honor System Review Committee held weekly 90-minute meetings from January through May, 2018, and had in-depth discussions across a wide range of topics pertaining to the Honor System. Committee members held differing views on many of these topics, and this report will not attempt to capture all of the nuances of these discussions, or describe all of the various viewpoints. Rather, this report represents a set of recommendations that we as a committee believe would improve the Honor System as a whole.

2.2 USG referenda, December 2017

Since its adoption in 1895, the Honor Constitution has been amended several times, most recently in 2012, 2014, and 2015.

In December 2017, at the same time that the Honor System Review Committee was being assembled, the student body voted on and passed four referenda to amend the Honor Constitution. As explained in a letter sent to students on January 4, 2018 by the vice president for

campus life, the dean of the college, and the dean of the faculty, three of these four referenda would “fundamentally alter the University’s disciplinary penalties and standards for assessing violations of the Honor Code during in-class examinations” and could not be adopted without “the engagement and support of the faculty.” These three referenda were remanded to the Committee on Examinations and Standing. As part of our charge, our committee was asked to “consider these referenda...and to recommend to the Committee on Examinations and Standing whether the proposals about penalties, evidence, and faculty involvement in deciding infractions should be adopted.”

A summary report (linked here) was released on March 23, 2018, and describes our recommendations regarding these three referenda. While we did not recommend adoption of any of the three referenda, we recognize there are genuine concerns about the Honor System; the USG referenda, while imperfect, attempted to address these concerns. We believe the faculty should take these concerns seriously, and not be dismissive of student opinion.

3 Guiding principles

Below we describe the main principles that guided the committee’s thinking, along with corresponding recommendations. In each section, we have structured our recommendations into “short-term” recommendations, which we hope can be implemented within the next year, and “long-term” recommendations, which we believe will require further deliberation and more planning before being implemented. For the discussion and implementation of our long-term recommendations, we recommend that a committee or working group be formed from faculty and students so as to facilitate transparency and dialogue, consistent with the notion of the Honor System as a pact between students and faculty.

3.1 Academic integrity values

In an academic institution such as Princeton, academic integrity lies at the core of our values. We expect all members of our community to conduct themselves with integrity, and we try to instill these values in our students from the first day they set foot on campus.

In 1893, when the Honor System was established, it was the students themselves who recognized the importance of academic integrity. Prior to 1892, cheating was commonplace at Princeton; the situation has been described as a “continuous sly warfare between the professor and the student.”[3] But in the fall of 1892, a student movement persuaded a small group of faculty to consider adoption of an honor system. On January 18, 1893, the faculty adopted a resolution under which examinations would no longer be proctored, and each student would simply sign a pledge at the end of the examination paper stating that he had “neither given nor received aid.” The experiment was remarkably successful: the “sly warfare” ceased almost immediately, and the Honor System has continued to this day.

Under the Honor Code, members of our community have a twofold obligation:

1. to hold ourselves personally accountable to a high standard of integrity;
2. to hold others accountable to the same standard.

A central aspect of the Honor System is that undergraduates hold each other responsible for upholding standards of academic integrity. While we did not conduct any surveys, several students on the Honor System Review Committee believe that undergraduates are reluctant

to report a fellow student to the Honor Committee even if they were to observe an Honor Code violation, because reporting would be too cruel given the severity of the penalties. These reservations about reporting violations have existed for as long as the Honor System has been in place, and they are a cause for concern: if students are not willing to hold each other accountable to a high standard of integrity, then how are these standards to be maintained? If indeed the widespread sentiment is that it is too cruel to report a fellow student (even if that student is attempting to gain an unfair advantage over everybody else in a class), then the Honor System ceases to function properly.

Short-term recommendations

Continue to leave exams unproctored. It is concerning that many students say they would not be willing to report an Honor Code violation. One possible solution is for faculty to simply proctor exams, and remove this burden from the students. However, we feel that the culture of the Honor Code, under which students have a responsibility to hold others to the same high standards of integrity to which they hold themselves, is too important to abandon. If students are reluctant to report violations because of mistrust in the system, then this mistrust should be remedied in other ways.

Long-term recommendations

Consider adding faculty to the Honor Committee. While a key component of the Honor System is that investigations and hearings are entirely student run, recent student initiatives indicate an erosion of trust in the student-run system. For instance, Referendum 3 from December 2017 (see Appendix C) seeks specifically to give a course instructor veto power over an Honor Committee decision. Indeed, in a system in which students are judging other students, there can be a perception that students on the Honor Committee are overly punitive, and are out to get other students. Our recommendation is to consider restructuring the Honor Committee to include faculty, for instance mirroring the structure of the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline, described in Section 2.1. The hope is that, by including faculty on the Honor Committee, students and faculty alike will have greater trust that the system functions in a fair and consistent manner. In addition, this approach would have the added benefit of making more explicit the faculty involvement in the Honor System, as will be addressed in Section 3.2.

