

Honor Council Year End Report 2018-19

FROM: Dr. Cindy Bennington - Faculty Advisor to Stetson
University Honor Council
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During the 2018-19 academic year the Stetson University Honor Council handled a total of 45 reports of violations of academic integrity. This is the highest number of reports in the last four years (33 in 2017-18; 23 in 2016-17; 38 in 2015-16; 46 in 2014-2015; 50 in 2013-2014). It is, of course, not clear whether this represents an increase in the number of cheating incidents or an increase in faculty willing to report. Below I highlight this year's cases, continuing educational initiatives, and priorities for next year.

Case Summary

- Of the 45 student violations to the Honor Council in 2018-19, eight were dismissed before an investigation could take place, either because the professor changed his/her mind, the student did not return to the university, or the council deemed the case outside of our purview.
- Of the remaining 37 cases the Council received, two were reported late in the spring semester and are being held over until Fall 2019.
- Thirty-five cases were settled in the 2018-19 academic year; 12 students were involved in hearings, 23 were handled through our expedited small claims process.
- As in previous years, the most frequent violation was plagiarism (varying from lack of understanding of proper research and citation to egregious cases of blatant plagiarism from the work of peers and published sources). Cheating was the second most frequent violation.
- Sanctions reflected the nature of the violation. The council typically imposed an academic punitive component (varying from zero on the paper, to "F" in the course with no recourse to the course exclusion policy). In addition, restorative/educational sanctions were generally imposed as well. These included writing a reflective paper about plagiarism, writing a letter of apology to the faculty member, visiting the Writing Center and/or visiting the Academic Success Center. The specific nature of the sanction was based on the type of violation and the explanation for the violation made by the offending student.
- The 45 violations were reported by 21 faculty members (16 A&S, 2 SoB, 3 SoM).

- In addition to cases reported by faculty members, there were a disturbingly large number of informal reports made by students to council members and/or to faculty. The reporting students were unwilling to go on record as accusers, but were troubled by incidences they observed; e.g., multiple members of a class took out their phones/laptops while the instructor was out of the room, one student observed another on his phone during the exam, another student overhead two students discussing the way they cheated following an exam. In the coming year, the council will continue educational initiatives for both faculty and students.

Continuing Educational Initiatives

- The Council and Honor Pledge continue to play a central role in the University's opening convocation. Council members introduced first-year students to the Honor code during the Community Standards session of FOCUS.
- The Council sponsored workshops to educate students on proper use of citations on written assignments.
- At the request of the Department of Athletics, one Council member made a presentation about academic integrity at a weekly meeting of athletes.
- Council members co-conducted a workshop with Dean of Students, Lynn Schoenberg and Director of Community Standards, Barbara Hawkins.
- We increased the number of council members from 15 to 20. In part this was due to the number of very strong applicants and subsequent interviews. Moreover, we have found that, even with 15 or 16 members, it can be difficult to find hearing times that will work for seven council members, the faculty advisor, the reporting faculty member and the accused student(s). We are hopeful that a larger council size will facilitate rapid resolutions in all cases.
- The Council conducted a workshop and mock hearing on Values Day.
- The Council was named Student Organization of the Year.
- The Council reestablished its connection to SGA in 2017 and has retained at least one SGA member on the council since that time.
- Working with the SGA, the Honor Council received money for the purchase and installation of a copy of the Honor Pledge in each academic classroom.
- Working with the SGA, the Honor Council created a guideline for notifying a student-athlete's coach when an academic violation is reported. That bill will be modified in the next academic year because the Honor Council's intent was to notify the coach, not the Athletic Director, as the final bill states.

2019-2020 Priorities

- To establish Integrity Week to raise awareness about academic integrity and the role of the Honor Council on campus.
- Modify SGA Bill related to student-athlete violations.
- Create new policy for dealing with graduating seniors who are reported for academic dishonesty at the end of their final semester.
- Create new guidelines for training council members to be good investigators and hearing participants
- Review and edit the templates used for notification and decision letters sent to students/faculty.
- Update the Council website.
- Poll faculty and students about their perceptions of academic dishonesty on campus. This is in response to a number of students, including council members and applicants for the council, who report frustration that faculty do not appear to take cheating seriously.
- Create a series of workshops to educate first-year students, in particular, about plagiarism, improper citation, and other potential integrity violations.
- Maintain a presence on campus on the first day of FSEMs by promoting academic workshops planned for the fall semester.

THE HONOR COUNCIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The 2016-2017 Honor Council Advisory Committee consisted of;

Dr. Cindy Bennington – Chair

Prof. Karen Merritt (School of Music)

Ms. Jennifer Corbin (Library)

Dr. Fred Augustine (School of Business; sabbatical replacement for Dr. John Rasp)

While I was on sabbatical in the Fall, Dr. Philip Lucas served as Faculty advisor to the Honor Council. During that time there were no meetings of the advisory committee. The committee met once in the spring semester where we discussed council initiatives and ways the committee can support the council. In particular, we discussed the way in which committee members can: a) help recruit new students for the council, b) encourage faculty to invite council members to their classes to discuss academic integrity, and c) support the council's efforts to host cultural credit opportunities centered around academic integrity. In the coming academic year, the advisory committee will be called upon to assist the council in surveying faculty about their perceptions of academic dishonesty on campus.