

**HONOR SUPPORT
OFFICER
INFORMATION BOOKLET**



2023-2024

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This booklet is not intended to provide a comprehensive or detailed description of Honor Committee policy or procedure, but rather an overview of the Honor System for new students. In addition, because aspects of the Honor System may change from time to time in response to changing ideals and standards of the student body, recent changes in the Honor System may not be reflected in the material contained herein. For these reasons, students seeking detailed information about the current policies and procedures of the Honor System should refer to the By-laws and Constitution available at www.virginia.edu/honor or should contact the Honor Committee at (434) 924-7602.

Introduction

Welcome to the University of Virginia. The Honor System has been a defining characteristic of life at the University for more than 175 years. The Honor System is founded upon a commitment made by all University of Virginia students to never lie, cheat, or steal. This commitment is not imposed on students. It is instead a chosen ideal, one that underlies our common endeavor as students: the pursuit of the truth. Each student at the University has signed a pledge to abide by the Honor System on their application for admission. Students have also committed themselves to governing the system—the Honor Committee is made up entirely of your fellow students and the Honor Committee Constitution can only be altered by a student vote. In pledging to live with honor and in accepting this responsibility for the governance of the System, students at the University enter into a contract we call the Community of Trust.

The Honor System and the Community of Trust that it protects have real and tangible benefits for University students. At this University, a student is assumed to be honorable unless their actions prove otherwise. This presumption of honor accompanies a student in all interactions with fellow students, faculty members, administrators, and members of the community. The Honor System means that a professor will trust both your words and your work. The Honor System also means that you can trust a fellow student for no other reason than because they are a fellow student. This positive conception of Honor is the heart of our System.

Essential to maintaining our Community of Trust is the acceptance of individual responsibility. The foundation of the Honor System depends entirely upon the willingness of each student to live up to the standards set by the community of their fellow students. Administration of the Honor System rests with the students. For the community to remain strong, each student must be committed to bringing to the Honor Committee any member of the community who may demonstrate a disregard for these basic principles of honesty.

This booklet seeks to enhance your understanding of the basic principles upon which the Honor System is based, as well as provide a brief overview of how it operates.

If you have any questions concerning any facet of the Honor System, please contact an Honor advisor or Honor Committee member at:

HONOR COMMITTEE

4th Floor, Newcomb Hall

(434) 924-7602

<http://www.virginia.edu/honor>

Philosophy

The central purpose of the Honor System is to sustain and protect a Community of Trust in which students can enjoy the freedom to develop their intellectual and personal potential. The concept of an Honor System implies that students commit themselves to the pursuit of the truth. Dishonest means are incompatible with this pursuit.

The System does not exist simply to punish students who commit Honor Offenses, nor to place restrictions on students that might conflict with their personal values; rather, its purpose is to promote an atmosphere of trust. Only with this atmosphere of trust can the University continue to foster the spirit of community that has helped define it for so long.

The Students' System

The Honor System is entirely student-run. The standards of conduct deemed to be dishonest, the scope of the Honor System, and its various policies and procedures have all undergone gradual redefinition by successive generations of students who each evaluate the System according to their own values and principles.

“The Alumni know that the greatest treasure they left behind, or rather that they carried away with them, because it’s both, is the spirit of honor; they know that they have bequeathed this priceless legacy to you; they know that you are the custodians of a sacred trust.”

- Thaddeus Braxton Woody, 1901-2000, Professor Emeritus of French

A Brief History of the Honor System

In 1842, in order to bring about better relations between students and faculty, Professor Henry St. George Tucker offered this resolution:

Resolved, that in all future examinations... each candidate shall attach to the written answers... a certificate of the following words: I, A.B., do hereby certify on my honor that I have derived no assistance during the time of this examination from any source whatever.

In the more than 170 years since the inception of the Honor System, it has been administered entirely by students. Following the Civil War, the University's Honor System became associated with the concept of the "Southern Gentleman." Men were expelled for defaulting on payments of debts, cheating at cards, and insulting ladies. During this period, no formal procedures existed — Honor violations were handled by a group of interested students or by the student body as a whole.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Honor System underwent numerous changes. Many students wanted to expand the system into a complete system of student government, covering all instances of student misconduct and the Honor Committee's rules of conduct were first formalized during this period. The Honor System, as we now know it, was first established in 1909, and was revised in 1917 and 1934. In 1952 the Bad Check Committee was created in order to ensure continued good relations between the University community and local merchants. The Bad Check Committee was later dissolved, and its community relations responsibilities were assumed by the Vice Chair for Community Relations. The Honor Committee, recognizing that a complex ethical system based on current standards of behavior relied heavily on student input, began to emphasize open forums for discussion and exchange of information.

