

**CONSTITUTION OF THE ST. MARY'S  
HONOR COUNCIL AND HONOR SYSTEM**

**ARTICLE I. Purpose of the Honor Council and System**

*Section 1.* The purpose of the St. Mary's Honor System is to create an atmosphere of honesty and integrity among the students and faculty members.

*Section 2.* The purpose of the Honor Council is to observe and maintain the Honor System.

**ARTICLE II. Creation, Preservation, and Termination of the Honor System and Council.**

*Section 1.* The Honor System has been created by the students' desire for an atmosphere of honesty at St. Mary's.

*Section 2.* The Honor System has been preserved by means of cooperation among students and their teachers.

*Section 3.* The Honor System may be terminated when the student body of the Upper School decides with a two-thirds majority vote to abolish the Honor System and Honor Council.

**ARTICLE III. Honor Council Officers, Their Election, and Their Duties**

*Section 1.* The officers of the Honor Council shall be a President and a Secretary.

*Section 2.* The presidential nominees shall nominate themselves and be elected by students in grades nine through twelve before the time of the Student Council elections in the spring of each year. The three nominees shall be members of the junior class at the time of the elections. The President's term will begin upon induction into the office and will terminate the following year on the date of the induction of the new President.

*Section 3.* The Secretary shall be a rising junior at the time of appointment. She shall be appointed by the President at the first meeting and shall serve as secretary until a new secretary is appointed the following year.

*Section 4.* The President shall preside over all meetings and shall carry out all decisions made by the Honor Council. The President shall decide all questions of procedure and interpretation of this constitution unless otherwise overruled by a two-thirds majority vote of the Honor Council Representatives. The President shall also be responsible for contacting the student or teacher who notified the Honor Council of a possible offense, thanking her for supporting the Honor System, but not revealing the verdict.

*Section 5.* The Secretary shall keep and record minutes of all meetings in a designated Honor Council notebook and shall see that this notebook is kept in the Office of the Upper School Head unless in use by the President or faculty advisor.

*Section 6.* The Executive Council is composed of the President and all senior and junior representatives.

Section 7. The Honor Council shall be consulted by a faculty advisor and assistant advisor appointed by the Upper School Head.

#### **ARTICLE IV. Honor Council Representatives, Their Election, and Their Duties**

*Section 1.* Representatives shall be nominated by grades nine through eleven in the spring of each year. After self-nominations and voting, the Honor Council President shall approve two girls from the rising sophomore class, three from the rising junior class, and four from the rising senior class as representatives. Representatives shall serve from the fall semester to the close of the academic year. Two ninth grade representatives shall be self-nominated and elected the first month of the fall semester.

*Section 2.* If a vacancy or an extreme prolonged absence of an officer on the Honor Council should occur at any time, a replacing representative shall be chosen immediately by the Honor Council members and sponsors.

*Section 3.* It shall be the duty and the responsibility of each Honor Council representative to report to the President anyone suspected of committing an infraction of the Honor Code.

#### **ARTICLE V. Meetings**

*Section 1.* The Honor Council shall have at least two meetings each semester. At least one representative from each grade must be present before a meeting can progress.

*Section 2.* All Honor Council meetings, whatever the purpose, shall take precedence over all meetings or assemblies. All representatives are required to be present unless otherwise notified or excused by the President.

*Section 3.* The Honor Council shall make sure that each student brought before the Honor Council is dealt with fairly. The student in question shall be presumed innocent unless proven guilty by the greater weight of the evidence. Decisions are determined by a unanimous consensus in which every member of the Honor Council agrees to support the verdict and the consequence. In the event that after five rounds of voting, a unanimous consensus has not been reached the verdict will be the lesser finding.

*Section 4.* Whatever the decision made by the Honor Council, minutes of all investigative meetings shall be kept and recorded in the Honor Council notebook.

*Section 5.* Both the accused and any members of the Honor Council present at the meeting shall be bound to secrecy by oath. The President may, under special circumstances, discuss the case with a faculty member. The President may also discuss the case with the appropriate administrator.

#### **ARTICLE VI. Infractions of the Honor Code**

*Section 1.* Infractions of the St. Mary's Honor Code shall include any form of stealing, lying, plagiarizing, cheating, receiving help on a test or divulging information concerning tests to those who have not yet taken the test, and failing to report any infraction of the Honor Code.

*Section 2.* Any student who is suspected of committing one of these infractions shall be called upon by the

Honor Council President to account for her actions.

#### **ARTICLE VII. Reporting Infractions of the Honor Code**

*Section 1.* It is the intention of the Honor Code that the first responsibility of reporting a violation lies with the student who has committed the offense.

*Section 2.* Any student, faculty or staff member, having information concerning any infraction of the Honor Code shall report her findings to the President or a representative. In order to have sufficient and legitimate evidence the President must be able to talk personally to the witness, who shall be otherwise anonymous to the accused and to the Council.

