

Question of HONOR

"Honor is what students do when nobody's looking. Students need ... to think how their actions affect others." JONATHAN SLAIN, UNC Student Attorney General

Colleges and universities across the country are working to redefine the concept of honor on campus. Student input is becoming increasingly important in the process.

Honor codes vary across campuses

BY ALESIA DICOSOLA
STAFF WRITER

Two years ago, one professor at the University of Virginia suspected that more than 200 students had committed plagiarism. Less than half eventually were charged with violating the university's honor code. But such widespread instances of academic dishonesty have prompted administrators across the country to take a closer look at their policies regarding academic integrity.

Numerous schools are revitalizing old codes or writing new ones, said Diane Waryold, executive director of the Center for Academic Integrity, a nonprofit foundation at Duke University.

Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill are part of the growing number of schools creating an "honor code culture," a campus environment where honor guides student life.

Since 2000, Duke students have taken part in an honor code signing ceremony at the beginning of every academic year. Duke's honor code was passed by student referendum in 1993.

Such codes are far from universal. They are not part of every school's culture, said Paul Cousins, director of the Office of Student Conduct at N.C. State University. Many UNC-system schools do not abide by traditional codes.

But having a set of rules is catching on. Students at the University of Texas-Austin are in the process of writing their first honor code.

Institutions modifying their honor codes often look to Davidson College and Washington and Lee University — schools renowned for their strict codes.

Kathy Bray-Merrell, Davidson's associate dean of students, said the Honor Code and Code of Responsibility at Davidson are the school's "cornerstone(s) of life."

She said that self-administered exams are proof of an active honor culture on campus.

Helen Hughes, president of



...on my honor...

ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA DINGELDEN

Washington and Lee's Executive Committee of the Student Body, said honor is so integral to university culture that a wallet left out in the open wouldn't be stolen.

The recent push to rejuvenate honor codes, Waryold said, comes from a modern-day corporate culture that questions the ethical standards of its workers. "Communities, faculty and students are realizing the importance of teaching students how to make good decisions."

But it might take time for codes to become a staple of college life. Research shows that it is difficult to create an honor code culture where the tradition does not exist.

"It is a tough sell on a college campus to sell values," Cousins said. "Many believe that universities should teach math, science, history, and have no business teaching honor and integrity."

HONOR AT PEER INSTITUTIONS

DUKE UNIVERSITY
The school's honor code requires every student to "communicate directly" with any person he believes to be in violation of the honor code and report such violations.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
A code of student conduct is in place. Violations include submitting "substantially" the same work for two classes, falsification of lab results and hazing.

UNIV. OF FLORIDA
Students charged with an academic violation try to work it out with the professor. If an agreement cannot be reached, the issue is brought before the Office for Judicial Affairs. The student can either choose to take the matter before a student-run honor court or a student conduct committee run by administrators.

UNIV. OF TEXAS-AUSTIN
The school has no official honor code. However, a potential honor pledge is being supported by the school's president. Professors are left to create their own honor codes for their respective classes.

UNIV. OF MICHIGAN-ANN ARBOR
The school has no honor code. Each college has its own rules and regulations regarding academic integrity. All other matters are covered by a student statement of rights and responsibilities. If a student is found guilty of violating a law, it is handled within the university and is not

COMPILED BY JOSEPH SCHWARTZ

HONOR CODE TIMELINE

- 1795 The Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies, the oldest student organizations on campus, begin imposing rules and regulations on their members concerning cheating and plagiarism.
- 1875 University President Kemp Plummer Battle gives the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies the authority to operate the University honor system, officially establishing the system at UNC.
- 1921 The Student Council takes over authority to operate and enforce the University honor system, removing the responsibility from the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies.
- 1947 The Student Constitution is created, organizing the judicial branch of student government. Originally, the branch was divided into the Men's Council and the Women's Council.
- 1974 The Judicial Reform Committee creates the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, which outlines the current Honor Code and its means for enforcement.
- 2002 The Committee on Student Conduct crafts revisions to the Honor Code to make it more up to date with issues facing the University. The changes are approved the following year.

Change plays key role in Code

BY JOE SAUNDERS
STAFF WRITER

For the past 208 years, students have strolled past Old East Residence Hall with books slung under their arms, in pursuit of an honorable education. Throughout the same period, UNC-Chapel Hill's honor system has continued to grow and change, striving to adapt to the demands of the time.

"The Honor Code is the best system we have because it speaks to you and me as individuals," said former UNC-system president Bill Friday. "(It informs you of) the person you ought to be and the person the University expects you to be."

The roots of UNC-CH's self-governing honor system can be found at the University's establishment in 1795.

The Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies, the oldest student organizations on campus, imposed rules and regulations on their members concerning cheating and plagiarism. Possible punishments included expulsion.

