

THE UO HONOR CODE COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Editor's Note: For the past 15 weeks a senate committee has been laboring over a report on the possibilities of an honor system for the University of Oregon. The report is now completed and will be in the hands of ASUO senators by Thursday.)

Since the plan, if adopted, would bear on every student in this University, we thought our readers would be interested in the full report of the committee.

So, on this page we are printing an introduction to the report (written from comments and opinions of the entire committee) and the first section of the report itself. (The remaining sections will appear in following papers.)

An Introduction

By E. G. Ebbighausen
Committee Chairman

The honor code committee was appointed by ASUO President Bill Carey on Nov. 8, 1951, and the appointments were approved by the senate at that meeting. Since the above date the committee has met on numerous occasions and the results of their deliberations appear in this report, which is presented to the senate for its consideration and approval.

The charge given . . .

. . . to the honor code committee was "to investigate the honor system program". As will appear from this report, the committee has interpreted this charge very broadly. It has not only investigated many of the facets of an honor system, but has recommended procedures to be employed in the setting up of an honor system at the University of Oregon, should the decision be made to make that attempt.

The committee, either in session or as individuals, has interviewed numbers of students, faculty and members of the University administration. The committee has asked and received information from schools that now have an honor system. Three student members went to Stanford university to gather information about that school's long-established honor system. The committee concludes, as a result of its extensive deliberations, that an honor system would be desirable here at the University of Oregon.

One central, overwhelmingly important fact . . .

. . . should never be forgotten and that is that for an honor system to work it must be wholeheartedly adopted by the students as a result of a decision that they alone can make. Neither the senate, this committee, the faculty, nor the administration can impose an honor system upon the students of this University and expect it to function.

The precedents for this statement are numerous. The adoption of an honor system must be done by the students themselves, and its continued success will clearly depend upon the wholehearted individual and collective recognition of the responsibilities involved. The honor code committee believes that the students of the University of Oregon should be given an opportunity to decide for themselves whether or not they wish an honor system.

An important addition to the conviction . . .

. . . expressed above is that the faculty of this University also has a responsibility to cooperate with the students if an honor system is adopted. The continued success of an honor system depends not only upon student realization of responsibility, but also the belief of the faculty that the system functions.

If, as the committee believes, the faculty is now skeptical of the success of an honor system, it must be recognized that its faculty has considerable precedent for this attitude. It is up to the students to prove to the faculty that cheating in this University can be greatly reduced if the students are given the responsibility of making this attempt.

In the event that the senate should approve the attempt to adopt an honor system at the University of Oregon, this committee recommends the following procedure:

1. The senate should approve the beginning, by this committee, (of) an extensive orientation program to acquaint the students with their responsibilities and duties under an honor system. The orientation program is outlined in this report.
2. After this orientation program is completed, it is recommended that a student referendum be taken in order to determine the strength of student sentiment and desire for an honor system.
3. The third step is mandatory. Only the faculty of this University can approve the formal adoption and use of an honor system. Therefore, it is recommended that if the expressed student desire for an honor system is strong, the senate should petition the faculty through the student discipline committee for the adoption of an honor system.

If the student discipline committee . . .

. . . should decide favorably upon the petition, then presumably the matter would rest in their hands—further action would be up to that committee. It should be recognized that the student discipline committee is a body set up by the faculty with powers to handle matters of student discipline. It is presumed that the committee would bring the matter before the general faculty and ask for its approval.

It is recommended that all possible means be used to discover student opinion. A highly favorable student referendum would be very desirable and indeed necessary. If sentiment for the system were high, it is hoped that spontaneous student petitions would be directed to the student discipline committee or the general faculty.

Expressions of individual . . .

. . . student approval to instructors would certainly be a strong factor. If the faculty is going to approve the formal adoption of an honor system, it must be convinced that the students are really ready to give it effective support.

4. It should not be forgotten that there is the possibility that the student response to the establishment of an honor system may not be highly favorable. If student opinion should be divided or clearly against an honor system, then this committee recommends that the senate should not petition the student discipline committee for instigation of the system. Instead, this committee recommends that the senate approve the continuation of efforts to carry the student body orientation program into the next academic year.

General Philosophy

'... A Positive, Broad Approach'

An Honor code implies a positive and broad approach to learning in the University.

It is envisioned as a strong step in the direction of developing a mature attitude toward the acquisition of knowledge and the fostering of a genuine pride in the academic excellence of the school.

Faith in the efficacy of an honor code rests ultimately in the conviction that men and women of college age will respond positively to a situation which recognizes them as responsible and essentially honest individuals and which allows them to pursue their studies and undergo examinations in an atmosphere of freedom from suspicion and in an environment uninhibited by artificial restraints.

Won't End Cheating

It is not asserted that the adoption of an honor code will eliminate all cheating, or that it will even curtail cheating drastically at the outset. However, it is our conviction that over a reasonable period of time and by means of continuous indoctrination in its application student attitudes can be so shaped as to support an honor code and justify its adoption.

Some specific advantages which it is hoped will result should an honor system be installed at the University of Oregon include:

- The elevation of academic standards.
- An increase in the area of student government.
- The establishment of a strong tradition of honor in the University.
- A decrease in cheating.
- Development of a deeper sense of responsibility and a growth in self-reliance.
- An increase in student's sense of responsibility and a growth in self-reliance.
- Development of a deeper sense of personal integrity within individual students.
- A growth in mutual confidence and respect among students, faculty and the administration.
- Increased sense of identification with the University family on the part of the student.
- Enhance the prestige and reputation of the University of Oregon.
- Help combat dishonesty and lack of responsibility in public life.

