

Executive Committee Chair's Report

for hearing cycle Spring 2017

Presented to the faculty on November 2, 2017

Explanation of Structure and Process

The Yale College Executive Committee has 10 regular voting members: three tenured and three untenured faculty members; three undergraduate students; and the Dean of Yale College or his designee. In addition, there are three officers. In Spring 2017 these were: chair, Paul North, Professor of German; fact-finder, Fabian Drixler, Professor of History; and Jill Cutler who took over as secretary from Pamela George in March 2017.

The majority of cases are adjudicated by a coordinating group made up of the chair, secretary, fact-finder, and one student member. The coordinating group meets weekly to hear the cases in which a student or students have admitted the validity of the charge against them.

In a typical case, a complaint comes to the secretary of the committee from a faculty member, dean, or another member of university staff. The coordinating group reviews the complaint and decides whether to charge the student under one or more sections of the undergraduate regulations. If a charge is made, the student, along with their dean or advisors, receives a charging letter explaining the charge and asking whether they admit validity or wish to dispute the charge. Disputing the charge leads to a full hearing. To give a sense of the ratio, in Spring 2017 there were 19 dispositions without formal hearings and 1 full hearing.

Dispositions without a formal hearing give students and their advisors every chance to tell their side of the story to the coordinating group. By the undergraduate regulations, prior to the hearing, the students receive all the materials for the case, including details of the complaint against them, any police report, supplemental testimony, or email correspondence should there be any. The student then writes a statement in response, explaining what happened, their motives, the context, their state of mind and thought process, and anything else they think might help the committee understand their actions. All this becomes matter for questioning during the hearing. After reading prepared remarks reminding students of the guidelines and of their obligation to be honest, the Chair invites the student or students to make an opening statement that may reiterate what was in their statement or add something new that is of importance. The committee then asks questions. The tenor of the questions depends very much on the type of case. Since the majority of cases involve charges of academic dishonesty, Coordinating Group members usually ask the student to reconstruct the events leading up to the incident, to recall the guidelines for assignments listed in the syllabus, to explain their psychological state, and so on. State of mind, it should be said, is not a mitigating factor, but it can help give a fuller picture of the kind of dishonesty—whether it was a one-time lapse or perhaps a more routine habit. In the question period, the committee tries to get as full a picture as possible. Once members are satisfied that they have a full enough picture, the student's advisor has a chance to speak on the student's behalf. Finally, the student is allowed another chance to speak, to give a closing statement. Then deliberations begin.

There are three goals in the deliberation phase of the coordinating group hearings: 1. to determine an appropriate penalty in accordance with the undergraduate regulations and with precedent, 2. to see to it that harm done to the university community is mitigated, and 3. to help the students learn something about themselves and envision ways to avoid this kind of behavior in the future. Sometimes, in addition to one of the standard penalties (reprimand, probation, suspension, expulsion), the committee asks a student to write a letter of apology to parties involved, write a short text on the university value they imperiled with their actions, or meet regularly with a dean or tutor to work on better ways of going through college. When there has been damage to property, students are often required to repay the losses. Sometimes, also, Students are required to make amends in other ways as well, such as stepping down from a leadership position in a campus group, restrictions on social events, or for leaders of a campus group, a requirement to draft a safety plan.

In Spring 2017, there were 19 dispositions without formal hearings, involving a total of 23 charged students.

Hearings before the full Executive Committee operate in a very similar manner to those before the coordinating group. These hearings are for students who contest the charges made against them. There are a few differences in procedure. For full hearings, the fact-finder investigates. Normally, they interview the student charged, witnesses if necessary, and the complainant. They also review all the written materials, so that they can produce in the end a report laying out the evidence for and against the student. The fact-finder is specifically enjoined in the regulations to be on the lookout for evidence that might exculpate the student. All the procedures are the same in this type of hearing, except that there are two phases, a judgment phase and a penalty phase. In the judgment phase, after hearing the student's statement, a period of questioning, hearing from the student's advisor, and a closing statement by the student, should the student wish to make one, the full committee may decide to withdraw charges or, conversely, to find the student responsible for the act. If the student is found responsible, the committee then deliberates on a penalty and chooses one of the following: reprimand, probation, suspension, or expulsion.

In Spring 2017, there was 1 formal hearings involving 1 charged student.

There are very few standard penalties listed in the undergraduate regulations. And although there are many years of precedents to guide the choice of penalty, judgments made by the coordinating group and the full committee are always responsive to the details of a particular case. Plagiarism may be as serious and extensive as copying an entire paper from a classmate, or as unreflective as failing to cite sources fully. Vandalism may be the result of a moment of foolishness or a pattern of alcohol abuse. It is to the great credit of committee members that they are deeply patient and careful and weigh many factors in their decisions.