During the 1970's, the Honor System underwent three major changes to better respond to student input and the increasing diversity at the University. First, students amended the System's jurisdiction in order to increase its effectiveness. Instead of an unlimited jurisdiction, the scope of the System was limited to Honor violations committed within the boundaries of Charlottesville, Albemarle County or wherever a student represents themselves as a student of the University of Virginia. Second, students voted to eliminate the non-toleration clause of the Honor Pledge, which required students to report any potential Honor Offenses that they observed. Finally, the Conscientious Retraction ("CR") was added to the System. The CR allows a student who has committed an Honor Offense, but who has no reason to believe that the act had come under suspicion, to admit their mistake, make amends with all affected parties, and remain within the Community of Trust.

In the spring of 1980, students voted to allow a panel of randomly selected students to serve as panelists in Honor Hearing. This change afforded an accused student two options — a panel of solely Honor Committee members or a mixed panel of Honor Committee members and randomly

selected students. In 1990, the Honor Committee put forth a referendum to allow Hearing panels to be comprised solely of randomly selected students. The referendum passed and students' jury panel options expanded to three choices.

In 2013, the student body approved another addition to the Constitution: the Informed Retraction (“IR”). This policy provides a student who has been informed that they have been reported for an Honor Offense the right to admit guilt, make amends with all affected parties, and leave the University for two full semesters before rejoining the Community of Trust.

In 2015, the Constitution was amended again by two referenda proposed by two Honor support officers. The first amendment requires the Honor Committee to hold a bi-annual popular assembly to facilitate discussion, ascertain pressing concerns, and generate potential measures to be put forth for student consideration. The second amendment requires that the Honor Committee respond to non-binding ballot questions affirmed by a majority of students in a University-wide election by putting forth a vote the following year in the form of a binding constitutional referendum. This amendment was later revised, via another constitutional referendum, and now requires that the Committee “enact a response” within one year.

In 2018, the Committee expanded the IR to include all reported Offenses and those self-reported by the student. This policy, often referred to as “additional admissions” ensures that any student who is reported is able to take an IR and, if they self-report all additional Offenses committed during their time as a student, return to the University with a clean slate.

A Brief Explanation of the Honor Process

Criteria

An Honor Offense is defined as a Significant Act of Lying, Cheating, or Stealing committed with Knowledge. Three criteria determine whether or not an Honor Offense has occurred. These three criteria are defined in the Honor Committee's By-laws as follows:

1. **“Act”** shall mean any specific event or occurrence of Lying, Cheating or Stealing.
2. **“Knowledge”** shall mean, with respect to a particular Act, that the actor knew, or a reasonable University of Virginia student should have known, that the Act in question might be considered an Honor Offense. Ignorance of the scope of the Honor System shall not be considered a defense
3. **“Significance”** shall mean, with respect to a particular Act, that open toleration of such Act would be inconsistent with the Community of Trust.

In order for a student to be found guilty of an Honor Offense all three criteria must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

Conscientious Retraction

A privilege afforded to every student under the Honor System, a “Conscientious Retraction” (“CR”) allows a student who has committed a dishonest act to admit their actions and make amends, without leaving the Community of Trust. This admission must be both complete (i.e., contains all of the required information) and valid (i.e., submitted before the student has reason to believe that their actions have come under suspicion by anyone). A student with the integrity and courage to come forward with a timely, good-faith retraction has thereby reaffirmed their personal commitment to honor and will be allowed to remain in the community.

To file a CR, a student should contact an Honor Advisor immediately. Generally, in order to submit a complete CR, a student must completely acknowledge committing an Act that might be an Honor Offense by describing the Act in question and making appropriate corrections and/or amends. In addition, the CR must be signed by all affected parties. For further information as to specific requirements for CRs in particular cases, students should contact an Honor Advisor or a

member of the Honor Committee, either by phone (434-924-7602) or online (www.virginia.edu/honor/reports-retractions/.)

