The Honor System

Click on a link to be taken to the entry below.

- Introduction
- Philosophy
- The Single Sanction
- The Honor Committee
- Juries
- Honor Support Officers
- The Community Relations Committee

Introduction

The Honor System has been a defining characteristic of life at the University for 160 years. The Honor System, plainly stated, means that all University of Virginia students have committed themselves to not lying, cheating, or stealing. This ideal of Honor is not imposed on students; instead, it is a chosen ideal and a common endeavor. Each student at the University has signed a pledge to abide by the Honor System on his application for admission. The students have also committed themselves to governing the system—the Honor Committee is made up entirely of your fellow students. This commitment means that the University of Virginia exists as a community of trust.

The Honor System has real and tangible benefits to University students. At this University, a student is assumed to be honorable unless his actions proven him otherwise. This presumption of Honor accompanies a student in all his dealings with fellow students, faculty members, administrators, and members of the community. The Honor System means that a professor will trust both your word and your work. The Honor System also means that you can trust a fellow student because he is a University student. This positive conception of Honor is the heart of our system.

Essential to maintaining our community of trust is the acceptance of individual responsibility. The foundation of the Honor System depends entirely upon the willingness of each student to live up to the standards set by the community of his fellow students. Unfortunately though, it only takes one student to breach the community of trust. And for the community of trust to remain strong, each student must be committed to bringing to the Honor Committee any member of the community who may demonstrate a disregard for these basic principles of honesty.

Philosophy

The central purpose of the Honor System is to sustain and protect a community of trust in which students can enjoy the freedom to develop their intellectual and personal potential. The concept of the Honor System implies that students commit themselves to the pursuit of truth. Dishonest means are incompatible with this pursuit. The System does not exist simply to punish students who commit honor offenses, nor to place restrictions on students that might conflict with their personal values; rather, its purpose is to promote an atmosphere of trust.

http://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=9&page=06c_the_honor_system.html
The Single Sanction

If a student commits an honor offense by willfully committing a serious act of lying, cheating or stealing, that student breaches the trust of the entire community. Students convicted of an honor offense are permanently dismissed from the University. With respect to University graduates convicted of an honor offense, the Honor Committee may make a recommendation of degree revocation to the General Faculty. These measures help to promote an atmosphere of trust and freedom from suspicion in our community.

The Honor Committee

The Honor Committee is responsible for the overall administration of the Honor System. It is composed of two representatives from each of the eleven schools of the University with the exception of the College of Arts and Sciences, which has three representatives. The committee elects a Chair, Vice-Chair for Investigations, Vice-Chair for Trials, Vice-Chair for Services, and a Vice-Chair for Education from among the representatives. Honor Committee members are elected each spring by the student body.

Operation

Anyone can initiate an Honor case by calling an Honor Advisor or contacting an Honor Committee member. Once a case is initiated, the Committee assigns two trained Honor Counsel to investigate the case. After the investigation is completed, the evidence is presented to a panel of three Committee members, who decide whether or not there is enough evidence to formally accuse the student of the alleged offense.

If the student is formally accused, he or she may elect to either (1) leave the University, without requesting a trial (in which case he or she will be deemed to have admitted guilt, whether or not such an admission is expressly made), or (2) request an Honor trial. If a student requests a trial, she will have the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses in her defense to a panel of student jurors.

If a student fails to cooperate with the Honor process sufficient to establish ongoing communication about his case, the Committee may cause a "registration block" (barring further registration) and/or a "transcript hold" (resulting in the denial of transcript requests) to be imposed until such communication has been established (or restored). If a student is the subject of Honor charges immediately prior to graduation, his degree will not be conferred, and he will not receive a diploma, pending the resolution of such charges.

Any student found (or deemed) guilty of an Honor offense will be permanently dismissed from the University and will not be entitled to receive or hold a degree from the University of Virginia. The notation "enrollment discontinued" will be placed on the student's transcript. In the case of a student found (or deemed) guilty of an Honor offense following graduation, the general faculty of the University will undertake proceedings to revoke his or her degree.

The rules of the Honor System apply to any person who was a University student at the time an alleged Honor offense was committed. Students who leave or have left the University for any reason (including transfer, withdrawal, leave of absence, graduation or other failure to return to the University for any reason), at any time, whether prior to case initiation and official accusation or thereafter, are subject to the Honor System, so long as a case is initiated within two years from the date of the alleged offense.

The current rules and procedures of the Honor Committee, as embodied in its By-laws (as they may be amended or updated from time to time), are available directly from the Honor Committee. While the By-laws describe the organization and procedures of

http://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=9&page=06c_the_honor_system.html
the Honor System, they are not meant to be exhaustive or to extend to every imaginable circumstance, and they do not constitute a contract between the University and University students, past or present. Questions regarding the By-laws or any aspect of Honor Committee practice or procedure should be addressed directly to the Honor Committee. The Honor Committee can be contacted by phone at (434) 924-7602, or through their website at www.student.virginia.edu/honor.

Juries

In 1990, the student body reaffirmed a 1980 referendum to allow randomly selected students to serve as jurors in honor trials. It is the right of the accused to be judged by a panel of peers; therefore, students are called upon to serve as jurors to help judge the guilt or innocence of an accused student. To ensure that the trial process remains as equitable and expedient as possible, students are obligated to respond to the jury notification letters forwarded by the Honor Committee. Once secured as a juror, students are expected to appear on the designated trial date. Failure to meet these obligations will be considered a breach of the University Standards of Conduct. Such cases will be subject to an appropriate sanction as determined by the Judiciary Committee.

Honor trials will generally last one full day. The Trial Chair, an Honor Committee member, provides knowledge of the Honor System and trial experience. By devoting one day as a trial juror to the operation of the Honor System, each student can guarantee that the Honor System remains a vital and responsive aspect of University life.

Honor Support Officers

The Honor Committee appoints student support officers each year who are responsible for various aspects of the Honor System. Honor Advisors, Counsel, and Educators are charged to advise students involved in honor cases, conduct investigations, participate in trials, and disseminate the philosophies and guidelines of the Honor System, respectively. When an honor violation is suspected, an Honor Advisor should be contacted immediately at (434) 924-7602. The Honor Committee selects support officers each fall through a series of tests and interviews.

The Community Relations Committee

The Community Relations Committee, formerly known as the Bad Check Committee, ensures that students have unique privileges that promote a community of trust between students and merchants in the Charlottesville community. One of these privileges is the ability to write checks to local merchants by simply showing your University of Virginia ID. The Community Relations Committee maintains this privilege by providing a means for merchants to contact the Committee, rather than the police, whenever a student bounces a check. In this way, the Community Relations Committee acts as an intermediary between the student and the merchant, ensuring continued check-writing privileges for students in the community, generally.

Students, however, should be aware that bouncing checks can be costly. Most result in a large service charge from banks, plus an additional charge from the merchant. The Community Relations Committee, through the Office of the Dean of Students, has the power to suspend students who do not make restitution for their bad checks within a timely manner, so as not to jeopardize the trust between merchants and students. Cases where a student has willfully written bad checks are considered a breach of the trust established by the Honor System, and will be referred to the Honor Committee for investigation.