

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT, SPRING 2012

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

### **Dispositions without a formal hearing:**

If they are willing to admit the validity of the charge, they may petition to have a disposition without a formal hearing and come before the Coordinating Group. The Coordinating Group is composed of the Committee's three officers, (the chair, a fact-finder and the secretary of the committee), along with a Yale undergraduate. In a question and answer dialogue with the student, followed by a comment from the student's adviser (usually his or her residential college dean), the Coordinating Group does its best to grasp the detailed circumstances of the violation as well as the current state of mind of the student with respect to the past event, which might in turn be an indicator of future behavior. The penalty, however, is based solely on the violation. We may dismiss the charges, but more often we hand down a penalty: reprimand, probation, suspension, or expulsion. A penalty of probation, suspension or expulsion will remain on a student's permanent record. In applying for jobs or graduate school, if a student is ever asked if they've been disciplined at Yale, they must say that they have been. A master or dean must verify this fact in a student's record. The penalty may also include a fine, if warranted, and reprimands are often accompanied by an additional task, which we assign in order to complete the act of making amends or to make certain that the students understand not just that they have received a penalty, but also why.

In the Spring of 2012 we had 75 dispositions without formal hearings involving 94 students. There were no formal hearings before the entire Executive Committee. There was one penalty hearing. As a result of our deliberations six students were suspended, 12 received probation, 68 received reprimands, one student had the degree withheld, and charges against eight students were withdrawn.

**Plagiarism:** Of the 31 charges of Academic Dishonesty (many of these held over from the close of the fall term), 23 were the result of plagiarism. The penalties ranged from reprimand (11), to probation (4), to suspension (5), with one degree withheld. The charges were withdrawn in two cases and one case was carried over to Fall 2012.

### **Other forms of academic dishonesty:**

We had eight cases concerned with other forms of cheating: collaborating on problem sets, the illegal use of an electronic device during an exam, answers copied from another student, false claims about the taking of exams, and a false explanation for the delay in handing one in.

**We saw the full range of acts of poor judgment, very often without malicious intent but occasionally with either a will to destructive behavior or blindness as to its implications:**

Tossing liquid through a dorm window, causing a fire in the dorm room, misuse of e-mail (in one instance with falsification of the sender), trespassing, willful property damage, interpersonal harassment and aggression, both verbal (sometimes with a truly reprehensible disregard for the respect due to others) and physical violence, in one instance with serious hurt to the victim.

**Many of the charges involved violations of alcohol regulations:** buying or consuming alcohol while still a minor, falsification of IDs to do so (9 cases), serving liquor to people under twenty-one at parties where little or no attempt was made to keep alcohol from minors. The saddest cases, of course, involved alcohol consumption to the point of serious self-endangerment. There seems to be far too little realization on the part of our undergraduates as to the seriousness of this kind of lapse. There have been near-death experiences at Yale. Other educational institutions have been less fortunate.

### **Referred Cases:**

There were also cases involving 80 students whom we did not see but whom we referred directly to the residential college. Most of these students were violating alcohol regulations for possession of alcohol by a minor, others had been making alcohol available to minors, 23 were intoxicated; of these 22 were transported to YNHH or University Health Services.

### **Full Hearings:**

Although the vast majority of students choose the disposition, a student who wishes to contest the charge may also wish to come instead before the entire committee. The full committee is composed of three tenured and three untenured faculty members, three undergraduates and the Dean's designate. The secretary of the committee also attends full hearings, but is not a voting member. We had no formal hearings in Spring of 2012.

### **Penalty Hearings:**

Students may also choose to come before the full committee if, after having had a disposition without a formal hearing, they wish to dispute the penalty. In the single penalty hearing of Spring 2012 the penalty was upheld.

### **Concluding thoughts:**

I served as head of the Executive Committee in 2011-2012 and will continue to do so in 2012-2013.

In his 2006-2007 report, Paul Bloom wrote that "most cases that the committee sees are caused by foolishness, inattention, inebriation, or honest mistakes." I think that is just right. Most of the students we see are individuals of high integrity atoning for a poor choice. It is our hope that the experience of coming before the Executive Committee is not simply that of a penalty imposed in reaction to the breaking of Yale regulations. If one doesn't come to understand the wisdom of the regulations, how breaking them often endangers the student himself or herself, how it can affect others in the community and the values of an educational institution, the process will not have

accomplished what it should. We hope that students who come before us leave the room with the sense that their penalty is just and that they have learned something about themselves that will transform their behavior in the future.

**A few brief suggestions for action on our part that might decrease the instances of certain types of cases would be:**

-More intensive and detailed reminders, and more intensive education about the misuse of alcohol and its procurement would be of great service to Yale (perhaps most effectively with students participating who have come before the Executive Committee or who have had their own difficult experience with alcohol). This is not simply because Connecticut laws and Yale regulations have to be obeyed. Students need to understand that when they violate these laws they put themselves and their fellow students at risk, sometimes dire risk, sometimes life threatening risk. We often hear students explain (away) their violence or other misdeeds as the result of intoxication. Getting intoxicated is a choice that one makes when one is sober, and the harm to oneself and sometimes to others which results is a matter of utmost concern for those of us who serve on the Executive Committee.