In 1875, the societies were given authority to operate a University honor system, a responsibility that was later passed on to the judicial branch of Student Government.

The honor system basically remained unchanged until 1974, when the largest and most dramatic alterations to the code took place.

The Judicial Reform Committee created the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, which outlined the current Honor Code and its means for enforcement. The Instrument was

developed as a result of several problems with the original honor system.

Douglass Hunt, former vice chancellor for administration, said, "(We needed) to revivify the Honor Code and stress to people what's expected of students here."

One of many problems was the "Rat" clause of the Honor Code, which required students to report peers who were guilty of lying, cheating or stealing to the appropriate student council.

"It was an ineffective clause in that many students didn't abide by it," said Charles Lovelace, student attorney general from 1976 to 1977. "It was hard to enforce."

Rollie Tillman, a former professor at Kenan-Flagler Business School and a member of the 1974 Judicial Reform Committee, said the changing face of UNC necessitated reform in the Honor Code. "The University had grown a lot and changed by being more complex," he said.

Tillman said the Instrument reflected a system of honor already at the University, but the revisions clarified many of the procedures and specifics of the judicial system. "There were drafts and redrafts until we felt we got it right."

It wasn't until last year that students, staff and faculty reviewed the Instrument again.

In January, the Committee on Student Conduct recommended improvements to the Honor Code that were implemented in July.

Faculty Council chairwoman Judith Wegner headed the committee. She said it was impor-



Faculty Council Chairwoman Judith Wegner

tant to keep the honor code up-to-date with the issues facing the University. "We're trying to teach students about truth and the meaning of truth," she said.

Many officials said they think there are still policies that need adapting for today's world.

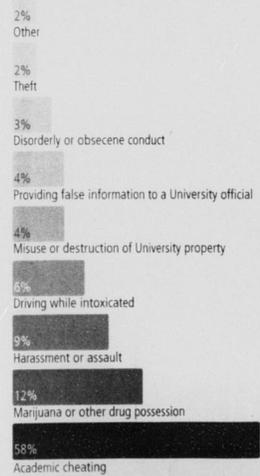
Student Attorney General Jonathan Slain said that many students at UNC-CH do not understand the importance of academic honesty. "We'll need to change the culture so that it's not cool to cheat," he said.

Tillman also supported the idea of updating the Honor Code to meet challenges that did not exist in the 1970s, such as MP3 file-sharing.

"It's time for us to have a look at it again because the world has changed," he said. "Redoing it every 10 or 15 years reinvigorates it."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

Case Type '02-'03

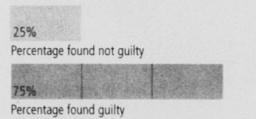


SOURCE: STUDENT ATTORNEY GENERAL

HONOR SYSTEM CASE RESULTS

The breakdown of Honor Code violations out of the 139 cases heard during the 2002-2003 academic year.

Case Verdict '02-'03



Last Year's Honor System Activity (academic year '01-'02)

- 287 cases reported to the student attorney general
- 187 cases charged by the SAG
- 167 Honor Court hearings held

DTH/MICHAELA IDHAMMAR

HONOR

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out to think how their actions affect others."

Other students said that to them, being an honorable person relates directly to behavior and equal treatment. "(Honor is) about the expectations you have for yourself and expecting the same of others," said senior Pailin Wedel, a biology major.

Both Slain and Student Body

President Matt Tepper said this year's drive for honor will encourage students to explore how it affects their daily decisions, whereas disciplinary measures were often the main focus in the past.

Questions on student honor arose after a series of controversial cases came before the Honor Court in October 2000, when Professor James Coggins levied charges against 24 students in his computer science class for cheating on an out-

of-class assignment.

The cases drew attention to the problem of cheating and the need to revise the Honor Code. Revisions were completed last year and implemented in July.

Tepper said this year's initiative will move the emphasis from punitive actions to a new theme.

"We're starting to see (honor) in a different way," he said. "It's more about the culture of honor than the honor system."

Ultimately, an encompassing atmosphere of honor is UNC's primary goal for the future. Moeser said he hopes the Honor Code will become more of a standard for living and conduct than a system of penal codes at the University.

Such an atmosphere would help prepare students for the workplace by building character and teaching them to focus on ethics, said Judith Wegner, co-chairwoman of HonorCarolina and

Faculty Council chairwoman.

Discussions about the meaning of honor and questions posed to students on a variety of ethical dilemmas — Honor and Integrity Week events — will help encourage the growth of honesty on campus, Wegner said.

By discussing controversial ethical topics, students, staff and faculty will bring false assumptions to light and help everyone come to an understanding on difficult issues.

Although University officials say it could take as long as four years for the initiative to ingrain itself in the student body, Tepper said he has faith that honor will become an important tradition at UNC.

"Students know what (honor) is," he said. "They know what to do to lead an honorable life at the University."

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