

# Honor System

"The question is not whether the University can discipline you, but whether you can discipline yourselves." - Edward Kidder Graham, UNC President, 1914-1918

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is the oldest state university in the nation, chartered by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1789. When Carolina enrolled its first students in 1795, authority to regulate student conduct was placed in the hands of the University trustees, who assigned powers of investigation and sanctioning to the faculty. The trustees were given the right to "make all such laws and regulations for the government of the University and preservation of order and good morals therein ? as to them may appear necessary: Provided, the same are not contrary to the unalienable liberty of a citizen or to the laws of the State." These concurrent goals of order and liberty have been the standards by which the Honor System has measured itself since that time.

The University's first code of conduct regulated much of students' lives. Study hours and church attendance were enforced and gambling, drinking, fishing, and dueling were forbidden. Students caught violating regulations faced public admonition by the faculty, suspension, or dismissal from the University. In his *History of the University of North Carolina*, Kemp P. Battle reports on students expelled or suspended for "firing of pistols?, assault, arson, drunkenness, throwing rocks at their tutors, stealing their professors' horses, and even dueling.

Throughout the early years of the University's existence, maintenance of these early regulations was left--with varying efficiency-- to the faculty and student monitors. Students and faculty alike generally maligned this arrangement. Students objected to the faculty's heavy-handedness and "oppressive and tyrannical laws." Faculty members disliked the arduous task of inspecting student rooms at night, where they would often find themselves the target of a variety of student pranks. An additional key component in the early years of the Honor Code's evolution came from two prominent student organizations, setting the standard of student self-governance that continues to this day. The Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies were organized by some of the first students in 1795 to serve as social and academic releases for students apart from the prying eyes of their professors. Faculty members were forbidden to interfere with the societies'

governance or attend their meetings. This practice of self-governance blossomed into an unofficial campus judicial system during the first 75 years of the University's existence. By the 1830s, the Societies would turn over members who violated university policies to the faculty and would offer guarantees of their fellow students' good conduct as members of the Societies. The Societies' standards of conduct were often taken into consideration by the faculty when reflecting on disciplinary measures against erring students.

When the University was revived in 1875 after the Civil War, the faculty turned the responsibility for maintaining "a high level of propriety" over to the two debating societies. By 1890, matters of academic cheating, along with the by now traditional cases of social misconduct, were turned over to the student societies for trial and punishment. In 1904 a new form of student self-rule, the Student Council, emerged. Since then, disciplinary matters have been handled by the University rather than by the debating societies. Continued growth in the size and diversity of the student body made new disciplinary bodies necessary. In 1946 the first student body constitution was adopted, which established five student courts. These were: the Student Council with original jurisdiction over all Honor Code offenses, a Men's Social Council, a Women's Social Council, an Interdenominational Council, and the Women's Council.

Criticism of this system in the 1950s and 1960s prompted major reforms to the implementation of the Honor Code. The creation of the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance in 1974 hailed an increased role for students in the regulation of their own affairs. Student courts were given original jurisdiction in academic as well as conduct violations. The Instrument leaves final authority over judicial matters in the hands of the Chancellor, but makes it clear that student discipline is both a right and a responsibility of three bodies: the students, the faculty, and the administration. No group may unilaterally change the system without the consent and involvement of the other two groups. In 2003 the Committee on Student Conduct significantly revised the Instrument, providing more opportunity for faculty and students to discuss alleged violations, expanding the range of sanctions, expediting the Honor System process, and giving the Honor Courts more flexibility to administer educational sanctions.

The Instrument and the Honor Code contained within it serve as one of the University's major policy statements on student conduct to this day, continuing the rich tradition of student self-governance at the University

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