

MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS: CONSIDERING UC VALUES, STANDARDS AND OTHER FACTORS

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What is ethics?

- ◉ applied or professional ethics
- ◉ "What is right or wrong to do in this particular situation?"¹
- ◉ "How do we determine appropriate and inappropriate behaviors?"¹

Ethics: Determining Right v. Wrong

- ◉ Rule Compliance Test
- ◉ "Gut Feeling" Test
- ◉ Role Model Test
- ◉ Exposure Test

Ethics:
Determining Right v. Wrong

- ◉ Rule Compliance Test
 - UC Standards of Conduct
 - Research integrity policies
 - Academic integrity policies
 - Sexual harassment policies

What other policies/codes/regulations do you have to follow?

Ethics:
Determining Right v. Wrong

- ◉ "Gut Feeling" Test
 - Do I sense that what I'm doing might be wrong?
 - Will I experience some shame over my action?
 - Am I hoping that nobody finds out?

Ethics:
Determining Right v. Wrong

- Role Model Test
 - What would the most ethical person I know say about this behavior?
 - What would the local ethics officer say about this behavior?
 - What would my clergy think?

Ethics:
Determining Right v. Wrong

- Exposure Test
 - Would I still do the behavior if...
 - my supervisor was standing there watching me?
 - my UC colleagues knew?
 - my non-UC colleagues knew?
 - it was published on the University website?
 - it was published on the front page of the city newspaper?

Determining Right vs. Wrong:
Case Studies

Why ethics?
(and not just compliance)

- Problems and challenges today are not black and white
- Complex ethical dilemmas created by:
 - Diverse work environments & global work tasks
 - Lead to conflicting interests, priorities and values
 - Multiple policies and codes
 - Cause confusion and rule overload

For example....

- UC researchers collaborating with Chinese researchers fail to follow human subjects protocols when conducting research in China
- Staff member keeps silent on workplace bullying because the UC ethical value of "excellence" privileges the department's award-winning productivity
- Students help each other cheat because they value loyalty to each other over truthfulness to the institution

Ethics:
Determining Rights v. Rights

- Ethics is not a state of being - it is an action
- It is not only an action to determine right versus wrong
- But right versus right
- Sometimes the "wrong" is difficult to discern and "rights" conflict
- So individuals need to make decisions

Ethics:
Determining Rights v. Rights²

- ◉ Deontological
 - What do the rules, norms or maxims say I should do?
 - But what if they are not aligned?
- ◉ Utilitarianism
 - What are the effects or consequences of my decision?
 - But what if they conflict?
- ◉ Virtues
 - What actions would be aligned with my values or valued virtues?
 - But what if my values conflict with the values of my profession or my community?

**Ethical Decision-Making:
Case Study**

**Ethical Decision-Making Model^{2, 3, & 4}:
Step 1**

Determine if the situation being faced has an ethical dimension to it.

- ◉ Right vs Wrong Tests
- ◉ Right vs. Right Tests

Ethical Decision-Making Model: Step 2

Consider all of the possible alternatives for resolving this situation.

- Brainstorm
- Consult with as many as you can

Ethical Decision-Making Model: Step 3

Determine which, of the above choices for action, may be possible "right" choices based on:

- **values** that might be undermined or upheld
- **consequences** (positive and negative) that might result and who they might impact.
- **rules**, standards, codes of ethics, integrity policies, or other guidelines that might be violated or upheld

Ethical Decision-Making Model: Step 4

Discuss the possible "right" choices for action with those who may be affected by your decision.

- What do they think of the "right" action choices you have narrowed down to?
- Are there still other "right" choices they think you should consider?

Ethical Decision-Making Model: Step 5

Choose one "right" course of action

- In general, the "right" action should be something that results in **more good than harm, upholds fundamental values and is in accordance with established and agreed upon standards.**

Ethical Decision-Making Model: Step 6

Consider obstacles to choosing the "right" action

- What frustrations, challenges, or obstacles might you experience in choosing the "right" action?
- consider if there are any ways to mitigate the consequences (for yourself or others)

Ethical Decision-Making Model: Step 7

Enhance your motivation for acting ethically

- consider what reasons/motivations you have for choosing the right action despite the frustrations, challenges, or obstacles
- be prepared to accept the consequences (good and bad) with the choice

Summary

- Making ethical decisions is a learned and practiced behavior
- Educational institutions should teach the practice
- A simple model is a more robust approach than any single criteria

Bibliography

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