



Campus Conversation Report: **Resources for Continued Engagement on** ***The Honor Code***

On March 27th, 2025, the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative hosted a Campus Conversation where faculty, staff, and students discussed the culture of academic integrity and the honor code at Davidson. The forum's purpose was for the Davidson community to have a meaningful discussion about the role of academic integrity on campus.

To begin the forum, the Honor Council provided an update and presentation on Davidson's honor code. After the presentation, the participants broke into roundtable discussions where they deliberated about what academic integrity is, what a culture that embodies academic integrity looks like, and possible actions to take to improve this culture at Davidson.

Participant Comments and Recommendations

During the deliberations, DCI facilitators wrote down participants' thoughts and recommendations about the Honor Code on large pieces of paper at the center of deliberation tables. While certainly not comprehensive, many suggestions and ideas for implementation were noted through this process. Here are some key points from the roundtable deliberations listed below (some points were revised for clarity).

GENERAL COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Importance of Academic Integrity

- The Honor Code is a fundamental aspect of Davidson.
- The Honor Code should be a community consideration.
 - The Davidson community as a whole should take the Honor Code with great care and value.
- Policies vs. Values
 - The policies regarding the honor code should reflect the values that we want to hold at Davidson.

Statements about the Current Culture at Davidson

- ChatGPT and AI is the biggest threat to fostering trust and good learning
 - The use of ChatGPT and AI has made cheating more accessible and rampant.
- Difficulties in emphasizing the importance of Honor Code.

- It is hard to stress the importance in upholding the honor code when people do not care or value its virtues.
- Individual resolution by faculty members without involving the Honor Council was once controversial and not seen as a viable solution among faculty, but that seems to no longer be the case.
- Without self-reflection and accountability, it is hard to let a student go without punishment.
- There are social repercussions for reporting faculty and students.
- Professors are hesitant to consult the Honor Council because of time, effort, unpleasantness, and fear of vilification.
- Some students have not had the resources to learn how to navigate school and by extension, Honor Code issues by themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Deepening Commitment to the Honor Code

- The written Honor Code should be evaluated each year at Davidson to improve and keep up to date.
- The Honor Code should be emphasized and marketed better.
- Students' commitment to the Honor Code should be renewed when a major is declared.
- Make the signing of the Honor Code more of a community-wide celebration.
 - Students from upperclassmen to underclassmen should attend the Honor Code signing celebration.
- Emphasize the real-world implications of academic integrity.
- Require students to include a Mandatory Pledge on all assignments.

Adapting Honor Code Implementation to Specific Contexts

- Enable a variety of Honor Code outcomes to respond to individual situations.
- Apply the Honor Code on a department-by-department basis.

Linking the Honor Code and the Admissions Process

- Bring back the admissions essay/statement about the Honor Code.
- Need part of the admissions application to state the importance of the Honor Code at Davidson to make students aware.

Ideas for the Honor Council and Administrators

- Encourage engagement with the Honor Council.
- Clarify Honor Council processes.
- Honor Council should focus on individual and community consequences.
- Ensure clear communications throughout the review process of individual cases.
- Create an Honor Code portal where faculty and staff can see students honor code violations.
- Use the harshest sentence more often.

- The harshest sentence is rarely handed out other than in serious cases and should be used more frequently.
- Punishment should not be black and white.
- Implement a possible strike system.
 - Levels of punishment are important; the “strike system” is a way to ramp up consequences.
- Provide regular and detailed updates on the number, types, and outcomes of cases each semester to the campus community.
- Lower the burden for faculty when they report.

Ideas for Faculty

- Oral examinations and face-to-face interactions help build trust and make it much harder to cheat.
- Publish violations and consequences to encourage more faculty faith in the Honor Code.
- The faculty send reports to be assessed by the honor council on whether the case goes to court or is resolved mutually.
- Faculty should have ONE system to respond to cheating in order to curb feelings of unfairness
- More learning happens when faculty feel less pressure to “police” students.