Consider transferring all academic integrity violations to a single student-faculty committee. As described in Section 2.1, the Honor System applies only to in-class examinations, while all other academic integrity violations are handled by the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline. This division seems awkward, since precisely the same type of cheating could occur on a take-home exam as on an in-class exam, yet these two violations would be handled by entirely separate processes. As far as we understand, the main reason for this division is historical. We think it would make sense to consider a radical restructuring of the Honor System and the Committee on Discipline, in which all academic integrity violations (e.g., in-class exams, take-home exams, plagiarism) are handled by the same committee, comprised of students and faculty. A separate committee could perhaps handle non-academic violations of University policy (as are currently handled by the Committee on Discipline). Such a radical restructuring would require careful thought, and input from students and faculty, but we feel that now may be an appropriate time to consider such a change.

3.2 Honor System as a covenant between students and faculty

The remarkable feature of Princeton's Honor System is that it was not imposed on students by the faculty; on the contrary, it was initiated by the students themselves, who decided that they wished to hold each other to a high standard of integrity. Nevertheless, the Honor System is a pact between students and faculty, and it requires the support of both parties in order to function properly.

In order to better appreciate the nature of this covenant, our committee sought to understand who has the actual authority over matters of academic integrity and discipline. The ultimate authority over matters of discipline, as set forth in the Bylaws of the University, rests with the Board of Trustees. This authority has been delegated to the president and faculty, as explained in Appendix B of the Bylaws: "Oversight of student life and discipline... has been delegated to the President and Faculty to be exercised through various Faculty and student groups."

Contrary to what may be commonly believed, the resolution adopted by the faculty on January 18, 1893 does not actually delegate that authority to the students. Below is that resolution in its entirety[1]:

Whereas, it appears that there has been a strong and growing Student Sentiment against the practice of Cheating in Examinations, and further, that the Students desire to have the Examinations so conducted as to be put upon their honor as gentlemen:

Resolved, That until due notice be given to the contrary there shall be no Supervision of Examinations, each Student simply subscribing at the end of his paper the following Declaration:

"I pledge my honor as a gentleman that during this Examination I have neither given nor received aid."

In the years following the adoption of this resolution, there were several cases of students cheating, and in each case the faculty and students worked together to determine the appropriate course of action. The following is an excerpt from the Trustee Minutes, June 10, 1895:

The first cases of discipline since the last meeting of the Board, were in connection with the mid-year Examinations. Three students, one Junior, one Sophomore, and one Freshman were detected by the students in cheating. On recommendation of the Student Committee, after a hearing before the Committee on Discipline, the Faculty adopted the following action. In the cases of the Junior and Sophomore, that they be withdrawn from college — in the case of the Freshman, a lengthened suspension. The ground for this discrimination is that Freshmen in the first term here have been in the college too short a time to appreciate fully the honor system. This discrimination came from the student body itself and the Faculty recognize its kindness and reasonableness.

The honor system, as it is called, is working admirably. The examinations never have been so pure as they are today.

It is notable that, while the faculty retained its authority over disciplinary matters, it acted on the recommendation of the "Student Committee" (today called the Honor Committee). Now, 125 years later, there is little or no faculty involvement in Honor System cases. As set forth in *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities*, Section 2.3, "All violations of the honor system are the concern

of the Undergraduate Honor Committee,” and there is no mention of faculty involvement. Based on the experiences of faculty members on the Honor System Review Committee, many faculty are not even aware of the distinction between the all-student Honor Committee and the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline.

We feel that at its heart, the Honor System is a pact between students and faculty, and as a result, there needs to be more faculty engagement with the Honor System. The responsibility of upholding our standards of integrity must be the shared responsibility of faculty and students, and in particular, the faculty involvement in the Honor System should be made more explicit.

Short-term recommendations

Do not reinstitute a faculty advisory committee. One way to make faculty involvement in the Honor System more explicit is to institute a faculty advisory committee to work with the Honor Committee. Such an advisory committee has been used at least informally in the past, but it has not been in place in the last decade.

In the opinion of members of the Honor System Review Committee, such a faculty advisory committee would be superfluous, and would not be effective. There is now close collaboration between the Honor Committee and the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students, and this collaboration provides consistency from year to year, as well as a resource for advice in tricky situations. A faculty advisory committee was therefore viewed as unnecessary. However, we do feel that we should strive for more explicit faculty involvement: see the long-term recommendation below.

Make explicit in a “Guiding Principles” document that the Honor System is a pact between students and faculty. We believe that both students and faculty need to better understand the nature of the Honor System as a covenant between students and faculty, and that upholding our standards of academic integrity is a shared responsibility. In particular, faculty need to understand the system better, and students need greater clarity about what their actual authority is. Under the Bylaws of the University, there seems to be no explicit authority delegated to the students. However, Section 2.3 of *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities* seems to imply that the Honor Committee has full authority over matters involving written in-class examinations, and therefore that these procedures (including penalties) can be changed by amending the Honor Constitution.

Many students (including the authors of the December 2017 referenda) believed they had the authority to alter penalties for academic integrity violations without any involvement from the faculty, simply by amending the Honor Constitution adopted by the students. Many students who voted for the December 2017 referenda felt disenfranchised when the referenda were not adopted. While it is clear from the Bylaws that the ultimate authority over these matters rests with the Trustees, and has been delegated to the President and the Faculty, this authority is not at all clear by reading other documents, such as *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities*, and the situation needs to be clarified.

