

## 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?"<sup>1</sup>
- ◉ "How do we determine appropriate and inappropriate behaviors?"<sup>1</sup>

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### Ethics: Determining Right v. Wrong

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

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Ethics:  
Determining Right v. Wrong

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

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

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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?

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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?

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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?

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Determining Right vs. Wrong:  
Case Studies

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**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

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**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

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**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

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**Ethics:**  
**Determining Rights v. Rights<sup>2</sup>**

- ◉ 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?

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**Ethical Decision-Making:  
Case Study**

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**Ethical Decision-Making Model<sup>2, 3, & 4</sup>:  
Step 1**

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

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

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Ethical Decision-Making Model:  
Step 2

Consider all of the possible alternatives for resolving this situation.

- Brainstorm
- Consult with as many as you can

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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

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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?

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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.**

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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)

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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

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## 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

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4. Rest, J. R. (1986). *Moral development: Advances in research and theory*. New York: Praeger.

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