

The Hinman College Judicial Board

At approximately the same time that the rest of the campus was storming the Couper Administration building demanding self-regulation and open houses, Hinman College was experimenting with another area of social regulation. Hinman College instituted its own judicial board to discipline students breaking the code of conduct. In April of 1968, Faculty Master Pete Gruber sent a memo to the councils of Cleveland, Hughes and Lehman Halls alerting them that the Executive Planning Board (EPB) of Hinman College had approved the judicial structure proposed for implementation in Hinman. It would go into effect as soon as 2/3 of the hall councils approved of the judicial structure and when the Masters' Council also approved it. On May 26 of that year, 2/3 of the hall councils approved of the structure and it went into effect.¹

The Hinman College Judicial Board consisted of five students elected from each building. Three faculty members would also sit on the board, as would one member of the Harpur College Administration to act as a "friend of the court."² Quorum would be reached with six members present at the meetings. Students who sat on the board had to have at least sophomore standing and had to have lived in Hinman for at least two semesters at the time of their election. The Chief Justice of the board would be selected from among the students. Ideally, this person had to have previous judicial experience and their term would run two semesters or a full academic year. Their responsibilities would include chairing the meetings and issuing decisions. Elections would take place two weeks into the fall semester and the term of office would be a full academic year. The Faculty Master would choose which faculty would sit on the board with the consent of the buildings. Their term would consist of one academic year.³

Interestingly, the jurisdiction of the board would be rather broad in scope. The board would consider infringements resulting from the violation of the rules and regulations of Hinman College authorities, violations of the Harpur College handbook arising in Hinman College but not in a specific hall, violations by residents of Hinman in a Hinman hall other than their own, and other violations falling under the category 4b described in greater detail later.⁴ A very big point in the university judicial system to this very day is that they are not legal systems subject to laws interpreted by lawyers.

The document also states that each individual hall should have its own judicial board to deal with violations arising out of infringements of the rules and regulations of the Harpur College Handbook, violations of curfew and key regulations, and other rules and regulations established by the hall council. Halls could only hear cases where both parties lived within the building and when the violation took place within their building. Section 4b of the document stated that reserved the right to determine jurisdiction when a party questioned the legality of the jurisdiction or if the Master questioned the jurisdiction. Only the Hinman Judicial Board could expel a student from Hinman. The individual halls could expel a resident only from their building, and that resident could potentially stay in Hinman. Noting the power of the Faculty Master of the time, section 5 states clearly, "All judicial decisions, except those involving minor infractions of hall rules, will take the form of recommendations to be carried out by the Master of Hinman College."⁵ This final clause stated clearly that while the Hinman Judicial Board held a great deal of power, the final say in all disciplinary hearings fell to the Master.

On February 16, 1970, the Master and staff of Hinman College prepared a document entitled *Brief Overview of Hinman College Development: September 1967-February 1970*. This document outlined many areas of Hinman development in those early years and it paid

particular attention to the judicial board. It stated that most forms of discipline were carried out either by peer pressure from the individual's floor mates or by interdiction by either the resident counselor and/or the Head Resident. If none of these avenues worked, formal sanctions would be passed down by the Hinman administrative staff, which in turn could be appealed to the judicial board. The document itself states the unclear environment that the board functioned in:

Although all procedures of the Hinman College Judicial Board are not set down or standardized, nor are the regulations and sanctions related to them carefully codified, the essentials of due process are carefully followed. Up to the present, no case tried by the Hinman Judicial Board has been appealed either by a defendant or a plaintiff. Moreover, the one case of administrative sanction appealed to the Board was upheld by the Board. The Hinman Judicial Boards have won the respect of both staff and students in the college.⁶

It appears that the Hinman Judicial Boards were functioning well despite the legal and technical kinks that still needed to be worked out. Sadly, the judicial boards at the hall level and the Hinman area-wide level would not last. Although the exact evolution of the process is unknown, at some point in time an effort to centralize all judicial violations and to make the judicial process the same for every student on campus came into effect and the individual hall judicial boards and the Hinman Judicial Board were disbanded. Still, this early form of disciplining university students would take shape again, not on the level of the residential college, but in the campus-wide judicial board which to this very day disciplines students violating policy.

¹ C.P. Gruber, "Judicial System for Hinman College," memorandum to Cleveland, Hughes and Lehman Hall Councils, April 8, 1968, Appendix #3 of *Brief Overview of Hinman College Development*, Hinman Archives.

² "Report of the Judicial Commission of Hinman College of Harpur College, April 8, 1968, Appendix #3 of *Brief Overview of Hinman College Development*, Hinman Archives.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.