Upon submission to the Honor Committee, the CR will be reviewed for completeness and may be returned to the student for changes if necessary. The complete CR will be maintained in a confidential Honor Committee file unless the underlying Act is later reported, in which case the validity of the retraction will be evaluated in accordance with the By-laws of the Honor Committee. If a student is later reported for an Act for which they filed a CR, and the CR is deemed to be valid, it will act as a full defense.

Informed Retraction

A right afforded to every student under the Honor System, an Informed Retraction (“IR”) allows a student who has been reported to the Honor Committee for an alleged Act of Lying, Cheating, or Stealing to take responsibility for the commission of the Honor Offense and to make amends for it.

In order to provide consistency and clarity in the IR process, the Honor Committee requires students who wish to file an IR to complete and submit an Informed Retraction Form (“IR Form”), which requires the student to collect the signatures of all affected parties, the Dean of Students, the student’s Association Dean or Academic Dean and, if they’re an international student, an advisor from the International Studies Office. Upon submission to the Honor Committee, the IR Form will be reviewed and may be returned to the student for changes if necessary.

Because a student who submits an IR agrees, implicitly, to recommit themselves to the Community of Trust, each student may file a single IR during the entirety of their time at the University.

For further information as to specific requirements for the IR in particular cases, students should contact an Honor Advisor or a member of the Honor Committee, either by phone (410-924-7602) or online (www.virginia.edu/honor/reports-retractions/), or refer to the By-laws of the Honor Committee.

Scope and Statute of Limitations

Although a student should always conduct themselves honorably, a student is only formally bound by the Honor System in Charlottesville and Albemarle County, and elsewhere whenever a student represents themselves as a University of Virginia student. The geographic limitation is intended to prevent an over-extension of the System, for the Honor System can only act effectively where it is reasonably well-known and understood.

A case may be reported against anyone who was registered as a student at the time of an alleged Honor Offense, regardless of whether the student subsequently left the University for any

reason (including, without limitation, transfer, withdrawal, leave of absence, graduation, or failure to return to the University for any reason), at any time, whether prior to the case report and official accusation or thereafter, so long as the case is reported within two years from the date on which the alleged Offense occurred. Furthermore, a case may be reported against a University student for an alleged Honor Offense that Occurred within a period of two years after the University student was registered or enrolled, but only with respect to alleged Lying by such student in any University disciplinary proceeding arising out of such student's own conduct, including without limitation, any proceedings of the University's Judiciary Committee, the University's procedures relating to the Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence, or the Honor Committee itself. With respect to a University graduate, if such a case is reported and leads to a guilty verdict (or the accused graduate is deemed to have left admitting guilt, as described below), the Honor Committee will refer the case to the General Faculty for degree revocation proceedings.

Investigation/Hearing Procedure

The Honor System would not function if students did not hold one another accountable. Deciding to report an Honor case, however, can be very difficult. It is important to remember that one need not make this decision alone. Anyone who suspects a student has committed an Honor Offense should speak with an Honor Advisor or a member of the Honor Committee. Any consultation is strictly confidential and does not in any way obligate one to report a case. A trained Honor Advisor or Honor Committee member can provide detailed information about the process and answer any questions related to a possible report. They cannot, however, instruct a potential reporter as to whether or not the conduct they witnessed is, definitively, an Honor Offense, nor can they decide whether or not the case should be reported. After discussing the matter with an advisor or Committee member, if one believes that an Honor Offense has occurred and wishes to report a case, the Advisor or Committee member can formally begin the process. Once a case is reported, it cannot be withdrawn.

Investigation

During the investigation stage, two Honor Investigators are assigned to the case as impartial fact-finders. The Investigators interview the reporter, the investigated student and any others who might have relevant information. They also prepare a written transcript of all the interviews and collect any relevant evidence. The case proceeds to an Investigative Panel when the investigation is completed.

