

The Honor and Discipline Committee reports to the College each year about the nature of the cases it has heard, the judgments it has made, and the penalties it has determined. This report covers the meetings of the Committee that reviewed cases that stemmed from incidents that occurred during the 2007-2008 year. Following this report is a report on disciplinary activity in the Dean's Office.

Report of the Honor Committee 2007-2008

Fall Semester

1. A first-year was accused of plagiarizing passages of a Wikipedia entry for an assigned essay in an English course, changing the wording only slightly. The student took responsibility for doing this. The Committee did not believe the violation of the Honor Code was serious enough to warrant failure in the course and recommended failure in the assignment and disciplinary probation for one semester. The Dean did not accept the recommendation and imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the spring 2008 semester.
2. A junior was accused of not attributing ideas and writing from a family member who helped the student write his/her paper for an English class. The student noted that he/she was very challenged by the demands of the course and that he/she sought the family member's help in the assignment. He/She nonetheless maintained that the work in the paper was his/her own. However, the student's professor had access to a draft of the paper in which the "track changes" function in Word was still activated and thus showed precisely where the family member had contributed text. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the fall 2008 semester.
3. Five students of various class years came before the Honor Committee because it appeared that they had improperly collaborated on two Computer Science assignments. It soon became clear that one student of the five was solely responsible for producing work that was not her/his own and which involved copying her/his peers' work without their knowledge or approval. That the student did this on two occasions, violated departmental policy by visiting student directories within the department, and maintained her/his innocence throughout the hearing with tendentious and unbelievable testimony about her/his actions led the Committee to impose suspension for two years. The other four students were all cleared of wrong-doing and were commended for the composure they maintained throughout the lengthy hearing.
4. A junior was accused of directly copying portions of an online article for an essay in a Political Economy course. The student admitted doing so and expressed remorse. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the fall 2008 semester.

5. A senior was accused of not properly attributing his/her sources for an essay in an Economics course and verbatim copying of passages from a scholarly article. The student maintained that he/she thought his/her citations were sufficient but could not explain the identical passages from the article. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until graduation.

6. A first-year was accused of using a “decompiler” to generate computer code for an assignment in a Computer Science course. The student admitted doing so and expressed remorse. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the spring 2008 semester.

7. A first-year was accused of not properly attributing the lab report of his/her lab partner in a Biology course, which the student had read in advance of the assignment’s deadline. He/She maintained that, by noting the lab partner’s name on the front of his/her report, he/she believed the lab instructor implicitly understood that the work was a product of collaboration between him/her and the lab partner. The Committee was not persuaded, however, in part because passages of the student’s report were taken verbatim from the lab partner’s report. The Committee found the student guilty and imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the fall 2008 semester. The lab partner did not know that his/her work would be incorporated in the partner’s lab report and therefore was not charged with violating the Honor Code.

Winter Study and Spring Semester

1. A sophomore was accused of plagiarizing an online source for the final paper in a Winter Study class. The student admitted doing so and expressed remorse. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the spring 2008 semester.

2. A senior was accused of copying portions of an online paper and claiming the work as his/her own in a Computer Science essay. In the course of a lengthy hearing, the Committee came to believe there were mitigating circumstances that helped explain why the student copied the online source and proved that the student never intended to deceive the professor. These circumstances included the student’s educational background in another country; the fact that the student had managed to get to his/her senior year with only minimal college-level essay-writing; and that he/she handed in the online paper along with his/her own paper, indicating the student did not see that his/her actions were a violation of the Honor Code. The Committee imposed failure in the assignment.

3. A junior was accused of consulting an instructor’s manual to complete several assignments in a Math course. The student claimed she/he did the assigned problems for the course and then checked her/his work against the manual; however, there was evidence that, in a couple cases, the student simply copied the answers from the manual. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until graduation.

4. A first-year student was accused of leaving an in-class exam for a Psychology course and going to a nearby computer lab to access course materials on Blackboard. The student admitted doing so but also claimed that she/he realized quickly that this was wrong and therefore did not use any of the Blackboard material on his exam, noting that she/he received a very poor grade on the exam. The Committee did not believe that was adequate proof of whether she/he incorporated any material in the exam and determined that simply the act of accessing course materials constituted a violation of the Honor Code. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the spring 2009 semester.

5. A sophomore was accused of directly copying large portions of text from two internet sites for an essay in an Art History course. The student admitted doing so and expressed remorse. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the fall 2008 semester.

6. Three students – one sophomore and two first-years – were accused of collaborating on a take-home final exam in a Math course. They admitted doing so and expressed remorse. The Committee imposed failure in the course and disciplinary probation until the end of the fall 2008 semester.

7. A junior was accused of cutting and pasting text from Wikipedia in an essay for an Art History course. The student had, in fact, helped to edit one of the Wikipedia passages and claimed that using that passage did not constitute a violation of the Honor Code. However, the student had copied another passage from a Wikipedia entry that she/he did not edit. In neither case did the student cite Wikipedia as a source. Because the student had a previous Honor Code violation, she/he was suspended for the 2008-2009 academic year, was failed in the course, and put on disciplinary probation until she/he graduates.

8. A junior was accused of gaining access to a final exam in a Physics class before it was actually handed out. In this case, the professor had allowed several students to take the exam early and had given those students the final exam in a slightly altered form than the version that the professor handed out for the regularly scheduled exam. This student took the exam at the regularly scheduled time, but handed in the earlier version of the exam. A lengthy review of the evidence showed that the student could not have accidentally attained the earlier version of the exam. Given the severity of the violation, the student was suspended for one semester, was failed in the course, and put on disciplinary probation for an additional semester.

Report of the Discipline Committee

The Discipline Committee consists of all members of the Honor Committee plus four additional members of the faculty. All members of the Committee vote. The Discipline Committee heard no appeals during the 2007-2008 school year.



Respectfully submitted by the 2007-2008 Honor-Discipline Committee:

Professor Duane Bailey, Faculty Chair
William Bruce '08, Student Chair
Karen Merrill, Dean of the College

Dean's Office Action

- For the 2007-2008 school year, there were four disciplinary actions taken by the Dean's office;
 1. Three students were suspended for exhibiting behavior not in accordance with the College's Standard of Conduct.
 2. One student was placed on disciplinary probation exhibiting behavior not in accordance with the College's Standard of Conduct.

The Security Department conducts initial discussions with students about underage drinking and marijuana smoking; these discussions are not a part of the students' disciplinary record. There were 72 such discussions. In especially problematic cases, or in the case of repeated warnings, the student is referred to the Dean's Office.