Long-term recommendation

Consider adding faculty members to the Honor Committee. As previously recommended in Section 3.1, we think that the best way to make faculty involvement in the Honor System more explicit is to add faculty members to the Honor Committee, perhaps mirroring the structure of the Faculty-Student Committee on Discipline. Such a change would require a significant

restructuring of the disciplinary system at Princeton, but we believe that faculty engagement is both important and consistent with the original philosophy of the Honor System as a covenant between students and faculty.

3.3 Appropriate penalties

Penalties for violations of the Honor Code should be appropriate to the violation, neither overly lenient, nor overly punitive. Academic integrity violations are serious matters, but there is a wide range of severity of violations: the penalty for working a few seconds overtime on an in-class exam should not be as severe as the penalty for copying from a peer or using a cell phone to look up answers during an exam.

As described in *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities*, penalties include probation, suspension for a period of one to three years (with or without conditions), and expulsion. In addition, censure can be added to any penalty and remains on the student's permanent record.

The Honor Constitution mandates that the first offense of cheating typically result in the recommendation of a one-year suspension. Depending on the seriousness of the offense, a two-year suspension may be recommended, and conditions or censure may be added to a suspension, depending on the severity of the offense. A second offense typically results in expulsion from the University.

Probation is typically given for overtime violations, unless the violation is particularly egregious. Probation is also a possible penalty when "the Committee fails to conclude that a student ought reasonably to have known that his or her actions were in violation of the Honor Code." A second violation following probation could result in suspension or expulsion. While neither *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities* nor the Honor Constitution specifies the period of probation, the Honor Committee precedent for the violations mentioned above is to recommend probation until graduation. Probation does not appear on a student's transcript, but does appear on a student's permanent record, while suspension appears on a student's transcript and on the permanent record. Periods of disciplinary probation and suspension will both be disclosed by the University in response to requests approved by the student.

Table 1 shows the number of violations reported to the Honor Committee between fall 2014 and fall 2017, along with the corresponding penalties.

Alignment with the Committee on Discipline. The penalties used by the Honor Committee are generally in line with those of the Committee on Discipline in academic cases. However, the Committee on Discipline has an additional "Dean's Warning" penalty. A Dean's Warning does not appear on the student's permanent record, but can be taken into account if a second disciplinary violation occurs. A student with only a Dean's Warning on their record can answer "no" when asked if they have a disciplinary record at Princeton. By contrast, a student with a probation penalty should answer "yes" when asked if they have a disciplinary record at Princeton.

The Committee on Discipline imposes penalties short of suspension (periods of disciplinary probation or occasionally a Dean's Warning) in approximately 25-35% of its cases in situations where a reasonable person may have been confused about the policies or the student's errors in citation were due to oversight or carelessness.

Comparison with peer institutions. We surveyed peer institutions on their typical penalties, based on the violation categories in Table 1. Suspension, typically for one or two semesters,

Category	Violations reported	Moved to hearing	Findings of responsibility	Penalties
Writing overtime	27	9	6	Probation
Use of prohibited aid	36	15	7	Probation (2) One-year leave (5)
Copying from a peer	15	2	2	One-year leave
Failure to submit an exam	4	4	2	Two-year leave One-year leave (1)
Doctoring a regrade	6	6	4	Two-year leave (2) Expulsion (1)
Total	88	36	21	

Table 1: Honor Code violations, hearings, and findings of responsibility, from Fall 2014 to Fall 2017.

is the most common penalty for all categories except overtime violations. Overtime violations are not common or a concern for many of our peer institutions, but those that enforce this policy recommend probation, reprimand, or suspension.

Important discussion points in our committee’s deliberations. As a committee, we recognize the importance of upholding Princeton’s traditions of honesty in all aspects of academic life. It is clear that the Princeton community as a whole values the importance of personal integrity and responsibility as part of the Princeton experience. We also recognize that the world has changed since the Honor System was established in 1893. Our students operate in a more complex world, rife with information overload, compounded by increasing amounts of stress and mental health issues. The college experience today differs dramatically from that of even two decades ago.

Student sentiment that led to Referendum 1 in December 2017 (see Appendix C) is that the current penalties are overly punitive and not necessarily rehabilitative. This is compounded by a general distrust in the Honor Committee process, and the fear that being reported to the committee ensures a finding of responsibility will follow. The feeling of unfairness increases in the cases of minor infractions, such as overtime violations on an exam or for making “careless” mistakes. In the case of overtime violations, there is no standard policy for how instructors call time on an exam. For example, “pencils down” is a clearer instruction than, “finish your thoughts” or “wrap it up.” Students interpret the latter differently depending on whether they need to finish a sentence or close out a paragraph. Careless mistakes involve using an aid such as a calculator or notecard when it was not allowed. In some courses, these policies are not spelled out clearly, or there is conflict between the course information and the exam cover sheet. Finally, there is concern that the increasing levels of stress our students are under contribute to making poor decisions in the heat of the moment.