Investigative Panel

The Investigative Panel (“I-Panel”) is a rotating panel of three Honor Committee members. The I-Panel decides whether or not sufficient evidence exists to formally accuse the investigated student of an Honor Offense. The I-Panel decides whether an Honor Offense “more likely than not” occurred. If the panelists conclude that it is more likely than not that an Offense occurred, the student is formally accused of committing an Honor Offense. If the panelists conclude that there is insufficient evidence to make a formal accusation, the case is dropped, and the matter is considered closed. The I-Panel may also decide that the investigation was incomplete and instruct the Honor Investigators to investigate the matter further.

Accusation

Once formally accused, the student, now referred to as the “accused student,” is entitled to an Honor Hearing. An accused student who does not request a Hearing, as provided in the By-laws of the Committee, or who requests a Hearing but fails to attend such a Hearing, will be deemed to have waived their right to a Hearing and to have admitted guilt, whether or not such an admission is

expressly made. Such waiver and admission of guilt is generally referred to as “leaving admitting guilt” (“LAG”).

Contributory Health Impairment Process

If any student (or former student) believes that they have a mental disorder or mental condition which contributed to the commission of an alleged Honor Offense and/or renders them substantially unable to understand the relevant Honor charges or to assist in their own defense, they may wish to request a Contributory Health Impairment Hearing (“CHI Hearing”) The CHI process is administered by the Office of the Dean of Students. If a CHI is, ultimately, found, the case is resolved through the CHI process and the Honor charges are dismissed. If the CHI is not, ultimately, found, the case is returned to the Honor Committee for further processing according to its By-laws. .

Hearing

If an accused student requests a Hearing, they have several options to consider. The student may choose a Hearing that is open or closed to the public. Finally, the accused student may choose any fellow student to act as their Counsel in the Hearing. Students often elect to have Counsel assigned to them from the Support Officer pool, as they are most familiar with the Honor Hearing process.

At the Hearing, the accused student is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. A member of the Honor Committee serves as the chair of the Hearing to ensure that the Hearing runs smoothly and in accordance with the Honor procedures. The Hearing chair also serves as a resource for members of the student panel who may not be entirely familiar with the process. The student panel hears from witnesses and reviews all the evidence. Counsel for each side have the opportunity to question witnesses, as well as to make a closing statement at the end of the Hearing to question witnesses directly.

Once all witnesses have testified, the student panel recesses for deliberations on Act, Knowledge, and Significance. Each of these criteria must be met beyond a reasonable doubt. If any of these criteria is not met beyond a reasonable doubt, a not guilty verdict is rendered.

Appeals

A student who is found guilty of an Honor Offense may appeal the decision on the basis of “new evidence” or for “good cause” in order to raise issues of fairness in the underlying proceedings. Students may file appeals on an “expedited” basis so that they may continue to attend classes pending the outcome of this filing (in which case, unless a conviction is ultimately overturned, the date of dismissal will revert back to the original date of conviction or the date of the LAG, as applicable).

Confidentiality

Pursuant to Honor Committee policy, the identities of the parties and witnesses in an Honor investigation and related proceedings are confidential. Further, under federal privacy laws, the University may not disclose the identity of investigated students.

This confidentiality is maintained throughout the Honor process, and beyond. If an investigation is dropped, confidentiality is maintained. The investigated, accused, or dismissed student may, however, decide to waive their right to confidentiality at any time. This may occur when they inform the Honor Committee expressly that they wish to waive their right of confidentiality or it may occur when they take action inconsistent with confidentiality (e.g., by speaking with journalists, on the record, about their case or by requesting an open Honor Hearing).

Violations of confidentiality by students, including, without limitation, Honor support officers, student panelists, and witnesses, are governed by Standard 11 of the University Judiciary Committee’s Standards of Conduct.

Student Panels

During an Honor Hearing, the panel will be composed of five Honor Committee members and seven randomly selected students. The Honor Committee maintains a pool of random student panelists by periodically obtaining a randomized list of students from the University Registrar. Random student panelists attend an orientation where they are briefed in the Hearing process and their responsibilities as a panelist. The Hearing will usually last one full day. The Hearing chair provides knowledge of the Honor System and Hearing experience. The panelists ensure that Hearing decisions reflect the views of the student body. By devoting one day as panelist to the operation of the Honor System, each student can guarantee that the Honor System remains a vital and responsive aspect of University life.

