Yale undergraduates are called before the Executive Committee of Yale College when they are charged with possible violations of the Undergraduate Regulations.

The Executive Committee is composed of 3 tenured faculty, 3 junior faculty, 3 undergraduates and the Dean of Yale College or Dean’s representative, with 3 members (non-student) serving as officers of the Committee: the Chair, the Fact-Finder and the Secretary.

In the majority of cases, students admit the validity of the charge(s) made against them and choose a disposition without a formal hearing before the Coordinating Group. Disposition hearings, held weekly, make up the bulk of Committee work and are conducted by the Coordinating Group which is composed of the 3 officers of the Executive Committee (the Chair, Fact-finder, and Secretary) and 1 of the 3 student members, who rotate in this capacity throughout the term. If the student contests the charge(s), then the case is considered further for a formal hearing before the full Executive Committee.

In Spring 2014 there were 46 dispositions without formal hearings involving 68 students; almost identical to the Fall 2013 term in which there were also 46 dispositions, but involving 70 students. Additionally, there was 1 full formal hearing involving 1 student, and 2 penalty hearings involving 2 students.

**Dispositions Without a Formal Hearing**

In the case of a disposition without a formal hearing, the charged student appears before the Coordinating Group of the Executive Committee along with his/her advisor (typically the Dean or Master of his/her residential college.) The student is read guidelines for the proceedings and may present an opening oral statement followed by a question/answer period based on this statement and on the student’s previously submitted written statement and other documentation such as police reports, e-mail correspondence, papers/exams and other records pertinent to the case. The student’s advisor is invited to make a statement on the student’s behalf followed by closing remarks by the student after which the Coordinating Group deliberates to reach a decision on the penalty. A full dismissal of charges is rare, and standard penalties include: reprimand, probation, suspension and expulsion. Students may also be required to meet additional conditions such as paying for damages to property, restricting use of specific buildings or entryways on campus, a request to consider counseling for substance abuse or mental health, submission of written reflections or formal written guidelines, (for example, a risk-management plan for groups and organizations.)

In Spring 2014 penalties were assigned by the Coordinating Group to 69 students as follows:

40 reprimands, 15 probations, 8 suspensions, 1 expulsion, 4 cases with charges dropped and 1 degree withheld.
Penalty Hearings

In cases were students wish to dispute the penalty resulting from a disposition without a formal hearing, they may petition for a Penalty Hearing which is brought before the full Executive Committee. In Spring 2014 there were 2 penalty hearings (one carried over from the Fall 2013 Term) involving 2 students, 1 freshman and 1 sophomore with both cases involving the drug LSD and 1 also involving a weapons charge. The penalties of 3 terms suspension in one case, and expulsion in the other case, were both upheld.

Formal Hearings

Although most students admit the validity of the charge(s) made against them and opt for a disposition without a formal hearing, if the student contests the charge(s) they will have their case heard by the full Executive Committee in a Formal Hearing. To begin the process, the faculty fact-finder will thoroughly investigate the matter by meeting with the charged student, instructors or other professional members of the University and any witnesses that the charged student wishes to include in the investigation.

In the Spring of 2014 there was 1 formal hearing involving 1 student charged with academic dishonesty. This student received a penalty of reprimand.

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism

In Spring 2014, 20 students were charged with academic dishonesty, this is again almost identical to the Fall 2013 semester in which 21 students were charged with academic dishonesty. Of the 20 students charged in Spring 2014, 9 were charged with plagiarism, which is again similar to Fall 2013. It was noted in the Fall 2013 report that the number of cases represented a 30% decrease in overall academic dishonesty charges compared to Spring 2012, and also a decrease from 60% of these cases involving plagiarism to only 42% involving plagiarism; so this drop in cases of academic dishonesty and plagiarism held steady through the Spring 2014 term. At the time of the Fall 2013 report, it was suggested that this notable 30% decrease in overall academic dishonesty cases and 60% drop in plagiarism cases might be a reflection of recent efforts to increase awareness, education and regulation of academic dishonesty spearheaded by Mary Miller, former Dean of Yale College. The observation that the decline in academic dishonesty cases held steady through the Spring 2014 term, is further confirmation of the likely impact of these efforts. It is too early to tell if a “steady-state” has been reached, however, results thus far are promising and suggest that current practices should be continued and possibly augmented to further decrease the incidence of reports of academic dishonesty in Yale College.

Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty

The 11 cases of academic dishonesty that did not involve plagiarism involved variable charges including: leaving an exam without permission, false claims of a Dean’s excuse for extension of a paper deadline, changing answers on a returned exam then requesting re-grading, referring to
notes during an exam, 2 or more students submitting identical assignments and copying answers from another student.

**Alcohol and Illicit Drugs**

In Spring 2014 there were 26 students charged with violations involving alcohol; down from 34 cases in Fall 2013. The majority involved under-aged drinking or distributing alcohol to under-aged individuals at social functions, and some involved presenting false identification or lying to police. Of the 26 students who were found to be intoxicated, 25 were transported to Yale New Haven Hospital or University Health Services. The typical penalty for alcohol-related charges was a reprimand and ongoing education and assessment.

There was a marked increase in drug-related cases for the 2013-2014 academic year, with a total of 33 drug violation charges in 2013-2014 compared to only 8 in 2012-2013, 5 in 2011-2012, 15 in 2010-2011 and 5 in 2009-2010. Of the 33 total drug-related charges brought before the Executive Committee in the 2013-2014 academic year, 7 involved marijuana, 1 involved ecstasy, 1 involved use of over-the-counter sleeping pills in combination with LSD, and 8 additional cases involved charges of use and/or concealment of LSD. As noted in the Fall 2013 Chair’s report, this apparent cluster of LSD cases are the first reported at Yale since the 1970’s-80’s. A total of 10 students ranging from freshman to juniors were charged with violations involving LSD in the 2013-2014 academic year.