Reflections after a second semester as Chair:

I continue to be concerned about the “culture of excellence” and how this affects students’ feelings, well-being, and behavior, particularly their behavior toward themselves. High expectations I would say are the main cause of cheating in otherwise honest and fully capable students, who hit a roadblock of one sort or another. I will quote some lines from last semester’s “reflections”: “As previous chairs have remarked in their periodic reports, students who come before the committee almost always commit infractions unwittingly or under stress, because of mounting emotional problems, or poor judgment of a foolish or occasionally of an egregious kind. That is: few do these things out of malice. There does seem to be, however, for many students, a shared framework, and that is the college itself and its implied ideals. Two infractions, academic dishonesty and hazing, are frequently dark shadows of the pressure on students to be “leaders” and to achieve “excellence” in all they do. The pressure is internal to the students, of course, and the vast majority of undergraduates at this institution don’t make the sorts of poor decisions because of the pressure that land them in front of the executive committee. But it may be helpful to consider how students could be encouraged to take advantage of the intellectual and social gift of spending 4 years in this community, without running a marathon to the top of every hill. The expectation to be excellent at everything is unrealistic and dangerous.”

There is a new pressure weighing on some of our students, and it probably ought to be recognized as a category of concern by everyone directly involved in student life in the college. This category is political turmoil and persecution. Obviously turmoil is not new in the world, but it is newly intensified in many regions and newly relevant for Yale, as the university recruits students from around the world and as it begins to think of itself as a global institution. Political turmoil is increasingly violent and can result in high anxieties for students, not to mention destruction and displacement of their homes and loved ones. Important to note: students may still not recognize clearly for themselves just how much dictatorship, persecution, violence, and injustice in their home country, in general or when enacted directly against friends and family, will affect them in New Haven, which is, to add to the difficulties, also often very far away from the scene of conflict and their focus of worry. Along with being a global university comes the responsibility to offset injustice where our students come from with as much support here as we teachers, advisors, and deans can give.

The chair expresses the utmost gratitude to the members of the executive committee. The hearings are long and the task is often unpleasant. Special thanks go to the student members, who in their wisdom and experience give the most luminous window onto student life. For his meticulous and absolutely principled collection and assessment of facts, thanks go to Professor Fabian Drixler. Without his thoroughness as fact-finder, and without his willingness to play devil’s advocate in every possible situation, the process would be much less rigorous. Jill Cutler brought precision and moral rectitude to the proceedings, along with her long experience. Thanks to Susan Sawyer in the General Counsel’s office for her help interpreting the regulations and assessing the stakes of many cases. Lisa Miller in the Yale College Dean’s office kept the steady flow of documents organized and the committee members informed—for that the chair offers her deep thanks.

This year (17-18) we welcome Gregg Peeples, Assistant Dean of Student Conduct as the Secretary to the Committee, and Prof. Laura Wexler as Fact Finder. And we bid goodbye to Lisa Miller after many years of dedicated work and wisdom for the committee.

Respectfully,

Paul North
Chair of the Executive Committee, 2016-2018
Professor of German

October 25, 2017

Spring 2017

Formal Hearings

1 formal hearings, involving 1 student

Dispositions without Formal Hearings

19 dispositions without formal hearings, involving 23 students

Penalties from dispositions and formal hearings

The following penalties were assigned to students:

suspensions - 2

withhold degree - 1

probations - 7

reprimands - 11

not guilty – 3

expulsion - 0

Academic Dishonesty

21 students were charged with Academic Dishonesty which resulted in:

withhold degree - 0

suspensions - 1

probations - 1

reprimands - 6

charge withdrawn - 8

carried over to spring term - 5

Plagiarism

5 of the 21 cheating cases were plagiarism which resulted in:

withhold degree - 0

suspensions - 0

probations - 0

reprimands - 2

charges withdrawn - 3

carried over to the spring term - 0

Other Cheating

16 of the remaining cheating cases were other forms of cheating:

6 copied answers from another student

1 changed an answer on an exam after it was turned in

1 turned in multiple papers after their deadlines

1 copied information he heard from other students to answer oral exam questions

1 copied answers from an answer key and submitted them as her own

1 tried to obtain final exam questions after scheduling a make-up exam
1 submitted another student's exam as his own
2 collaborated on an assignment
2 collaborated on final exam papers

Referred Cases

26 students were referred to the residential college for alcohol intoxication.
Of the 26 students who were intoxicated, 25 were transported to YNHH or University Health Services.

