Referendum Question No. 3
Princeton University Undergraduate Student Government Election—Spring 2019
Sponsored by ELIZABETH HAILE ’19 on behalf of the Joint Honor Committee and USG Academics Subcommittee on Academic Integrity Reconciliation Report Implementation

On March 24, 2019, the USG Senate approved the language of this condensation (ballot question) and referendum resolution as being neutral and clear (13 members in favor, 0 members opposed, 0 members abstaining).

Condensation (Ballot Question)
Shall the Honor Constitution be amended (1) to remove standard penalty (currently a one-year suspension for most violations and disciplinary probation for most overtime violations) and (2) increase the range of available penalties for Honor Code violations? After this change, the Honor Committee would be able to recommend penalties from a range of options. In addition to the existing penalties of disciplinary probation, one, two or three-year suspensions, and expulsion, one new penalty would be added and the range of existing penalties would be expanded. First, a “Reprimand” would be established for minor first offenses, in particular for most overtime violations. In addition, an increased range of probationary periods – in increments of months – with a maximum of probation until graduation, and a one-semester suspension would be available. In most cases involving a one semester suspension, a student’s suspension would likely be followed by a one semester leave of absence, as departmental sequencing and other course requirements necessitate that a student return in phase.

Explanation (Submitted by the Sponsor)
Under the current system, a first offense of the Honor Code results in a “standard penalty” of suspension of one year from the University, but the Committee may increase penalty or add censure in particularly egregious cases. The Committee typically recommends disciplinary probation until graduation for overtime violations.

An academic integrity review process began during spring 2017 that resulted in the release of a report in February 2019. This report recommended changes to the Honor Committee’s penalty structure in order to create a wider range of available penalties. This referendum addresses the need for a shift from a “standard penalty” framework to a graduated penalty structure in the Honor Constitution. It proposes three changes to the Constitution. First, a “Reprimand” would be established for first offenses, specifically for most first overtime violations; this penalty would not appear on the student’s disciplinary record unless a subsequent violation was committed. A reprimand would include a teaching moment, which would generally come in the form of a meeting with a student’s Dean or Director of Studies.

Second, the range of available probationary periods would increase, and the “months” standard (with a range of 3 - 48 months) would be adopted. Lastly, the Constitution would establish a one-semester suspension as a possible penalty. Currently, many academic departments’ requirements prevent students from taking a one-semester leave. In these cases, a student would take a subsequent leave following their one-semester suspension. Their disciplinary record would indicate their penalty of a one-semester suspension followed by a one-semester leave of absence. ODOC, the Honor Committee, and USG are working with academic departments to address the structural barriers that make one-semester leaves challenging at this time. Overall, this referendum creates a wider range of penalties for violations of the Honor Code, allowing for fairer and more commensurate responses to infractions.
Resolved by the undergraduates of Princeton University,

Article IV, Section A of the Honor Constitution shall be amended to read as follows:

A. Penalties

Students found responsible for violating the Honor Code will receive penalties in accordance with Rights, Rules, Responsibilities as follows:

1. Normally, the first offense will result in a suspension of one year from the university. In all cases, the Committee may exercise the option of suspension for two or three years. This rule is subject to the following exceptions: Typically, Undergraduate students are subject to the following penalties for a first violation of the Honor Code: disciplinary probation, suspension for one semester, and suspension for one, two or three years. These guidelines are subject to the following exceptions:

a. Where there are extenuating circumstances, the first offense may result in a penalty of disciplinary probation a reduced penalty. Extenuating circumstances may include, but are not limited to, situations where there was a substantial, material error on the part of an agent of the university, and situations where the Committee fails to conclude that a student should reasonably have understood that his or her actions were in violation of the Honor Code.

b. A reprimand may be taken into account in judging the seriousness of any future violation.

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b. c. If perjury occurs, the Committee may impose a penalty of two years for the first offense exercise the option to increase penalty.

2. Where a student is found responsible for writing overtime on an examination or otherwise gaining a time advantage, the Committee will normally recommend a punishment of disciplinary probation that the student be issued a reprimand and recommend that the student receive a zero for the examination. However, in especially egregious cases of writing overtime, the Committee will recommend a punishment of a one-year suspension. The Committee may exercise the option to increase the penalty.

3. Normally, a second violation of the Honor Code, or a violation of the Honor Code following a suspension for a violation of the University’s academic integrity regulations, will result in expulsion from the University.
a. Students whose first Honor Code or academic integrity violation resulted in a penalty of probation may face either suspension or expulsion should they be found responsible for a second violation of the Honor Code.

4. In cases adjudicated prior to the last day of classes, if the final decision is a separation from the University (e.g., suspension or expulsion), the student will normally not earn credit for the semester in which the infraction occurred. If the case is adjudicated during reading or exam period or if the student has essentially completed course requirements while awaiting the final disposition of the matter, obtaining credit for the semester will be at the discretion of the Committee. In such cases, the Honor Committee will normally recommend that the student receive a failing grade in the course in which the violation occurred.

This amendment becomes effective on September 11, 2019.

Approved April 19, 2019.
With 2,174 Undergraduates Voting
By a Vote of 2,022 (93.0%) Undergraduates in Favor, 152 (7.0%) Against

LAURA ZECCA ’20,
Chief Elections Manager

Attest:

CLAIRE MCCARRIHER ’21,
Executive Secretary of the Senate.