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## Evaluation on the Use of the Honor Code in Schools

Every year before the start of fall semester, Jesuit College Preparatory students sign and turn in a yellow slip of paper in which they agree to abide by all the rules contained in the Student Handbook, including an honor code that spells out rules regarding academic dishonesty. Every year, students sign the paper slip knowing full well that they are expected to act with integrity as a Man for Others. Every year, acting with academic honesty- doing one's own work and making sure to eliminate unfair advantages where possible- falls under this code of integrity that comes with being a Man for Others. Yet every year, students at Jesuit College Preparatory inevitably fail to follow through on this vow, invalidating with full knowledge the honor code that stands to prevent their very actions. Although effective in theory, the unfortunately inadequate nature of honor codes in minimizing acts of academic dishonesty due to circumstantial obstacles in practice calls for their elimination and replacement in all institutions of learning, Jesuit included.

Honor codes, dwarfed by the more deeply-rooted culture of inaction or indifference infecting most schools, fail to actualize a widely-accepted culture of integrity. Despite the presence of honor codes, which rely heavily on student enforcement, many acts of academic dishonesty go unreported due to an ingrained social acceptance of cheating. Perhaps stronger than most honor codes implemented by schools is the perverted honor code among students, especially those at all-male high schools such as Jesuit where the idea of brotherhood prevails, to pledge allegiance to their classmates and to overlook or even encourage witnessed instances of academic dishonesty. Some students simply do not view the act of reporting cheating "as their responsibility," as many at the high school and college level find themselves wrapped in too many other responsibilities to care about the actions of anyone other than themselves (Source B). Furthermore, many students choose to remove themselves from the matter out of fear of retribution or "[creating friction]" that would further complicate their already busy lives (Source B). Aware that those whom they report will be punished according to the formal penalties expressed in most honor codes and that confidentiality isn't exactly always preserved, students shy away from this component of the honor code, a definite obstacle to fixing student culture. While some schools have managed to find a way to effectively establish a community-wide aversion to cheating, these cases are rare, as it takes time and commitment by a large percentage of students. The implausibility of achieving this anti-cheating utopia manifests in the shockingly low number of students willing to participate in it, as in a school-wide survey conducted by a student honor council, only eight percent of students said they would report a fellow student for cheating. The hesitancy and lack of commitment among students to conform to this obligation of an honor code encourages academic dishonesty even more if anything else (Source E).

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External influences such as competitive pressure and technology make academic dishonesty an everyday reality in school, one impervious to the weak defense of an honor code. As long as competition exists, rampant cheating will continue to present a problem in most educational institutions. Many students choose to break their school's honor code because they feel as if "they have no choice but to [cheat] to remain competitive" amid the ruthless, cutthroat environment that is high school (Source F). Under the impression that none of their fellow classmates demonstrate academic honesty, students get sucked into a feedback loop where cheating becomes a seemingly necessary and fair tool. In situations like these, honor codes are spurned as specious and unfair and hypocritical, and students become ignorant of the consequences of their actions. Because students feel immense pressure to succeed and go on to prestigious universities amid high levels of competition, simply knowing that one's fellow students pledged to practice academic integrity by signing a sheet of paper isn't a persuasive enough deterrent to cheating. Honor codes create an environment of heavy distrust as students don't want to be the one left behind by adhering to the code while others infringe upon it. A removal of this type of system would perhaps placate this atmosphere of desperation. Furthermore, the temptation to cheat is higher than ever before as a result of a wider variety of information and facilitative technology available to students: "The Internet provides an inexhaustible source of information, and it's tempting to simply insert phrases directly into reports" writes Kahn, keying in on the fact that with a world of answers at students' fingertips, relying on an honor code based significantly on trust simply fails to overcome this great temptation (Source D). The advent of new technology has advanced the level of complexity of cheating in such a way that it is now practically effortless- quickly googling an answer on a hidden phone, switching between apps on an iPad, emailing a student an assignment can all be done so inconspicuously that to some students it wouldn't make sense not to cheat. The effectiveness of honor codes debilitated by this obstacle, schools could only hope or trust that their students refrain from such action, rendering these codes pointless as students will eventually give in to temptation with that much leniency.

An honor code simply does not present enough stringency and intimidation to successfully deter acts of academic dishonesty. According to the authors of Source E, forty-two percent of surveyed high school students demonstrated a lack of awareness of the sanctions described in their school's honor code, bringing to light an apathy toward or disregard for potential punishments of honor code violations that may arise out of students' aggressive and unyielding obsession with grades and the suffocating pressures placed upon them to succeed (Source E). In order for an honor code system to successfully operate, students must develop a respect for the system that pushes them to "take enforcement of the rules seriously," but based on this frightening statistic, students clearly don't even respect their honor codes enough to know the potential punishments they could face for breaching the code (Source C). This lack of respect is true especially surrounding student-led honor codes; while some think that punishments handed down by an "all-student court" as mentioned in Source C help to more effectively cultivate an

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anti-cheating culture, these peer-enforced systems may likely exacerbate the situation by appearing to be self-righteous and much less serious in nature. From the same previously mentioned survey, forty percent of students said they violated their school's honor code and haven't been caught. The ineffectiveness of honor codes to catch cheaters detailed in this statistic contributes to an inflated sense of invincibility among these students, invincibility that severely detracts from the code's intimidation factor (Source E). This confidence in turn makes these students more likely to violate the honor code in the future, revealing the fallibility of honor codes in deterring academic dishonesty and illustrating the case for their elimination and replacement. As shown by their satire in Source A, honor codes by themselves do very little to prevent academic dishonesty as opposed to much more intimidating and severe measures like the "spycam" referenced in the cartoon. Predicated on the notions of trust and accountability, honor codes simply become useless unless accompanied by stricter and more advanced methods of control. However, employing methods of surveillance to crack down on academic dishonesty renders honor codes pointless. The destruction of any sense of integrity that comes with the spycam completely discredits and precludes honor codes by contradicting the whole purpose for their establishment.

Honor codes simply present little usefulness and practicality when it comes to creating an atmosphere of academic honesty. The truth of the matter is that a signature on a piece of paper in which one vows to behave with integrity is not a viable solution for cheating. Promises are made to be broken; integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is looking, and most students lack the strength of character necessary to uphold the second part of this adage. In order to diminish academic dishonesty as much as possible in our schools, we must make a switch to a system that is much more reliable than an honor code.

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