**Other Violations**

Also in Spring 2014, there were 10 cases involving charges of trespassing and willful property damage, harassment or exposure—often influenced by intoxication; and 5 cases involving incidents of hazing (e.g., blindfolding).

**Referred Cases:**

26 cases involving 26 students cited or transported for alcohol consumption were referred to the residential colleges. 26 of the 26 cases involved 26 students who were intoxicated with 25 being transported to YNHH or University Health Services.

**Concluding thoughts:**

I have now served as Chair of the Yale Executive Committee for approx. one and a half full terms, beginning Fall 2013. This role continues to deepen my understanding of the perspectives and experiences of Yale undergraduates. Service on the Executive Committee also provides an opportunity to contribute positively to the Yale community and to enhance the academic
experience of students that come before the Committee by intervening and redirecting them toward a more positive and successful path. The goal is not to blindly punish and penalize, but rather, to provide “teachable moments” of self-reflection and the opportunity to recalibrate one’s goals and mindset.

The majority of violations do not involve malice, willful intent or lack of character, but are the result of poor decision-making, immaturity, lack of attention to details or the influence of intoxicants —also taken often as a result of poor judgment. There are also the occasional cases of self-imposed pressures to achieve “perfection” (rather than excellence), often ascribed to perceived and sometimes very real pressures of community/family expectations or circumstances, that can result in students navigating stressful situations poorly, while also feeling uncomfortable seeking help and guidance from their college Deans and other advisors. In such cases, the Committee along with the student’s Dean/Master take steps to make sure that the student is aware of available resources at Yale (e.g., tutoring, counseling, health), as well as assists in connecting the student with resource providers.

The vast majority of cases that come before the Committee involve students who are deeply remorseful and sincere, but have simply made a very poor choice due to a singular and momentary lapse in judgment. The experience of coming before the Executive Committee has a very profound impact on most students with the intended outcome of setting them back onto a path of academic and personal success.

In conclusion, this Chair’s advice to students with regard to violations of the Yale College Undergraduate Regulations is to choose to “raise your own bar” and continue to be the extraordinary person, scholar and citizen that led to your becoming a part of this truly extraordinary community and institution.

Thanks

I sincerely thank all of the members of the 2013-2014 Executive Committee for their commitment to service and very thoughtful consideration of all cases brought before the Committee. A very special thanks to the Secretary of the Committee, Dean Pamela George, for her professionalism, expertise and tireless commitment to excellence in serving the Executive Committee and Yale College. A special thanks also to the truly wonderful student members who served on the Committee, Austin Jaspers, JE ’15; Susannah Krapf ‘17; James Volz, ’15 (served in the fall 2013) and Hans Kassier, ‘16 for their preparedness and most thoughtful consideration of cases, and for providing invaluable insight and perspective each week as part of the Coordinating Group as well as at full hearings and penalty hearings. Thanks also to the Fact-Finder of the committee, Professor Alan Mikhail, for his thorough investigations and reports. It was a great pleasure to work in the Coordinating Group each week with Professor Mikhail and Dean George as both brought not only their unique and valuable perspectives on cases, but also the highest level of concern, fairness, compassion and respect for each student who came before us.

I thank Lisa Miller, Lisa Pitoniak and other staff in the Yale Dean’s office for their assistance with organizing cases, communications, distributing documentation and with the day-to-day logistics that allow the Committee to function smoothly. I am also thankful to Susan Sawyer in
the General Counsel’s office and Dr. Lorrain Siggins for their critical input and expertise as consultants to the Committee.

Last but not least, I am deeply thankful to each of the residential college Deans, Masters and other advisors who have appeared before the Committee. The value of their most critical role in advising, preparing, counseling and supporting the students who appear before the Executive Committee is immeasurable.

Ruth Blake  
Chair of the Yale College Executive Committee Fall 2013, Spring 2014  
Professor of Geology & Geophysics  
Professor of Forestry & Environmental Studies

Spring 2014

Formal Hearings
1 formal hearing, involving 1 student

Penalty Hearings
2 penalty hearings involving 2 students

Dispositions without Formal Hearings
46 dispositions without formal hearings, involving 68 students

Penalties from dispositions and formal hearings

The following penalties were assigned to 69 students:

expulsions – 1  
suspenions - 8  
probations - 15  
reprimands - 40  
not guilty – 4  
withhold degree - 1

Academic Dishonesty Charges, including pending cases

20 students were charged with Academic Dishonesty which resulted in:

suspenions - 5  
probations - 1  
reprimands – 7  
charge withdrawn – 0
Plagiarism

9 of the 20 academic dishonesty cases were plagiarism which resulted in:

suspensions - 3
probations - 1
reprimands – 1
charges withdrawn – 0
withhold degree - 0
carried over to the fall term – 4

Other forms of Academic Dishonesty
11 of the remaining academic dishonesty cases were other forms of cheating:

1  Falsely told his instructor he had a dean's excuse and turned in a final paper late
1  Left an exam without authorization to get lunch and then returned to the exam room
2  Changed their answers on a returned exam and then requested re-grading
6  Copied answers from other student
1  Referred to notes during an exam

Referred Cases

26 cases involving 26 students were referred to the residential college

26 of the 26 cases involved 26 students who were intoxicated; 25 were transported to YNHH or University Health Services.