

Big Bad Judicial

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People seem to know me on campus, so I've heard all sorts of complaints about what goes on here—especially when it comes to the judicial process at Stetson.

Some say the rules are too harsh. Others say that the administrators passing judgment on students are being unfair and not paying any attention to the circumstances.

Well, there is hope.

The Student Conduct Board, also known as the Student Judicial Board, is a group of 15 students with the responsibility to act as jury and judge for students since 2003, as stated on the university's website.

Also as stated on the website, “the Student Conduct Board has the authority to hear cases involving alleged violations of the Code of Community Standards”(sic). But when you break down the rules outlined in that code and the history of how sentence has been passed down, an olive branch of fairness has turned on us.

That is in the worst-case scenario. I can picture, with the power the student body and the university has allowed this group, judgment and sanction without due process or adherence to evidence.

For example, what would the Student Conduct Board do when faced with the anonymous individual featured in this paper's Public Safety Testimonials who had the misfortune of being, unknowingly, in the presence of alcohol under the age of 21?

According to the publicly available guidelines, as the guidelines made available to members of this board are considered “confidential,” the board could pass sanctions on this person regardless of evidence (or lack thereof) of their knowing of the presence of alcohol or their consumption.

This scenario doesn't even take into account what happens if a student does not arrive to a hearing (they are found "responsible" automatically), whether or not the student knew about the hearing, how the student conduct board is given the right to adjudicate in the first place (by what seems to be whim), or what happens in a hearing.

This last is the most interesting. You are judged by five of the 15 members of the board plus the advisor. Of the few rights you retain when facing them, the right to represent yourself, the right to emotional support (someone there to hold your hand, rather than help represent you), and the right to dismiss members of the board if you feel uncomfortable with them in the room, my suggestion would be to use this last, especially if the people present cause discomfort or unease.

Me? I keep my nose more or less clean. But that doesn't stop me from fearing, ever slightly, that someone will accuse me of some preposterous foolishness and cause me to be sanctioned on supposition alone, as seems possible.

We live in a country with one of the fairest legal systems in the world. So fair in fact, that a court would rather let 10 guilty people go free than sentence an innocent one.

Why can't this university adopt the same policy?