



## *Families for Honor, LLC*

P.O. Box 35 Moseley, VA 23120-0035

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The purpose of this letter is to raise your level of awareness on various concerns relating to the University of Virginia (UVA) and the UVA signature Code of Honor.

As a prestigious institution of higher learning, the University of Virginia is internationally recognized both academically and for its signature Honor System. *Families for Honor, LLC*, an independent organization, would like to inform college advisors, alumni, benefactors, parents, current and prospective students, and the media about the potential impact of practices by the UVA Honor System and how it might affect a student's college status, career, and future.

*Families for Honor* was formed by students and parents of students directly impacted by their experience with UVA Honor decisions. *FFH* presented the information below to the UVA Honor Committee, UVA Administration and Board of Visitors, as well as VA Governor's Office in 2010. Our objective now is to make others aware of our conviction that transformation of current Honor practices is needed. We fully support an honor system. Our goals are to strive for equitable justice for any student involved in the UVA Honor System or its disciplinary actions, to bring about greater process transparency, and public accountability for judicial outcomes, and to elevate the importance of educational rather than punitive remedies where appropriate. Thus, the core principles of Honor would be preserved equally with those of higher education and students' U.S. Constitutionally protected rights, including but not limited to preservation of equity in their educational investment. These are important facts you may not know and may want to consider before making any future decisions.

### **DID YOU KNOW...**

- **UVA has two disciplinary systems that are in ethical conflict.** The Honor Committee, "Honor" (for academic Honor infractions), and University Judiciary Committee "UJC" (for Standards of Conduct violations) demonstrate irreconcilable inequities in the manner in which justice is administered. For example, a rapist or student assaulting another may be allowed to graduate from UVA, but a student found guilty of plagiarism, whether inadvertent or not, is permanently expelled. (See [www.uvavictimsofrape.com](http://www.uvavictimsofrape.com).)
- **U.S. 14th Amendment Constitutional rights are frequently denied**, including a lack of due process of law and enforcement of Honor By-Law protections, as the Honor Committee does not feel constrained by the U.S. Constitution.
- **These life-altering Honor decisions severely affecting an accused student's education** are left in the hands of young adult students (advisors, counsels, and juries) who often lack adequate honor education and experience.
- **Testimony and witnesses that support a student's innocence can be eliminated unilaterally** by Investigative Counsel or the Pre-Trial Conference Panel so that there is little or no ability to clear your name during a trial.
- **Families of convicted students face huge financial losses.** If you are accused in one semester your trial is often in the following semester and the financial burden of that tuition is your responsibility without knowing your future as a student. Admission to a transfer university may require repeating up to two years in order to graduate.
- **Students participating in UVA programs, such as Semester at Sea, are not necessarily given the same rights** and support as UVA students on campus. You can be expelled or left ashore without resources in a distant country.
- **The interpretation of "Do not lie, cheat or steal"** has specific meaning that differs from course to course. Faculty often overlook giving adequate or timely explanations for their specific applications of the Honor Code resulting in widespread poor communications of Honor policy. This is consistently a major reason why students are wrongfully dismissed.
- **"Should have known" is the overused rationale for virtually every accusation.** Many expulsions are based solely on this definition of intent. Accused students are convicted without proof of premeditation to commit a dishonorable act.
- **The standard for acceptable citation practices does not seem to apply to the Honor Committee itself.** As an example, review the UVA on-line *Educational Supplement for Plagiarism* and compare to *A Manual for Writers*, by Kate L. Turabian, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. (Supplement link is on the bottom of the home page at [www.virginia.edu/honor](http://www.virginia.edu/honor).)
- **Course grades cannot be restored for a course downgrade or forfeited semester even if a student is exonerated** at trial or through appeal (within two years allowed), because the Registrar does not retain a record of impacted grades.
- **Very few trial appeals are granted, even when there are robust grounds for them.** The standard reason given is "that it would not have changed the outcome of the trial." No further explanations are provided as to why they are denied.
- **If dismissed from UVA, you will have to check a box** asking if you ever had to leave a university for an Honor infraction—on any job or higher education application ... for the rest of your life.
- **The contemplation of suicide, occurrence of depression or PTSD** (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) from lengthy trials and wrongful dismissal is a concern parents share.

We appreciate the time you have spent reading this letter and invite your comments via our website [www.familiesforhonor.com](http://www.familiesforhonor.com) or email [familiesforhonorllc@yahoo.com](mailto:familiesforhonorllc@yahoo.com).

Sincerely,  
*Families for Honor Advisory Board*