It is not clear that removal from the Princeton community would always be the best outcome in these situations. Students may not have the support structure at home, nor the funds available, to enable a year away from Princeton. Students may have access to counseling here

that would not be available away from campus. Along these lines, there is a general feeling that students are not reporting peers for violations because of the harsh outcomes. On the other hand, students aiming for competitive positions after graduation might wish to report a peer for an overtime violation, knowing that if found responsible, the peer will have to report a disciplinary record on applications.

We as a committee feel that penalties should lead to learning and reflection. Penalties need to serve the purpose of deterring violations of our academic policies, and they should allow students to take stock of their actions and learn from their mistakes. We recognize a need to be in alignment with the Committee on Discipline for academic penalties, and feel there is room for more gradations in penalty to reflect the severity of the violation while remaining in alignment. Finally, there are anecdotal reports that students who have been suspended found the time away from campus to be beneficial, but with no data on this issue, it complicates discussions on how necessary separation from campus is for rehabilitative purposes.

Short-term recommendations

Require the “Academic Integrity Refresher Program.” For academic integrity violations handled by the Committee on Discipline (e.g., for cases of plagiarism or cheating on take-home exams), students found responsible are required to participate in an “Academic Integrity Refresher Program.” We recommend that students found responsible for violations handled by the Honor System be required to participate in the same program.

Better inform course instructors about the Honor System. We should ensure that instructors understand and comply with the Honor System policies to lessen the chance of violations. Instructors should be made aware of the Honor Committee procedures and the penalties for violating the Honor Code.

Establish a standardized language for calling time in exams. Course instructors may not understand that the language they might use to signal the end of an exam is ambiguous. In order to help prevent overtime violations, we recommend standardizing this language.

Restate exam policies before the exam. We recommend that instructors clearly restate what aids are allowed in an in-class exam prior to the start of the exam, in order to curtail the use of prohibited aids.

Long-term recommendations

Revise the penalty structure for both the Honor Committee and the Committee on Discipline. We recommend revising the penalties available to both the Honor Committee and the Committee on Discipline, in order to allow for more options when assigning penalties. Our specific recommendations are below:

- Introduce a “**reprimand**” as a penalty available to the Honor Committee. These would be appropriate for most overtime violations. Reprimands would not appear on the student’s permanent record, but would be taken into account if a second violation occurred. Second violations would result in suspension or expulsion.

- In current practice, when the Honor Committee recommends probation as a penalty, the period of probation is “until graduation.” We recommend allowing **shorter probationary periods** in line with the violation. These would be appropriate for violations that result from “mistakes” in understanding exam policies, in line with “plagiarism that reasonably could have occurred as a result of carelessness or oversight” or “careless error” findings of the Committee on Discipline. Appropriate penalties for such violations could include reprimand or one or more semesters of probation, and the reflection on the student’s permanent record would depend on the type of penalty instituted. A student with a reprimand on the record without further violation could truthfully answer “no” if asked if they have a disciplinary record at Princeton. Second violations would result in suspension or expulsion.
- Institute a **one-semester suspension** as a standard response to a student’s first violation in situations other than those mentioned above (i.e., for all violations besides overtime violations and careless mistakes). While we understand that the current arrangement of course sequences in many departments often necessitates a one-year leave, we think alternatives that provide more flexibility should be investigated.
- Continue to explore other sanctions used by other institutions. For instance, the University of Pennsylvania uses one-semester suspensions that are “not imposed.” In these cases, the suspension is recorded on the student’s permanent record, but the student is not required to be removed from the community. Conditions for the semester could be required, for instance including the Academic Refresher Integrity Program, community service, or mental health counseling.

Conduct research on the extent to which leaves are rehabilitative. One of the reasons students found responsible for serious academic integrity violations are required to leave the university is punitive: these students have violated the trust placed in them, and there needs to be a serious consequence. But suspensions may also have a rehabilitative effect. Students who resort to academic fraud are often under stress for a variety of reasons, and spending time away can relieve some of the pressure. We recommend a thorough study of the rehabilitative effect of leaves for those in violation of the Honor Code. Such a study could include a survey to determine what a student chose to do during the time away, difficulties the student may have encountered both away from and returning to Princeton, and the value the student may perceive in taking time away.

Provide resources for students who are suspended. Because students come from a variety of backgrounds, suspensions affect different students in different ways. We recommend developing a program to provide resources to aid students in utilizing their time away as needed, including finding employment/internships, providing financial assistance, and access to mental health resources.

3.4 Transparency

One major critique of the Honor System at Princeton is its lack of transparency. Efforts to increase the transparency of the Committee are already underway. In 2013, the Constitution of the Honor System was amended to require the Honor Committee to publish aggregate five-year statistics on the following items: the number of students reported to the Committee; the

types of violations that are reported; the number of cases that go to hearing; the respective outcomes of those cases; the number of appeals made; and the respective outcomes of those appeals. The first statistics will be published during the fall 2018 semester, and a preliminary version (including four years of statistics) is given in Table 1.

We hope the publication of these statistics will correct a common misconception among students that all students who are brought before the Honor Committee are found responsible. Nonetheless, we believe the Honor Committee can and should pursue other initiatives to increase the transparency of its work.