Ideas for Students

- Students should consider the Honor Code in relation to other students, rather than only professors

Pathways for Moving Forward

Like the DCI’s Pathways Guides, this report also includes ideas for moving forward. One of the key deliberative dispositions that the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI) has identified is an “action orientation.” While dialogue and deliberation are themselves important contributors to a healthy democracy, they become even more valuable when they lead to shared agreement on key issues and an intentional commitment to take either individual or collective action on them.

Such action can come in a range of forms and should be broadly understood. It might involve issuing a set of recommendations or deciding to support a particular policy. It might also manifest as developing a better understanding of a topic, connecting with relevant local or national organizations, participating in continued discussions, or generating new approaches to engaging with the issue.

To support such an orientation, the DCI shares a series of “action pathways” for participants to consider after each event or activity it sponsors. Please see the pathways below related to the topic of **academic integrity at Davidson College**. These pathways may be related to the suggestions made by participants above but come from the research conducted by the event’s

planning team. Engaging in these activities is voluntary – participants are free to choose any of the pathways, or none. But we encourage you to at least consider them as options that can build on the conversation you just had with your fellow deliberative citizens.

GET INFORMED

- Learn about [The Honor Code at Davidson](#).
- Explore [the history of Honor Codes](#) in a paper published in the *Journal of Character and Leadership Development*.
- Examine the last [three decades of research about the effects of honor codes](#) on creating and maintaining cultures of academic integrity in this article published in the *Journal of College and Character*.
- Read this book on [Building Honor in Academics: Case Studies in Academic Integrity](#) by Valerie Denney and Camilla Roberts.
- Learn about the [convening of colleges and universities](#) that have honor codes hosted by Davidson College in the Fall of 2024.
- Watch a recording of a [panel of Davidson alumni and students](#) discuss the meaning and importance of the honor code, both historically and today.

GET CONNECTED AND GET INVOLVED

- Consider the recommendations provided by the forum participants outlined above.
- Report violations when you see them.
- Use the reporting process set up by the Honor Council.
- Begin conversing with fellow faculty, staff, and students about the importance of academic integrity.
- Join the Honor Council.
- Ask questions about academic integrity issues when you are uncertain.
- Organize more conversations about how we can improve the culture of academic integrity at Davidson.
- Think through “what if” scenarios so you are prepared to respond responsibly when you encounter them in real life.
- Organize and host skits that act out these scenarios and deliberate about what is the right thing to do in each situation.

About This Guide

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The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative

The Deliberative Citizenship Initiative (DCI) is dedicated to the creation of opportunities for Davidson students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the wider community to productively engage with one another on difficult and contentious issues facing our community and society. The DCI regularly hosts facilitated deliberations on a wide range of topics and organizes training workshops for deliberation facilitators. To learn more about these opportunities, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org.

DCI Deliberation Guides

The DCI has launched this series of Deliberation Guides as a foundation for such conversations. They provide both important background information on the topics in question and a specific framework for engaging with these topics. The Guides are designed to be informative without being overwhelming and structured without being inflexible. They cover a range of topics and come in a variety of formats but share several common elements, including opportunities to commit to a shared set of Conversation Agreements, learn about diverse perspectives, and reflect together on the conversation and its yield. The DCI encourages conversations based on these guides to be moderated by a trained facilitator. After each conversation, the DCI also suggests that its associated Pathways Guide be distributed to the conversation's participants.

DCI Pathways Guides

For every Deliberation Guide, the DCI has also developed an associated Pathways Guide, which outlines opportunities for action that participants can consider that are related to the covered topic. These Pathways Guides reinforce the DCI's commitment to an action orientation, a key deliberative disposition. While dialogue and deliberation are themselves important contributors to a healthy democracy, they become even more valuable when they lead to individual or collective action on the key issues facing society. Such action can come in a range of forms and should be broadly understood. It might involve developing a better understanding of a topic, connecting with relevant local or national organizations, generating new approaches to an issue, or deciding to support a particular policy.

If you make use of this guide in a deliberation, please provide attribution to the Deliberative Citizenship Initiative and email dc@deliberativecitizenship.org to tell us about your event. To access more of our growing library of Deliberation Guides, Pathways Guides and other resources, visit www.deliberativecitizenship.org/readings-and-resources.