



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
WEST POINT, NEW YORK 10996-5000

December 30, 2020

Members of the Long Gray Line,

Last Spring, while in remote learning environments away from the United States Military Academy, 73 Cadets were accused of violating the Cadet Honor Code by cheating on a calculus final. Of these 73 Cadets, 72 are from the class of '23 and one is from the class of '22. All but one of these young men and women were in the tenth month of their 47-month leader development journey.

These Cadets chose the easier wrong over the harder right.

As the Superintendent, I own this cheating incident. Furthermore, I and every leader at West Point own their role in developing leaders of character.

The standards established by the Cadet Honor Code have not changed and the Honor System receives my personal investment of time and attention. West Point takes every Honor Code violation seriously.

The incident involves a cross-section of Cadets from the Corps. They represent multiple companies. Some are athletes and some are Preparatory School Graduates. They include Division I Athletes from nine different teams and athletes from three different club squad teams. This incident is not isolated within one club, team, company, or regiment.

The strength, power and uniqueness of the West Point Leader Development Model is that while here on these hallowed grounds, we place our young men and women in the toughest, most demanding academic, military, physical, and character programs that shape, forge, and mold these young men and women into officers over time. The professors, both civilian and military, the staff, the Tactical Officers and Noncommissioned Officers, and our coaches are all mission essential role models that drive how we develop leaders of character.

The global pandemic disrupted our developmental process. In an instant, our tried and tested leadership model was interrupted and for a short time the Corps was dispersed to 4400 locations around the world. In this environment our Cadets were void of those critical developmental engagements in the barracks, in the classrooms, and on the athletic fields that help them understand themselves and increase their commitment to the West Point and Army values. Our plebes are the most vulnerable to the effects of losing the inspiration and accountability of an in person cohesive team.

Even though the environment changed, there is still no excuse for the actions of these Cadets; their actions are antithetical to the same honor code upheld by generations of USMA graduates.

These Cadets were notified of the allegations in May, and not incepted into the Honor System until September because the Corps was away from the Academy grounds. The Class of 2021 Honor Committee returned to West Point in August to receive training and to begin processing other cases already incepted. The Honor Committee is handling every case in compliance with the established sequence that ensures due process for every accused Cadet. Barring unforeseen circumstances, we expect all cases related to this cheating incident to be complete by April 2021.

As many of you know, over time the Honor System has changed from an attritional model to a developmental model. Since the publication of the findings of the Borman Commission in 1976, Superintendents have used discretion regarding separation for an Honor violation.

In the Spring of 2016, the Academy developed the Willful Admission Process (WAP) to encourage Cadets to take responsibility for their actions and reduce the barriers to reporting honor violations. In addition to losing rank and privileges, all Cadets granted discretion are enrolled in the Special Leader Development Program for Honor (SLDP-H). SLDP-H requires completion of a rigorous program of personal reflection and growth that is roughly equivalent to a 2.0 credit course. They do so under the tutelage of an assigned developmental coach who volunteers about 50 hours of coaching. If Cadets do not demonstrate growth in SLDP-H, they will be separated from the Academy.

In January 2020, I directed that we establish the Character Integration and Advisory Group (CIAG). Its purpose is to elevate, develop, and integrate character education across all of our developmental programs. In October 2020, I directed the CIAG and the Superintendent's Honor Review Committee to conduct a bottom-up review of the cadet honor process and to assess the overall effectiveness of the Cadet Honor Code and the Honor System. The purpose is to ensure the Cadet Honor Code and Honor System are effectively and efficiently achieving the character development goals articulated in West Point's strategic documents.

Developing leaders of character has been, and remains, my top priority for the Academy. We remain committed to the outcomes of the West Point Leader Development System, which is to graduate commissioned officers who live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence.

Our West Point Honor Code has been and will always remain the very core of our institution.

Darryl A. Williams
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Superintendent