*Section 3.* Information concerning violations of the Honor Code shall be treated as confidential by all persons involved. Care shall be taken to maintain the anonymity of both the witness and the accused to the extent possible.

#### **ARTICLE VIII. Procedures for Handling a First Report**

*Section 1.* The Honor Council President shall discuss the report with the Honor Council faculty advisor or assistant faculty advisor to determine if there is sufficient evidence to warrant an investigation.

*Section 2.* The Honor Council President shall meet with the student in the presence of an adult advisor and explain the charge to her. If the reported charge is of a serious nature, the Honor Council President or the Advisor shall at the President's discretion inform the Upper School Head who may sit in on this conference as an observer. The President shall explain the following options to the student:

- A.** If the student admits the charge, a hearing shall be scheduled to determine the consequence. The Honor Council President shall report the findings of the Honor Council to the student following approval by the Upper School Head. The student will then sign the charge acknowledging the offense.
- B.** If the student denies the charge, a hearing shall be scheduled with the Honor Council. The Honor Council President shall report the findings of the Honor Council to the student following approval by the Upper School Head. The student will then sign the charge acknowledging the offense.

*Section 3.* If a student is found not guilty, a subsequent report of an Honor Council offense will be handled according to above procedures.

#### **ARTICLE IX. Procedures for Handling a Report After the First Offense**

*Section 1.* The President shall discuss the report with the Honor Council faculty advisor or assistant faculty advisor to determine if there is sufficient evidence to warrant an investigation and will follow the procedure as for first offense.

*Section 2.* Subsequent offenses are considered very serious and shall have a more serious consequence. If a student has two guilty findings within twelve months, the Honor Council President will consult the Upper School Head about suspension. A third offense is extremely serious and places a student in jeopardy of being expelled from school.

## **ARTICLE X. Consequence for Infraction of the Honor Code**

*Section 1.* Some cases brought to the Honor Council require education in the Honor Code but are not deemed offenses. These receive no penalty and are not considered violations. They are called “negligence.” Negligence is defined as an observable action which arouses suspicion in the eyes of the Honor Council and in which no infraction appears to have occurred.

*Section 2.* Parents will be notified after a determination of negligence or guilt.

*Section 3.* The President of the Honor Council shall inform the student of the penalty for any offense in the presence of sponsor or administrator after it has been approved by the Upper School Head. Consequences may vary depending on the seriousness of the offense.

*Section 4.* Any member of the Honor Council found guilty of an infraction of the Honor Code, will be removed from the Honor Council immediately.

*Section 5.* A student holding a leadership position may be removed from office or prevented from holding office the following year if she is found guilty of an infraction of the Honor Code during her term.

*Section 6.* If a student is found guilty of an offense, but still denies the charge, she may appeal the decision on the following grounds: new evidence or failure of the Honor Council to follow proper procedures. In either case, a new hearing shall be scheduled with her choice of either the Executive Council or the full Honor Council in which the student must come before this selected Council and state her case. The student may select any faculty or staff member to assist her at the hearing. A new decision by the selected Council will then be decided and reviewed by the Assistant Head or Head of School.

## **ARTICLE XI. Honor Council Records**

*Section 1.* Honor Council records shall be kept separate from academic records in a confidential file. Only the Honor Council President, faculty advisor, assistant faculty advisor, Upper School Head, Assistant Head of School, or the Head of School may use this file.

*Section 2.* Honor Council records for each girl shall be destroyed upon her graduation from high school.

## **ARTICLE XII. Amendments**

*Section 1.* The Constitution of the St. Mary’s Honor Council may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Honor Council.

### **AMENDMENT I**

Because it is important for students to encounter an author first-hand through his writing rather than merely second-hand through what teachers, scholars, classmates, or reading guides say about him and his works, St. Mary’s has a policy governing reading assignments. The use of and resulting dependence upon crutches such as the ones listed below retard the development of reading comprehension and can become a habit-forming avoidance of reading for oneself.

Therefore, the following are prohibited by the Honor Code:

1. *Cliffs Notes, Monarch Notes, Spark Notes, Shmoop, or any similar guides*
2. The use of movies, videos, tapes, and the like prior to or as a substitute for a complete reading of the book
3. Dependence upon fellow students for summary or interpretation

It is the student's responsibility to secure from her teacher answers to any questions in applying this policy.

#### **AMENDMENT II**

The President of the Honor Council in consultation with the Upper School Head and the Middle School Head may appoint a member of the Honor Council to serve as a liaison with the Middle School Honor Council.

#### **AMENDMENT III**

If a student is found guilty of an offense, after an appeal, she may make a final appeal to the Head of School whose decision shall be considered final.

#### **AMENDMENT IV**

Meetings after the elections shall include both members serving the current year and those elected for the following year in order for past members to share their experiences and create continuity.