Diversity and the Honor System

Some community members have raised concerns that the Honor System might have a disproportionate impact on minority students and international students. The Honor Committee is constantly working to ensure that the System treats all students with equal fairness, regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, or other characteristics. The Honor Committee shares in the University's responsibility to ensure that students from many backgrounds thrive on Grounds.

To be a truly representative body, the Honor Committee has committed itself to maintaining a diverse support officer pool and reviewing constantly the experience of minority students within the system. Additionally, the Committee undertakes education and outreach initiatives to ensure that traditionally underrepresented groups have an active voice in the governance of the system.

As an additional measure to address these concerns and garner student opinion on the Honor System, the Committee established the Community Relations and Diversity Advisory Committee. The Honor Committee encourages any interested students to attend CRDAC meetings to help address these issues.

Cheating and Academic Fraud

All students at the University of Virginia are bound by the Honor Code not to commit “academic fraud,” which is a form of cheating. Academic fraud includes, among other conduct: **plagiarism, multiple submission, false citation, and false data.**

Plagiarism is when someone represents another’s ideas or work as their own original ideas or work. In its most blatant form, plagiarism is copying the words without indicating, through quotation marks and proper citation, that they were originally someone else’s. Plagiarism arises in less blatant forms as well, the most common of which is the use of paraphrased material without proper citation. Merely changing the order of another author’s words or ideas, or substituting one’s own words for another author’s original ideas, will constitute plagiarism unless they clearly acknowledge the source of those ideas. Moreover, if one uses certain words or phrases that are distinctive to their original source, they should use quotation marks around such words or phrases, as they appear within their paraphrased material, even if they go on to cite the original source.

Certain information in any discipline may be considered “common knowledge” and may be used without acknowledgment. What is considered to be common knowledge varies among fields; when in doubt, consult a professor or TA. The important question is whether one has represented someone else’s ideas or work as their own original ideas or works.

When in doubt about plagiarism, one should err on the side of caution by employing quotation marks, where appropriate—around direct quotes and any words or phrases that are distinctly those of the original author—and clearly acknowledging their sources. Because nobody can anticipate and describe every act that may constitute plagiarism, if one is at all uncertain, they should speak to their professor or consult a standards manual in advance to determine whether their actions may put them at risk of committing an Honor violation.

Multiple Submission is the use of work previously submitted at this or any other institution to fulfill academic requirements in another class. For example, using a paper from a 12th grade English class for an ENWR 1010 assignment is multiple submission. Slightly altered work that has been resubmitted could also be considered fraudulent. With prior permission, some professors may allow students to complete one assignment for two classes. In this case, prior permission from both instructors is necessary.

False Citation is falsely citing a source or attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained. A simple example of this would be footnoting a paragraph and citing a work that was never utilized.

False Data is the fabrication or alteration of data to deliberately mislead. For example, changing data to get better experimental results is academic fraud. Professors and TAs in lab classes will often have strict guidelines for the completion of labs and assignments. Whenever in doubt about what may be considered academic fraud, immediately consult with the professor.

The Honor Committee

The Honor Committee is comprised of two Honor Representatives from each of the twelve schools, except the undergraduate College of Arts and Sciences, which has five. A new group of representatives is elected by the students of their respective schools in the spring semester each year. The twenty-seven member Honor Committee is ultimately responsible for the maintenance and administration of the Honor System. With the help of support officers, the Honor Committee conducts Honor investigations and Hearings, disseminates information about the Honor System to new students and faculty, and establishes special programs and policies for the maintenance of the System from year to year.

Executive Committee

The Honor Committee elects, from among its members, a Chair, a Vice Chair for Investigations, a Vice Chair for Hearings, a Vice Chair for Education, and a Vice Chair for Community Relations. All members of this Executive Committee sit as voting members. This five-member body is responsible for administering the Honor System's daily affairs.

Community Relations and Diversity Advisory Committee

As described in the Honor Committee By-laws, the Community Relations and Diversity Advisory Committee (CRDAC) endeavors, first, to provide a formal mechanism for the University's diverse student body to express its views and interests as they relate to the Honor System, and, second, to foster a constructive relationship between the System and the rest of the student body. For more information on how to get involved with CRDAC, you should reach out to the Vice Chair for Community Relations.

