

The Honor System

The primary purpose of Davidson College is to assist students in developing humane instincts and disciplined and creative minds for lives of leadership and service. In implementing its purpose, Davidson has chosen to be a liberal arts college, to maintain itself as a residential community of scholars, to emphasize the teaching responsibility of all professors, and to ensure the opportunity for personal relationships between students and teachers.

The Honor System that governs Davidson's social and academic life demands commitment to the highest personal and community values. The essence of the system is set forth in the Honor Code, with the Code of Responsibility broadening those tenets to encompass all aspects of life within the College. Far from being mere pen-and-ink statements, the Codes are a declaration by the entire College community — students, faculty, staff, and alumni — that the honorable course is the most just, and therefore the best. By forming a basis for campus life, the Honor System engenders an atmosphere of openness and mutual trust that is all too rare in higher education today.

Applications of the System

The Honor System brings a special freedom to campus life. Every student on campus has agreed in writing to abide by the Honor Code and the system of discipline it requires. Tests and examinations are not proctored, and professors readily assign take-home tests. Final examinations are self-scheduled, so that students may prepare for and take them in their preferred sequence and at their preferred hours. The library operates with open stacks, allowing students to wander freely and use quiet nooks and crannies for study and research. In short, the system allows students, faculty, and staff to have mutual confidence in each other's words and actions. This atmosphere is self-perpetuating and enables students to live and learn together more easily.

From time to time there are violations of the community trust. Infractions are taken quite seriously and receive stern and prompt judgment

from the Honor Council, a body of thirty students elected by their classmates to sit on six-member panels to hear and rule on alleged offenses. Great care is taken to give the accused a full and impartial hearing, and all convictions may be appealed to the faculty-student Review Board.

We at Davidson place a high value on the Honor System, for it ensures academic integrity on our campus and provides an open environment in which we live and study. We hope that you, as a prospective member of the College, will give thoughtful consideration to the information in this brochure as you reflect on Davidson.

The Honor Code is stated simply:

Each Davidson student is honor bound to refrain from stealing, lying about College business, and cheating on academic work... Cheating includes plagiarism... Each Davidson student is honor bound to report immediately all violations of the Honor Code of which the student has first-hand knowledge; failure to do so shall be a violation of the Honor Code.

The Code of Responsibility:

As stated in the preamble to the Code of Responsibility, "The Code is based upon the belief that Davidson's educational purpose can best be advanced in a context which emphasizes the responsible use of freedom, as opposed to license. The aim of this code is to encourage individuals to develop responsible judgement capable of directing their conduct with a minimum of specific prohibitions."

The Code goes on to discuss general expectations in thirteen areas, including student integrity, social behavior, and residence hall life. Disciplinary rights and powers are then set out in detail so that students are aware fully of the consequences of a breach of understanding.

2006–2007 Honor Council Leadership
Bryant Kirkland, Chair
Elizabeth Ireland, Vice Chair