Transparency is not limited to sharing more information about the Committee's caseload; it also includes the Committee's relationship with the undergraduate students and the faculty and how the Committee communicates with these bodies. The Honor System Review Committee took into account these relationships in its evaluation of how the Honor Committee should become more transparent.

In exploring transparency initiatives, our committee weighed the imperative for transparency against the need to protect student privacy. The Honor Committee is bound by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which prevents it from divulging confidential information related to a student's disciplinary record at the University. FERPA prevents the Honor Committee from publishing, for example, anonymized summaries of the cases it investigates or adjudicates; however, FERPA does not prevent the Honor Committee from publishing an annual report similar to the annual report on the Committee on Discipline, linked here.

Short-term recommendations

Build a flowchart for the Honor Committee website that explains how an Honor Committee investigation works. An important part of Honor Committee investigations is contacting undergraduate student witnesses; however, many students are unaware that they may be asked to serve as witnesses and are uncomfortable doing so because they do not understand what role they are playing in investigations. Further, there is a misconception on campus that students are simply "Honor Coded" and suspended without due process.

In order to remedy these problems, we recommend that the Honor Committee update its website with a flowchart to describe how a typical Honor Committee investigation unfolds. The purpose of this flowchart is to clarify how the Honor Committee receives reports, the various individuals with whom investigators meet during an investigation, the evidence investigators collect during an investigation, and how and why the Honor Committee moves cases forward to a hearing.

In addition to clarifying its investigation procedures on its website, the Honor Committee should review these procedures with first-year, transfer, and visiting students during academic integrity presentations at the start of the fall semester.

Improve the timing of the first contact email to students under investigation to ensure they are able to speak to Honor Committee investigators as soon as possible after they are informed of their status as students in question. In December 2017, the Constitution of the Honor System was amended to require the Honor Committee to notify a student of their status as a witness or a student in question upon first contact. Since the passage of the amendment, the Honor Committee and our committee have evaluated what process the Honor Committee should follow in order to ensure that students in question can be paired with appropriate

resources upon learning of their status as such.

We recommend that the Honor Committee notify students in question of their status via email. Emails to students in question should be sent immediately preceding a three-hour time period in which Honor Committee investigators are available to meet with a student in question. Due to the stressful nature of first contact emails, the Honor Committee should not send such emails after 8:00 PM.

Include a peer representative in the first contact email to a student in question and include a student's residential college director of student life as a resource for wellness support. During the campaign to pass the 2017 amendment, Honor Committee leadership voiced concerns about notifying students in question of their status in environments other than the Honor Committee office. In order to mitigate these concerns, we recommend that the Honor Committee include information about relevant University resources available to students in question in first contact emails. Resources include, but are not limited to, residential college directors of student life, Counseling and Psychological Services, and other administrators who are familiar with Honor Committee proceedings.

Additionally, we recommend that the first contact email include contact information for a peer representative. The peer representative may answer any questions that the student in question has about Honor Committee procedure prior to the student in question's meeting with Honor Committee investigators; however, the peer representative may not participate in the student's interview with the Honor Committee or advise the student in any way during that meeting.

Eliminate character witnesses from Honor Committee hearings. Currently, students in question are permitted to invite character witnesses to testify on their behalf during Honor Committee hearings; however, the Honor Committee does not use character witness testimony in its evaluation of responsibility or penalty. Additionally, the Honor Committee always assumes good character of a student in question, irrespective of whether they invite character witnesses to testify at their hearing. Moreover, the committee is assessing a student's conduct, not character, and the option of calling character witnesses sends a confusing message. For these reasons, we recommend eliminating character witnesses during Honor Committee hearings. This recommendation increases transparency about what factors and evidence the Honor Committee takes into consideration when it deliberates.

Long-term recommendations

Increase efforts to educate the faculty and preceptors about the Honor Committee and academic integrity. Currently, the Honor Committee does not communicate with the faculty annually. The Honor Committee interacts with members of the faculty through one of two forums. First, the Chair of the Honor Committee gives a short presentation on the Honor System at Princeton during the meeting of new faculty and graduate student preceptors at the start of the fall term. Second, Honor Committee investigators interact with members of the faculty when students in faculty-members' courses are accused of violating the Honor Code.

Many new faculty and preceptors do not attend the meeting of new faculty at the start of the term. Additionally, many faculty do not begin teaching until their second or third year at the University. This means that significant time has passed between when they were educated about the Honor Code and when they begin administering examinations under the Honor Code.

Each year, a number of reports received by the Honor Committee relate to unclear course or examination administration policies. Most commonly, the Honor Committee receives overtime reports stemming from unclear time calls. For example, as mentioned in Section 3.3, a professor may end an in-class examination by saying, “Okay, wrap up your thoughts.” This directive can and often is interpreted differently by students in a classroom. One student may believe it is only reasonable to finish a sentence, whereas another student may believe it is reasonable to finish an entire paragraph.

