

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT, SPRING 2013

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. The penalty may also include a fine, if warranted, and is 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 2013 we had 49 dispositions without formal hearings involving 65 students. There were 2 formal hearings before the entire Executive Committee involving 2 students. There were no penalty hearings. As a result of our deliberations 6 students were suspended, 15 received probation, 42 received reprimands, and no student had the degree withheld. Charges against 4 students were withdrawn.

Plagiarism: Of the 30 charges of Academic Dishonesty 18 were the result of plagiarism. The penalties handed down for the plagiarism cases were 2 suspensions, 5 probations, 4 reprimands, 1 charge withdrawn. The charges on six cases were carried over from Fall 2012.

Other forms of academic dishonesty:

We had 13 cases concerned with other forms of cheating: 2 collaborated on a take-home exam, 1 submitted one paper for two courses, 1 submitted lab reports that were not his/her own, 2 brought notes to exams, 1 collaborated with another student on an assignment, 1 copied another student's exam, 2 submitted problem sets that were not their own, 1 provided problem sets to other students, 2 collaborated on problem sets.

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

Smoking marijuana, unauthorized use of university space, misuse of computer services and gaining access to a web forum under false pretenses, defiance for not cooperating with a police officer, trespassing, acts of violence towards others, tossing beer bottles out of a window, property damage, endangering others, intimidating and threatening another member of the Yale community, and so on.

Many of the charges involved violations of alcohol regulations:

A number of these involved minors in possession of alcohol who had also used a false I.D. to obtain it. Others involved students who had been transported multiple times. There were several cases in which hosting a social event resulted in underage drinking (already worrisome) and others, still more worrisome, in which those events resulted in the transporting of minors. **Any student who hosts a party as well as any student who is an officer of an organization hosting a party in which minors consume alcohol needs to recognize that he or she is responsible both for the illegal consumption of alcohol by minors and the serious consequences that often result from that.** Perhaps the most egregious failing in moral responsibility occurred in a case in which upperclassmen were charged with Hazing in connection with consumption of alcohol by a freshman. The underage student was pressured to drink. The violation of alcohol regulations resulted in penalties of reprimand and probation.

Referred Cases:

There were also 39 cases involving 40 students whom we did not see but whom we referred directly to the residential college. 31 of the 39 cases involved 31 students who were intoxicated. 29 were transported to YNH 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 2 formal hearings in Spring of 2013.

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. We had no penalty hearings in Spring of 2013.

Concluding thoughts:

I have served as head of the Executive Committee since Fall 2011.

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 continue to 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.

In my Spring 2012 Executive Committee report I offered a few suggestions: first, with respect to raising awareness about the dangers of and responsibilities with respect to alcohol consumption and, second, with respect to continued measures to make students aware of the definition of plagiarism. Both of these remain relevant.

In the report concerning F2012 I added some further general thoughts on the work of the committee which concerned student misapprehension of the Committee's function and ethos. Since those thoughts were written late in Spring of 2013, I repeat them below:

It was with great pleasure that I met with members of the Yale College Dean's Advisory Council for a discussion on academic integrity. I was rather dismayed to learn, however, particularly dismayed to learn from a group with such a finely-tuned sense of life at Yale, what the student apprehension of the Executive committee seems to be. Perhaps misconception is inevitable given that all participants in the meetings of the Executive Committee are required to maintain strict confidentiality. I would like to say the following:

What to the casual reader of the semesterly report of the committee might seem like an arbitrary imposition of different sanctions for the same violation of the Undergraduate Regulations is hardly what takes place. There is a significant difference between a Freshman who makes a relatively minor error in the required documentation for a paper and the student who lifts great portions of a paper from the internet and presents them as his or her own, or someone who copies someone else's take home examination, or a student who in a premeditative attempt to cheat takes materials into an examination room.

My experience of the deliberations of the committee has been that of deeply serious, often agonizing consideration of every aspect of the case we have heard. We take all the evidence presented by both the student and the person making the charge into consideration. We review past, similar cases for precedent. We care deeply about every student who enters that room. I can only surmise that we are doing things right because one can never predict whether the student serving on the committee in any individual week will be more or less severe in relation to each case. The student often offers us a perspective we would otherwise be unable to have access to, filling us in on certain aspects of student life or practices, but there is no fundamental difference between the faculty, administrators, and student who serve in terms of the resolutions we reach.

Yes, the Executive Committee is committed to preserving the integrity of the university. When we see cases, as we have this year, for example which connect alcohol abuse and hazing, the

organizations responsible can count on penalties commensurate with thoughtlessly putting one's fellow students at risk. But the task of the committee, as I and the previous chairs have viewed it, is hardly simply one of meting out punishment. We are committed to making an appearance before the Committee an educational process, to thinking through with students where things went wrong and why, to putting the student in touch with some of the considerable resources of Yale to bolster them in the future, to reminding them that close at hand are dedicated deans and expert help at Yale Health when that is relevant. And we are committed to doing all this with the most finely tuned sense of justice possible.

Thanks:

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 fall side-by-side in the Coordinating Group with Professor Caleb Smith, our fact-finder, and Pamela George, the Secretary of the Committee. Caleb Smith's finely-tuned sense of justice, his careful, deliberate mode of weighing all factors, his respect for the students who come before us made working with him a great pleasure. 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.

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.

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