Faculty Advisory Committee

Faculty support is crucial to the longevity of the Honor System; therefore, the Honor Committee has created a standing committee to serve as a liaison between the faculty and the Honor Committee. The Faculty Advisory Committee channels faculty opinion to the Honor Committee and keeps the faculty informed about the Honor System.

Support Officers

Each year the Honor Committee selects a pool of students to serve as Honor support officers. Honor support officers undergo a semester of training that prepares them to serve in one of three support officer roles. The support officer roles have unique responsibilities and are crucial to the maintenance of the Honor System. The three different pools in which a support officer may serve are the Advisor Pool, the Counsel Pool (which performs both Investigator and Counsel roles), and the Educator Pool.

Honor Advisors

Honor Advisors provide support and information about the Honor System to both students and reporters throughout the course of an Honor case. In addition, Honor Advisors are expected to help maintain open lines of communication between investigated or accused students and the Honor Committee. All conversations between a student or witness and their respective Honor Advisor are strictly confidential.

Every individual who decides to report an Honor case is immediately assigned an Honor Advisor. This Advisor keeps the reporter informed of developments in the investigation and is available to answer any questions or concerns that the reporter may have.

Each investigated student is also assigned an Honor Advisor. This Advisor helps explain the report that has been filed against the student and what to expect as the case unfolds. Advisors help explain the student's options (e.g., to file an Informed Retraction, to request an Honor Hearing, or to "LAG," as described above) without attempting to influence the student's decision in any way. Rather, the Advisor's role is to support the student through what may be a difficult decision-making process.

If the accused student requests a Hearing after being formally accused by an Investigative Panel, their Honor Advisor works closely with their Honor Counsel throughout the Hearing.

If an accused student is found guilty at a Hearing, their Advisor continues to work with them through the course of any subsequent appeal proceedings, until the case has been finally resolved.

Honor Investigators/Counsel

Honor Investigators serve as impartial fact-finders during the investigation stage of Honor proceedings. A team of two Honor support officers impartially investigate each case reported to the Committee by interviewing witnesses and gathering other relevant evidence. An I-Panel, made up of three Committee members, reviews the evidence gathered during the investigation and decides to either formally accuse the reported student or drop the case.

If a case proceeds to a Hearing, Honor Counsel ensure a fair and balanced representation of both the accused student's interests and the Community's interest during the Hearing process. For the purposes of the Hearing, an accused student may select their own advocates from among the

general student body or the Honor support officer pool; otherwise, the advocates are assigned from the support officer pool to the accused student.

During the Hearing, the accused student's Counsel act at the discretion of the accused student at all times. In accordance with the principles of the Honor System, Hearing Counsel do not argue legal precedents, nor refer to decisions in past Honor Hearings; rather, Counsel are instructed to constrain their arguments to the facts of the case and to refrain from making emotional or inflammatory remarks to the jury panel.

When an accused student is found guilty at a Hearing, their Hearing Counsel continue to assist them through the course of any subsequent proceedings, until the case has been finally resolved.

Honor Educators

The role of the Honor Educator is to serve as a liaison between the University community and the Honor Committee. Educators are the primary mechanism through which the Honor Committee communicates information about the Honor System's philosophies, policies, and process. The role of an Educator is largely focused on finding the most effective ways to communicate between the Honor Committee and the Community of Trust, which includes undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

In both education and outreach roles, Educators seek out current student opinions to share with the Committee so that changes might be considered accordingly. Educators reach out to every part of the larger University community through organizing and executing events, presentations, forums and campaigns.

Getting Involved

Any student can become an Honor support officer. Support officers are recruited in the fall semester. The process consists of a short quiz and two subsequent interviews. Watch the Honor website and Facebook page for postings about informational meetings, quiz dates, and times. If you are interested in running for a position on the Honor Committee, you must comply with any requirements set forth by the University Board of Elections (UBE). Elections are administered by the UBE and occur early in the spring semester.

Where to Go for More Information

For additional information regarding anything covered in this booklet, you should consult the Honor Committee's website at www.virginia.edu/honor. You should also feel free to call the Honor offices at (434) 924-7602 or stop by the the fourth floor of Newcomb Hall during business hours to speak to an Honor Advisor, a member of the Honor Committee, or the Special Assistant to the Honor Committee.