Additionally, the Honor Committee receives reports that students used impermissible resources such as calculators or study guides during an in-class examination. Students who use these resources do not always do so with the intent to gain an unfair advantage; instead, their use of impermissible resources is indicative of their incorrect knowledge of course policy due to assumptions informed by other courses in the same department, differing instructions on a practice examination, or unclear communication of examination policies by an instructor.

To reduce the number of overtime and impermissible use reports received by the Honor Committee, we recommend that the Honor Committee implement a schedule for communicating to faculty similar to its annual schedule for communicating to the undergraduate student body. At the start of each academic year, the Honor Committee should send a letter to the faculty with reminders and updates about the Honor System at Princeton and how the faculty may help their students maintain high academic integrity standards. Before each midterm and final examination period, the Honor Committee should send a brief memorandum to the faculty with reminders about clear communication of examination policies.

Additionally, we recommend that Honor Committee partner with the Council on Teaching and Learning to work on initiatives to standardize how examination policies are communicated to undergraduate students by faculty and preceptors. These initiatives include, but are not limited to, implementing a deadline after which faculty may not change the form of final assessment originally indicated on the course syllabus and the rules for this final assessment, adding a section to course worksheets in which faculty must indicate rules for their final examinations, and creating an independent form to be completed before faculty are assigned final examination times and locations on which faculty must indicate rules for examinations.

3.5 Fairness

The Honor Committee has striven to ensure fair processes for all students. The Honor Committee follows the fundamental procedures and responsibilities outlined in the Honor Constitution, which sets forth requirements regarding the composition of the committee, the various types of violations, the standard of evidence for a finding of responsibility, rights for students in question under investigation, investigation procedures, hearing procedures, penalties, and appeals.

In order to ensure consistency and continuity as the composition of the committee changes from year to year, Honor Committee members undergo a training process similar to that used by the Committee on Discipline. Adherence to the Honor Constitution as well as close interaction with the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students helps maintain this consistency. The Honor Committee’s adherence to procedure is also evaluated when a student appeals a decision to the dean of the college. Section 2.3.3 of *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities* offers further details on current procedures regarding the reporting and investigation of a suspected violation, the hearing, decision, and the basis for appeal.

The composition of the Committee includes both elected and appointed representatives (the presidents of the sophomore and junior classes and the former sophomore and junior

class presidents). Two investigators are required to promptly investigate an initial report by a reporting witness, and there must be independent support for the initial report in order for the case to proceed to a hearing. If the case moves to a hearing, the student may have a peer representative. The investigators are present during the hearing but do not vote on whether the student is responsible for the alleged violation. A student is found responsible only if the members are overwhelmingly convinced that the student ought reasonably to have understood that his or her actions were in violation of the Honor Code and if the vote is 7-0 or 6-1 to find the student responsible. Honor Committee members have also sought to increase communication with the student body and increase awareness of the academic integrity policies, with required matriculation essays on the Honor Code for incoming students, a first-year introduction to the Honor Code each September, visits to advisee groups in the residential colleges, and campus-wide e-mails regarding the Honor Code.

Short-term recommendations

Adopt less confrontational terminology in Honor Committee proceedings. The Honor Committee has faced a challenge with students' perceptions that the Committee is mysterious, powerful and prosecutorial. We recommend changing the language used in describing the initial meeting with the student in question regarding the alleged infraction from "confrontation" to "interview" to make it clear that the student under question is not under attack. Similarly, we recommend consistently using the terminology "finding of responsibility" and eliminating references to "guilty," "guilty verdict," and "acquitted," in all procedures and written materials (such as the Honor Constitution and *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities*), as it may contribute to the student in question feeling prosecuted or attacked. It may be less stressful for the student in question and more beneficial for the Honor Committee to convey that the investigation and hearing are neutral, fact-finding processes necessary to enforce a community standard.

Increase elected student membership in the Honor Committee. Currently, the membership of the Honor Committee consists of fifteen members: four elected members (the current and former presidents of the sophomore and junior classes), as well as eleven appointed members who apply directly to the Honor Committee. We recommend increasing the number of elected members of the Honor Committee from four to six, so that the student body will have a greater voice in the makeup of the Honor Committee. We also recommend removing the requirement that current and former class presidents serve as ex officio members of the Honor Committee. Class presidents have a large number of responsibilities already, and serving on the Honor Committee is a significant time commitment. Members of the Honor Committee need to be available to conduct investigations and attend hearings, and class presidents are often too busy to fulfill these responsibilities adequately.

Our recommendation is to increase the number of Honor Committee members from the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) from four to six, keeping the total membership of the Honor Committee at fifteen people. Of these six USG members, three would be senators and three would be U-Councilors. The members would serve for a one-year term. If after serving a term the elected student representative wishes to continue to serve on the Honor Committee, he or she could apply to be an appointed member.

This recommendation would need to be approved by the Undergraduate Student Government. The student members of the Honor System Review Committee all support this recommendation, and the hope is that the USG could consider this recommendation in Fall 2018.