There is, of course, also the question of access and we are dedicated to making people assume responsibility for laxity or disregard with respect to underage drinking. Providing alcohol to minors at events has sometimes resulted in the separation of those responsible from-- or a removal of those individuals from a position in-- various organizations and fraternities.

We all have the responsibility, and that means that every one of our students has the responsibility, to keep a vigilant eye with respect to alcohol abuse. Its potential dangers are that serious. We are deeply grateful to the students who make the call that could potentially save a life. It is my hope that students will continue to call the Yale police promptly when a fellow student is in need of help because of alcohol abuse, whether at an event or as a result of drinking in their rooms and apartments, and that we will maintain a sense of community that encourages people to do so.

On this, as on other matters, the Executive Committee serves the function not only of holding hearings on specific cases but also of listening carefully to those who come before us to see how the university in turn can be more responsive to student needs.

-Dean Miller has rightfully recognized the seriousness of hazing. Even more education about hazing, some deep reflection about the difference between building respectful bonds to a group and (sometimes dangerous) acts of humiliation, might be helpful.

-With respect to plagiarism as well, we need to continue what Dean Miller has undertaken these past semesters: offering repeated emphasis on its precise definition and how to avoid it (through

periodic e-mails, especially at the times of greatest academic stress). This might, I think, spare a few well-intentioned but poorly informed students from appearing before our committee. It might also remind students who are tempted to plagiarize that faculty are aware of the various forms of borrowing the work of others and are also technologically prepared to follow up on apparent irregularities.

**Thanks:**

My thanks go to Margaret Clark. Having served several years on the committee before being appointed as chair, I benefited from observing the kindness, calm, respect and evenhandedness with which she officiated. (For an exquisitely detailed description of the committee's function, see her report from 2010-2011).

My special thanks to the hardworking members of the entire committee. The full hearings are long and difficult, I know.

I had the honor to work last spring side-by-side in the Coordinating Group with Professor Eric Sargis, our fact-finder, and Pamela George, the Secretary of the Committee. Eric Sargis's energy, precision, sense of fairness, intelligence, and time-demanding dedication to the job are endless. There are no sufficient words to praise Pamela George's equal devotion to the integrity of Yale University and the well-being of its students. I am thoroughly in her debt for her painstaking attention to detail, her clarity, her great wisdom, and her untiring insistence on justice—her insistence that we get it just right. It is the wonderful insights and the specialized knowledge and understanding of the undergraduates serving alongside us, that so critically helps us to do so. Our thanks go out, therefore to Allison Rabkin Golden BK'12, William Horowitz JE'12 (Fall 2011), Alexis Wise BR'13, Matthew Williams BK'13 (Spring 2012).

Profound thanks as well to those working behind the scenes: to Lisa Miller whose dedicated and meticulous work keeps the complex paperwork (and us) organized; to Susan Sawyer in the General Counsel's office, and to Dr. Lorraine Siggins and others we consult with regard to the mental health issues that face us. Each student brings an adviser along, usually the dean of his or her college. The Executive Committee lives with the problems of individual students once a week. The deans are there for them 24/7 with compassion, patience and wisdom that truly contribute to Yale's greatness. You all have my heartfelt thanks and admiration.

Carol Jacobs  
 Chair of the Yale College Executive Committee 2011-2012  
 Professor German Language and Literature  
 Birgit Baldwin Professor of Comparative Literature

**Spring 2012****Formal Hearings**

0 formal hearings, involving 0 students

**Penalty Hearings**

1 penalty hearing involving 1 student

**Dispositions without Formal Hearings**

75 dispositions without formal hearings, involving 94 students

**Penalties from dispositions and formal hearings:**

The following penalties were assigned to 94 students (no formal hearings):

*suspensions* - 6

*withhold degree* - 1

*probations* - 12

*reprimands* - 68

*not guilty* - 8

**Academic Dishonesty Charges, including pending cases (2 carried from the Spring)**

31 students were charged with Academic Dishonesty which resulted in:

*withhold degree* - 1

*suspensions* - 6

*probations* - 6

*reprimands* - 12

*charge withdrawn* - 3

*carried over to fall term* - 4

**Plagiarism**

23 of the 31 cheating cases were plagiarism which resulted in:

*withhold degree* - 1

*suspensions* - 5

*probations* - 4

*reprimands* - 11

*charges withdrawn* - 2

*carried over to the fall term* - 1

**Other Cheating**

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

2 collaborated on problem sets

2 copied answers from another student

1 referred to an electronic device during an exam

1 copied answers posted by a TA

1 falsely claimed taking a makeup exam