

Ethics case study activity

Used in Career Development course, graduate level, Fall 2010

Purpose/Learning Objectives

To utilize student's critical thinking skills and knowledge of the ethics code by exploring ethical "grey areas." Specifically, to:

1. Deepen student's understanding of the ethics code
2. Utilize student's critical thinking skills
3. Practice ethical decision making
4. Apply their ethical knowledge
5. Collaborate with other classmates in ethical decision making

Students were divided into four groups (by counting off), and each group was assigned a case study, along with discussion questions to answer. After 15-20 minutes, each group presented its case, along with its answers to the discussion questions. We then discussed as a class.

Handout:

Case 1: More Than a Typical Resume Critique: Joy is working on her master's degree in counseling and this is her first semester. She has accepted a graduate assistantship working in the campus library doing critiques for the university career center after completing a week-long training seminar. Just a few weeks into her new position, Joy sits down with Amy, for what starts out as a typical critique. Amy tells Joy that she has been unemployed for several months and she feels a lot of pressure because her bills are piling up. Amy then says: "I feel lost and alone; I sometimes just want to end it all." Joy has not discussed the limits of confidentiality with Amy.

What is the ethical dilemma?

What are the applicable sections in the NCSA Code of Ethics?

What is the best outcome?

Case 2: Technology's New Twists: Jill works as a career advisor in a community career center serving a variety of clients. For several years now, the center has been using a computerized program called *Exploring Career Options* (ECO). After meeting with an advisor, clients can use ECO to guide their job search, including using its assessment tools. The director of the center wants to make a link to ECO

available on the center's webpage, making it available at anytime to anyone. Jill is not so sure. Although Jill likes the idea of more access, she is concerned that without an advisor there to assist clients may become overwhelmed or frustrated.

What is the ethical dilemma?

What are the applicable sections in the NCD Code of Ethics?

What is the best outcome?

Case 3: Special Attention for the "Best and Brightest": Samir runs a career center in the engineering department of a major university. Samir has a small staff, so he often reaches out to other faculty for assistance. Samir also facilitates an employer relations program for the college of engineering. A few employers have begun to ask what they will receive in return for their work with current students; specifically they would like a "short list" of the most promising. The dean really likes this idea of showcasing them in publications geared towards employers, and has asked Samir to choose the best 12 students from each class. Samir is uncomfortable with this because he thinks it is his job to promote the welfare of ALL students.

What is the ethical dilemma?

What are the applicable sections in the NCD Code of Ethics?

What is the best outcome?

Case 4: College Search Complications: Alex is a guidance counselor at a high school, and he is helping Raina decide what to do after she graduates. Raina has had a tough year, she has shared with Alex that her parents had just finalized a messy divorce about 6 months ago. Alex suggested Raina get support from the school counselor, but doesn't know what the outcome was. Raina recently set up a meeting with Alex to discuss her options, and wanted to have her mother there because Raina has been living with her and they have grown close in the past 6 months or so. Alex meets with Raina and her mother 3 times, and come up with a plan for which major Raina should choose and which universities she should visit. A few days later, Alex receives a phone call from Raina's father, who is very angry, demanding to know why he wasn't included on these meetings since he is the father and is going to be paying for all of this. He demands to know everything that went on in the meetings Alex had with Raina, and if Alex doesn't comply he threatens to sue.

What is the ethical dilemma?

What are the applicable sections in the NCD Code of Ethics?

What is the best outcome?

Case 5: Curious Clients in a Small Town: Carlos, who has many years of experience as a career counselor in major university career centers, has decided to move to a small town and open a private practice there. Because the town is small, often Carlos will get referrals, and finds himself often taking on clients who have pre-existing relationships with his other clients. But, since this is a small town, where else would they go? Carlos finds himself counseling both Rose and Barb, who are sisters. Rose

has seen her children grow up and is now considering a career change for herself. Barb is seeing Carlos to create a resume and brush up on interviewing skills. Yet, she continually asks about Rose and the decisions she is making, ie. "Rose isn't thinking about switching jobs, is she? Their finances are tight- I don't know what I would say to her husband- he needs that paycheck coming in. It seems her choices are unrealistic, have you noticed how she always makes poor decisions? What will you tell her to do?"

What is the ethical dilemma?

What are the applicable sections in the NCD Code of Ethics?

What is the best outcome?

References

Makela, J.P. (2009). *A Case Study Approach to Ethics in Career Development: Exploring Shades of Gray (National Career Development Association Monograph)*. Broken Arrow, OK: National Career Development Association.