



Haverford College

Office of the President

June 13, 2021

Friends,

I am pleased to accept all five of the resolutions passed by students at Plenary this spring. I accept them all without stipulation for changes while also including a comment on Resolution 3: Social Code Amendments (below).

I am grateful to the student body for engaging with seriousness of purpose and generosity of spirit throughout the plenary process as it was modified for our pandemic-disrupted academic year. In particular I would like to thank the resolutions' presenters, as well as Students' Council leadership, for wise, creative, and community-minded work.

Resolution 1: Election reform

I accept this resolution.

Resolution 2: Definition of the role of Community Outreach Multicultural Liaisons

I accept this resolution. I applaud the clarity and improvement that this resolution provides to the multiple layers of confrontation engagement offered by Community Outreach Multicultural Liaisons (COMLs).

Resolution 3: Social Code amendments

I accept this resolution, with the following comment:

This resolution intends to assist the Haverford student body in becoming a community that more often, more widely, and more fully experiences our shared aspirational values of trust, concern, and respect when matters arise that lead students to engage in confrontation. This intent has guided Honor Code revisions across generations of Haverford students.

As revised, Section 3.06 of the Honor Codes describes confrontation in this way:

Confrontation, in the Haverford sense, refers to initiating a dialogue with a community member about a potential violation of the Honor Code with the goal of

reaching a common understanding. It should be understood that achieving a common understanding does not necessarily mean reaching agreement.

Resolutions 2 and 3 combine to increase the likelihood of “reaching a common understanding” and building trust, concern, and respect during student social confrontations by adding and/or clarifying layers of student engagement in confrontation (i.e. mediated by Community Outreach Multicultural Liaisons (COMLs) or trusted student advocates). I applaud these clarifications to mechanisms that seek to increase students’ capacities to find common understandings *without* seeking Honor Council’s involvement. I also greatly appreciate the explanations of trust, concern, and respect offered by Resolution 3.

College campuses have long struggled with the tension between the open exchange of ideas and boundaries relating to harmful speech, across the myriad ways that such speech might be understood. Haverford is no exception.

There is no universally correct approach to balancing freedom of speech with protection from its effect on others. More speech is not always the answer, nor can we protect individuals from hurtful speech in all cases. We are a community; while we are tightly-knit in many ways, that does not preclude our differing ideas, perspectives, and experiences. We will have disagreement and conflict, and we must not shrink from it, for within conflict lie powerful learning opportunities. In this spirit, we as learners are called to follow principles of free inquiry, listening, and discourse. I know that engaging in conflict can be challenging in a small community, where our interactions cross multiple, complex dimensions. And yet engaging in conflict rather than suppressing it is essential to our community’s health.

The fundamental purpose of the Honor Code is to foster community processes that promote dialogue in the face of conflict. I appreciate the goals that the presenters of this amendment had in mind in addressing the injuries caused by harmful speech. While a shared set of student goals around expression could be written in any number of ways, and any particular articulation can be critiqued because of our community’s diversity of perspectives, I support this amendment’s thoughtful and earnest efforts to articulate the complexities of these matters within the clear intent of opening up rather than stifling dialog across difference.

More importantly, I support—and I urge us to seek as a diverse community—the inclusive dialogue and exchange of views that can happen when we encounter conflict and confrontation with open hearts and minds. I see in this amendment the premise that students will engage in dialogue across difference with honesty, reflection, regard for one

another, and empathy. This is not always easy when conflict centers on strongly held views, whether personal, social, religious, political, or otherwise.

It is a college president's responsibility to ensure that normative expectations do not chill the thoughtful expression of ideas or beliefs. A reasonable person might see language in this amendment that causes them to worry about whether they are free to share their views, whether a political affiliation, a stance on public policy, or a religious value at odds with others'. A learning community cannot function when individuals are fearful about sharing earnestly held beliefs or asking earnest questions, nor can we be a truly inclusive community. I ask all students to reflect on what role you can play in making Haverford a place where we are not afraid to disagree. How can you make space in your own actions, and through your living out of the Honor Code, to ensure that others may give voice to uncomfortable, opposing, or controversial views? For my part, I pledge to listen and to seek to hear what my fellow community members might wish to share, even when doing so is hard for me. And should I as president be called to review any resolutions from an Honor Council trial, I will be guided by the principles of empathetic listening, hearing, and reflecting in the context of building an inclusive community that aspires to live by the values of trust, concern, and respect.

Resolution 4: Academic Code amendments

I accept this resolution.

Resolution 5: Honor Council Academic Trial Restructuring

I accept this resolution.

Sincerely,



Wendy E. Raymond
President