Long-term recommendations

Appoint professional investigators to pair with student investigators. One of the challenges that Honor Committee members have faced is how to balance the heavy workload of conducting investigations and hearings with their studies and other extracurricular commitments, which contributes to difficulty with the recruitment of new members and the retention of existing members. We recommend appointing one or more professional investigators who can pair with the student investigators. To maintain the student-run and student-led process, the student investigator could lead the investigation and the professional investigator could help take notes and complete write-ups of interviews and otherwise support as needed. The Honor Committee Chair also shoulders the time-consuming responsibility of preparing for hearings and writing memorandums of Honor Committee decisions, and the professional investigator could assist the Honor Committee chair with pre-hearing preparation or post-hearing support. The Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students currently retains three University Investigators who have experience conducting academic integrity investigations for the Committee on Discipline, and their roles could easily be expanded to assist with Honor Committee investigations.

Formulate clear standards for examination procedures. The most common violations that the Honor Committee investigates are those involving writing overtime on an exam. As a long-term recommendation, the Honor System Review Committee recommends standardizing how faculty members call time at the end of exams. The inconsistency among how faculty members call time or the imprecise language they use (“Try to finish up,” vs. “You have one minute left, after which your pencils must be down...Pencils down”) can lead to reports of overtime violations. Another common violation is the impermissible use of a calculator or cell phone during an exam. The Committee recommends having faculty members remind students about the precise rules governing exams and ensuring that the rules are consistent across the syllabus, postings on Blackboard, and verbal and written exam instructions.

A Committee members

Name	Title
Clancy Rowley (co-chair)	Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Carolyn Liziewski (co-chair)	Undergraduate Class of 2018
Cecily Swanson (staff)	Director of Studies, Mathey College
Omid Abrishamchian	Undergraduate Class of 2018
David August	Professor of Computer Science
Rebecca Burdine	Associate Professor of Molecular Biology
Janet Chen	Associate Professor of History and East Asian Studies
Patrick Flanigan	Undergraduate Class of 2018
William Gleason	Hughes-Rogers Professor of English and American Studies
Michael Graziano	Professor of Psychology and the Princeton Neuroscience Institute
Elizabeth Haile	Undergraduate Class of 2019
Soraya Morales Nunez	Undergraduate Class of 2018
Ling Ritter	Undergraduate Class of 2019
Joyce Chen Shueh	Senior Associate Dean, Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Students
Anna Shields	Professor of East Asian Studies
Jasmine Young	Undergraduate Class of 2020

B Charge to the committee, and corresponding recommendations

Below is the charge to the committee, along with pointers to corresponding sections of this report that address the items in the charge (in italics).

Considering the University's long-standing commitment to upholding a high standard of academic integrity and enforcing the pact between faculty and students to abide by the Honor Code, the Honor System Review Committee is tasked with examining aspects of the University's Honor Committee ("HC"). The review committee's study will assess the current policies and procedures and be guided by the following questions:

1. **HC investigation and hearing processes and policies.** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current processes? How might the current processes be improved, given concerns about effectiveness, confidentiality, and transparency? Are there more effective ways for the HC to conduct investigations and collect testimony?

See Section 3.4 and Appendix D.

2. **HC Constitution language and academic integrity standards.** Does the Preamble to the Honor Code Constitution that appears in RRR align sufficiently with the subsequently revised Honor Code Constitution? Are there places where we should strive for more consistency and clarity? How do we increase awareness on the part of students and faculty about the most common violations and decrease their incidence?

See the second recommendation in Section 3.2 and the first recommendation in Section 3.4.

3. **Honor Committee penalties.** Should the HC be able to use a wider, more graduated range of penalties outlined in *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities* for Honor Code violations, taking other factors into consideration when judging the seriousness of the offense (i.e., violations that seem less serious or those that result from carelessness)?

See Section 3.3.

4. **HC membership and the HC's relationship with the Undergraduate Student Government.** Are the current procedures for the selection of members appropriate and effective? What is the best role for the Undergraduate Student Government to play in HC selection processes? What is the best way to balance representation from elected officers with HC members who have the requisite interest, skill set, available time, and commitment?

See the second recommendation in Section 3.5.

5. **USG December 2017 referenda.** Three of the four referenda passed by the student body have been remanded by President Eisgruber to the Committee on Examinations and Standing for review and a decision about whether they should be moved forward for the approval of the full faculty. We ask the Honor System Review Committee to consider these referenda as part of its charge, and to recommend to the Committee on Examinations and Standing whether the proposals about penalties, evidence, and faculty involvement in deciding infractions should be adopted.

See our interim report released March 23, 2018, [linked here](#).

6. **Honor Committee faculty advisory committee.** We ask the Honor System Review Committee to formally consider whether to reinstitute a faculty advisory committee to consult on process, policy, and procedure, so that future changes to the Honor Committee's work might be more effectively vetted by faculty.

See Section 3.2.

In doing its work, the Committee should consider the University's bedrock values, including our high standards for academic integrity, consistency and equity among all students, transparency of administrative procedures, and confidentiality of private student affairs. The Committee will ask whether those values are supported by current HC practices and may consider whether they are better supported by practices adopted by peer schools.