Formal Hearing

In a formal hearing, Senior charged with Academic Dishonesty for changing an answer on an exam after it was turned in, was reprimanded.

Dispositions without Formal Hearings

Freshman, charged with Academic Dishonesty for copying another student's take-home test, was placed on probation for one term.

Senior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for submitting a senior essay largely identical to a paper used for another course, had degree withheld for 2 terms.

Sophomore, charged with Academic Dishonesty for plagiarizing a final paper, was suspended for 1 term.

Sophomore, charged with Falsification of Documents and Academic Dishonesty for altering a Dean's Excuse, was placed on probation for 3 terms.

Freshman, charged with Academic Dishonesty for copying code for a problem set, was reprimanded.

2 Juniors, charged with Academic Dishonesty for submitting nearly identical problem sets, were placed on probation for 1 term.

Junior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for turning in multiple papers after their deadlines, was reprimanded.

Junior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for plagiarizing a paper, was reprimanded.

Junior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for plagiarizing a written assignment, had charge withdrawn.

Junior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for plagiarizing a written assignment, had charge withdrawn.

Junior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for plagiarizing a written assignment, had charge withdrawn.

Junior, charged with Defiance for refusing to cooperate with freshmen counselors in Vanderbilt Hall, was reprimanded.

Sophomore, charged with Willful Property Damage for discharging two fire extinguishers in Saybrook College, was placed on probation for 2 terms and given 20 hours of community service.

Sophomore, charged with imperiling the integrity of the university for misuse of a bathroom in Pierson College, was reprimanded.

Sophomore, charged with imperiling the integrity of the university for misuse of a bathroom in Pierson College, was placed on probation for 1 term.

Freshman, charged with Academic Dishonesty for plagiarizing a paper, was reprimanded.

Senior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for copying another student's homework assignment, was placed on probation.

Freshman, charged with Academic Dishonesty for submitting identical lab reports, was reprimanded.

Senior, charged with Defiance, Harassment and Intimidation for behavior in the Silliman Buttery, was reprimanded.

Senior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for trying to obtain final exam questions after scheduling a make-up exam, was reprimanded.

Sophomore, charged with Academic Dishonesty for plagiarizing two papers, was reprimanded.

Junior, charged with Academic Dishonesty for submitting another student's exam as his own, was suspended for 2 terms.

Referrals

Freshman, 18 y.o., found intoxicated in Vanderbilt Hall. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, 18 y.o., found intoxicated in Vanderbilt Hall. AMR transport to YNHH.

Senior, 21 y.o., found intoxicated at Morse College. Yale Security transport to Yale Health.

Sophomore, 19 y.o., found intoxicated on Broadway approaching the intersection of Tower Parkway. AMR transport to YNHH.

Junior, 20 y.o., found intoxicated in Baker Hall, Room 320 at 100 Tower Parkway. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, 18 y.o., found intoxicated in Timothy Dwight College. AMR transport to YNHH.

Senior, 21 y.o., found intoxicated in Silliman College. AMR transport to YNHH.

Sophomore, 19 y.o., found intoxicated in Morse College. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, 19 y.o., found intoxicated at Farnam Hall. Yale Security transport to Yale Health.

Freshman, 19 y.o., found intoxicated at Bingham Hall. Yale Security transport to Yale Health.

Senior, 21 y.o., found intoxicated in Pierson College. Yale Security transport to Yale Health.

Freshman, 20 y.o., found intoxicated at Silliman College. AMR transport to YNHH.

Sophomore, 20 y.o., found intoxicated in Bingham Hall. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, 19 y.o., found intoxicated at Lanman Wright Hall. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, 19 y.o., found intoxicated at Durfee Hall. AMR transport to YNHH.

Junior, 20 y.o., found intoxicated in Pierson College. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, 19 y.o., found intoxicated at Vanderbilt Hall. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, age not recorded, found intoxicated in Silliman College. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, age not recorded, found intoxicated at Spring Fling on Old Campus. AMR transport to YNHH.

Senior, age not recorded, found intoxicated at Spring Fling on Old Campus. Transported to Yale Health Center.

Senior, age not recorded, found intoxicated at Spring Fling on Old Campus. AMR transport to YNHH.

Junior, age not recorded, found intoxicated at Spring Fling on Old Campus. AMR evaluated but did not transport.

Freshman, age not recorded, found intoxicated at Spring Fling on Old Campus. AMR transport to YNHH.

Senior, 23 y.o., found intoxicated in front of 242 Dwight St. AMR transport to YNHH.

Freshman, 19 y.o., found intoxicated at Lanman-Wright Hall. AMR transport to YNHH.

Junior, 21 y.o., found intoxicated in Saybrook College. AMR transport to YNHH.