Possible Arguments

Many Advanced, Most Refuted

1. State school requires only high school diploma for entrance. Caliber of students low; therefore, honor system won't work at Oregon.

The sense of inferiority stemming from the fact that students are admitted to the University, virtually unscreened, seems to have reached alarming and, we believe, unjustified proportions.

Dubious Assumption

The reasoning of this argument against the Honor Code implies a negative correlation between co-called low caliber students and honesty. This is a dubious assumption and certainly one which is difficult or impossible to prove.

If it is argued that students on the border-line academically are likely to resort to cheating to stay in school, then the same thing can be said of students in that status at any university no matter what its criteria of selectivity may be.

Further, by supporting the honor code the student is able to share in the responsibility and privilege of maintaining the academic standards of the University.

2. Cheating is tolerated, if not accepted, by most students.

Regardless of whether the stu-

dent tolerates or accepts cheating, he is still aware of the difference between right and wrong. Once the attitude is instilled that the habitual cheater contributes to the delinquency of the entire student body and threatens the reputation of the University (and by extension impairs the worth and utility of the degree) many of the qualms about reporting infractions of the code will dissipate.

3. No traditions of honor, character or high morals exist at the University of Oregon.

This simply is not true. This student body is neither corrupt nor amoral.

It is granted that traditions of honor, character and high morals can be strengthened on this campus and one of the ways to accomplish just this is to establish an honor code. In short, an honor code would help build such traditions where they are lacking and reinforce them where they already exist.

4. Students would not report violators.

Admittedly the reporting of violators would not be brisk at the inception of the honor system. However, with its growth and with an adequate orientation program students would eventually come to feel that it is as much an obligation to report violators as it is not to violate.

System Will Improve

Once enthusiasm and confidence in the honor code is generated students will tend to feel that the violator is breaking down something in which he believes; that he is conspiring to undermine a system which they have voluntarily adopted and are trying to make function effectively.

At this point it is contended reporters of flagrant violations will cease to feel guilty of "informing" should they turn in the license number of a hit-and-run driver.

5. Fraternities, sororities, dorms and other living organizations provide hotbeds for cheating rings.

On the contrary, living organizations under the Oregon honor code can be the strongest backers of the plan. With proper orientation they can exert internal pressure on their membership to back the plan.

Support Needed

Concerted and consistent support of the honor code by any significant segment of the living organizations can almost guarantee the success of an honor system.

By support of the honor code a living group would not only in-

crease its self-reliance and self-respect but it would also bind itself more closely to the University and to other living groups.

6. Lack of trusting attitude on the part of many professors.

Actually, many professors would welcome the honor system, especially as it gave indications of success. If the students really want and ask for an honor code it is believed that the large majority of the professors will cooperate in supporting the experiment.

Actually, it really doesn't matter. The students can bypass the instructor.

7. Incoming frosh would have a hard time adjusting to the honor system after general cheating environment in high schools.

Assuming this to be true, an assumption which at least one administrator in the office of student affairs claims is absolutely false, this merely provides added incentive for overcoming such conditioning through the honor code.

8. Natural or habitual cheaters would tend to make efforts to beat the system.

Naturally, and in so doing might well antagonize sincere students to the extent that an effective wedge in the reluctance to report violators would be achieved.

Add to Effectiveness

This then would tend to add to the effectiveness of the honor code rather than to detract from it. In fact, it might be the factor which would "make" rather than "break" the system.

9. Two or more students with a grudge against a fellow student would try to "frame" him.

"Framing" of course is a possibility in any situation where there are procedures set up for enforcing a system.

It is not believed such tactics would be resorted to very often. In the face of vehement denial on the part of the accused and in the absence of strong evidence, the alleged violator would probably be declared not guilty but his case would be filed. A second offense with the same detectors and reporters would cast doubt on the validity of the charge.

On the other hand, a repeat with different detectors and reporters would look bad for the supposed violator. At any rate such things are a part of the machinery of detection and punishment.

It should be emphasized that the primary emphasis in the institution and operation of the honor system is preventative rather than punitive.

Report on an Operating Honor System

How Are Cheaters Caught, Treated? Here's the Way Stanford Does It

(Ed. Note: This is the second of a series of three on the honor code now in operation at Stanford university.)

By Phil Bettens

How does the honor system at Stanford work?

Here's what a subcommittee of the honor code committee reported after a trip there.

Violators, reported by either students or professors, are tried before a joint session of the men's and women's council—who otherwise act as a sort of discipline committee—sitting as the council for student control.

Faculty Doesn't Sit

The faculty has no part in hearing the cases, except that the dean of students is empowered to review all cases and send them back for retrial if necessary. All members of the council are elected by the student body.

No names of violators are released, although a bare outline of the trial, stating whether a man or woman offender, appears in the Stanford Daily. The article, according to the committee's report, ends with a "moralizing conclusion."

The name of the person reporting the violation is not made

known to the violator unless the reporter should happen to speak to the cheater during the exam. The reporter appears before the council previous to the violator's trial and explains the situation; the violator then has his chance.

The minimum penalty is an F in the course and suspension for one quarter; the maximum is permanent suspension.

Only 9 Cases Last Year

Last year, only nine cases were heard by the council, two of which were turned in by students. Both cases turned in by students were adjudged not guilty. Disposition of the other seven cases was not cited.

The weakest link in the honor code chain is the fraternity. "A natural feeling of brotherhood exists in them," the committee reported, "and since they may take home exams they work them out together."

(Wednesday: Some observations on the honor system, and a few details about examinations under the system.)