When its work is completed—preferably within the spring 2018 semester—the Honor System Review Committee will deliver a report to Vice President W. Rochelle Calhoun, Dean of the College Jill Dolan, Dean of the Faculty Sanjeev Kulkarni, and the Committee on Examinations and Standing. Recommendations about the three USG referenda will be taken up by the Committee on Examinations and Standing; other recommendations may be forwarded to other venues for discussion and action.

C Undergraduate Student Government referenda, December 2017

Below we list the text of the referenda voted on by the student body in December, 2017. All referenda passed by a wide margin, with over 3300 students voting, and between 84% and 90% of votes cast in favor of the referenda.

Referendum 4 was allowed to stand, but the first three referenda were remanded to the Committee on Examinations and Standing, because they would “fundamentally alter the University’s disciplinary penalties and standards for assessing violations of the Honor Code during in-class examinations.” The Honor System Review Committee was asked to make a recommendation about whether these referenda should be adopted.

Referendum 1

Question: Shall the Honor Constitution be amended to (1) change the standard penalty for a first violation of the Honor Code from a one-year suspension to disciplinary probation, (2) change the standard penalty for a second violation of the Honor Code from expulsion to a one-year suspension, and (3) stipulate that a violation of the Honor Code involving “extenuating circumstances” will result in a finding of not responsible, instead of disciplinary probation?

Referendum 2

Question: Shall Article III, Section C, Subsection 6 of the Honor Constitution be amended to add that an “[alleged Honor Code violation] case brought to hearing must have at least two separate pieces of evidence, each of which indicates that a violation occurred”?

Referendum 3

Question: Shall Article II, Section D of the Honor Constitution be amended to add that “a student will be found not responsible [of an Honor Code violation] if the Committee fails to find overwhelmingly convincing evidence that the student ought reasonably to have understood that their actions were in violation of the Honor Code, or if the course instructor explicitly states that a student’s actions were not in violation of their class policy”?

Referendum 4

Question: Shall Article III, Section C, Subsection 4 of the Honor Constitution be amended to require that Honor Committee investigators “disclose [a] student’s status as a student in question or a witness” when “making initial contact” with that student, rather than allowing investigators to defer this disclosure until just before questioning the student?

D Detailed Honor Committee procedures

D.1 Procedures for contacting witnesses and students in question

Prior to the passage of the 2017 amendment, the Committee typically contacted witnesses and students in question via phone to request an in-person meeting immediately. The Committee notified students of their status upon meeting with Honor Committee investigators. The time between when a student was informed that their participation was required in an Honor Committee investigation and when a student was informed of their status as a witness or student in question typically was not more than an hour.

Since the passage of the 2017 amendment, the Committee has shifted away from its practice of contacting students via phone. Instead, the Committee contacts students via email. Per the amendment, all email contact to students includes clear communication about whether students being emailed are witnesses or students in question. Email is advantageous because it allows Honor Committee investigators to pre-schedule meetings with witnesses; accordingly, Honor Committee investigations are conducted in a more timely manner.

However, there are certain logistical challenges related to notifying a student of their status as a student in question via email. Specifically, we believe it would be inappropriate to notify a student of their status as a student in question hours before Honor Committee investigators are available to meet with the student. Notification of SIQ status is extremely stressful for most students, and students should be able to respond to the alleged violation during an in-person meeting with Honor Committee investigators as soon as possible.

In order to attempt to mitigate the amount of time between when a student in question is notified of their status and when Committee investigators can meet with the student, emails to students in question will be sent thirty minutes before Honor Committee investigators are available for in-person meetings. Honor Committee investigators will block out three hours of availability for an in-person meeting on the day that the student in question is notified of their status. Honor Committee investigators will also block out three hours on the following day in case the student in question does not read the email during the three-hour block on the day it is sent. Emails to students in question must be sent no later than 8 PM, and meetings with students in the question may not begin any later than 10 PM.

D.2 Initial email correspondence with a student in question

A first contact email to a student in question should include the following components:

- The subject line “[Urgent] Honor Committee Inquiry”
- The course in which the student has been accused of violating the Honor Code
- The statement, “We would like to be clear that this is only an investigation, and that no determination about whether your case will move forward to a hearing has been made.”
- At least two separate blocks of time during which Honor Committee investigators are available to meet with the student in question
- A link to Article III, Section A of the Constitution, which enumerates a student’s rights as a student in question
- The name of the student’s residential college Director of Student Life, and the DSL’s campus phone number and email address

- The name, phone number, and email address of a peer representative who is available to discuss Honor Committee procedure with the student in question
- The campus phone number, and email address for Joyce Chen Shueh, the Senior Associate Dean of Discipline and advisor to the Honor Committee
- The phone number of Counseling and Psychological Services, with a reminder that CPS is available to students 24/7
- The phone number and email address of the Honor Committee Chair

The Honor Committee has an internal email template to which all members have access. Members must use the template email to ensure that all students in question receive the aforementioned information.

References

- [1] Faculty Minutes, Princeton University, January 18, 1893.
- [2] Trustee Minutes, Princeton University, February 9, 1893.
- [3] Muncy, Mitchell S., *A History of the Honor System at Princeton University, 1892-1985*, Princeton University, 1993.
- [4] Discipline Report 2015-2016, revised October 2016.