



## *Ethical Decision Making in Academic Advising*

# Webinar Handout

### **Presenter:**

Joanne Damminger  
Dean of Student Affairs  
Salem Community College  
jdamminge@salemcc.edu

---

### **Overview**

NACADA Board of Directors Vice President Elect, **Joanne Damminger**, brings her highly acclaimed NACADA Summer Institute topical session to the AdvisorConnect venue to discuss general ethical principles that advisors and advising administrators will want to consider in providing appropriate assistance to all students and professional development for advisors. Advisor development related to ethical decisions is critical to effective advising practice, and advisors need to be skilled in resolving ethical dilemmas that arise when all principles of right action cannot be followed at the same time. NACADA's Core Values and the Council for the Advancement of Standards guidelines, which will be reviewed in the presentation, are helpful in resolving such dilemmas as they relate directly to general ethical principles. Joanne will also define and clarify language associated with ethical issues and dilemmas and share examples of dilemmas and their potential resolutions.

### **Pre-Webinar Activity Suggestions**

The presenter will refer to case studies #1 through #6. It may be beneficial to review them prior to the webinar, and if possible, discuss in a small group setting.

### **Post-Webcast Activity Suggestions**

1. Discuss case studies with colleagues. Decide the best resolutions based on the general and advising ethical guidelines that were explained in the webinar.
2. Create opportunities to discuss ethics in advising with the advising staff and administrators on your campus.
3. Plan professional development training for new advisors related to ethics in advising.
4. Discuss situations that have arisen on campus that were handled well, grounded in the guiding ethical principles and NACADA and CAS guidelines.
5. Commend colleagues for good decision making and ethical resolutions.

### **Suggested Questions for Post-Webinar Discussion**

1. What ethical dilemmas have arisen in your practice or within the department in which you work?
2. Who are the go-to people in your division to assist in the resolution of ethical questions and dilemmas?
3. What type of training does the institution provide for new part-time, full-time, and faculty advisors related to ethical decision-making and resources?

## CASE STUDIES

### 1. Case of Maria: "Developmental Math - Does it Count for Graduation?"

A new advisor unknowingly counted a developmental math class as fulfilling the only math requirement in a specific program of study. When Marie's graduation application was reviewed, she was told she did not have the college-level math required to graduate in her program. Marie could not graduate.

### 2. Case of Akeem: "Things Change"

Akeem, one of your advisees who is double majoring, contacts you with concern. He has completed all paperwork for both majors and expects to graduate at the end of the semester. His concern centers on waivers that were signed to allow course substitutions for degree requirements in his second major. A new department chair reviewed his records for graduation and wants to rescind some of the substitutions. The advisor for the second major is reluctant to disagree with the new department head. The student is very frustrated and does not know to whom to turn.

### 3. Case of Saura: "It is all in the Family"

Saura comes for advising and is disappointed that she did not get to see Mr. Jones for advising. Saura goes on to explain that she wanted to see Mr. Jones because students say that Mr. Jones, who is a relative of the Registrar, registers students before registration opens by calling his spouse. Students appreciate getting a seat in advance in the classes that fill the seats quickly.

### 4. Case of Antoinette and Anthony: "Everyone is Unique"

Antoinette is the sister of Anthony who saw a particular advisor regularly the previous year. Anthony stops by and remarks that Antoinette is just following what Anthony did for his courses and does not feel she needs advising. The advisor calls Antoinette and explains that she is an individual and equally important as Anthony. She too needs to come for advising and discuss her own situation.

### 5. Case of Hatef: "You Will Thank Me Later when you Need that Math"

An advisor fails to provide Hatef information that he could possibly waive a specific math class that he has been dreading and considers excessive because the advisor feels the math might be helpful to Hatef in the future. If you were aware of this situation, what would you do and why?

### 6. "Case of the Colleague"

During a new student orientation, your colleague advisor, is asked to provide an overview of the University's publications. You notice that the description of the purpose and information contained within one of the publications is not accurate. What do you do?

### 7. "Failing but not Communicating About It"

One of your advisees is not doing well in ENGLISH 101 class. The instructor reports that the student is not attending class regularly and does not hand in assignments when he does attend. You have spoken to the student and encouraged him to seek tutoring and other academic support. You happen to cross paths with his father who proceeds to thank you for "being there" for the student and tells you how pleased he is that the student reports going to class and doing well. You know that a FERPA waiver has been signed by the student allowing discussion of "education records" with the father. How do you proceed?

### 8. "Anecdotal Notes"

In your advising center where you serve as a full time advisor, there are 6 other advisors and students are seen on a first-come, first-served basis. In meeting with a student for your first time, you review the anecdotal notes from her previous advising session. The notes are very subjective and accuse previous advising sessions as providing incorrect and biased information to the student. It documents that the advisor completing the advising sheet has now "set the student straight." What will you say to the advisee? What will be your next steps regarding the colleague who completed the advising sheet?

*Developed by Joanne Damminger, 2012*

## References and Recommended Resources

Academic Advising Program CAS Standards and Guidelines.

Connect via the NACADA website at <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Standards.htm#CAS>

Frank, K. (2000). Ethical Considerations and Obligations. In Gordon, V., Habley, W. & Associates, *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*. (pp. 44-57). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gordon, V. N., Habley, W. R., Grites, T. J., & Associates. (Eds.). (2008). *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hughey, K. F., Burton Nelson, D., Damming, J. K., & McCalla-Wriggins, B. & Associates. (2009). *The Handbook of Career Advising*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Kidder, R. (1995) *How Good People Make Tough Choices*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Co.

Kidder, R (2005) *Moral Courage*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Co.

Lowenstein, M. (2008). Ethical Foundations of Academic Advising. In Gordon, V.N., Habley, W.R., Grites, T.J., & Associates (Eds.), *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). (pp. 36-49). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lowenstein, M. & Grites, T. (1993). Ethics in Academic Advising. *NACADA Journal*, 13(1), 53-61.

NACADA Clearinghouse: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Ethical-Decisions.htm>

NACADA Core Values. Available at: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Core-Values.htm>


Puroway, D. (2012, March). Three approaches to everyday dilemmas. *Academic Advising Today*, 35(1). Available at [http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/AAT/NW35\\_1.htm#8](http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/AAT/NW35_1.htm#8)

Rachels, J. & Rachels, S. (2006). *The elements of moral philosophy* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

*The Mentor: An Academic Advising Journal*. Available at: <http://www.psu.edu/dus/mentor/>

# Ethical Issues in Academic Advising

Thank you to Karen Boston, Remy Soto, Kathy Stockwell, and Marc Lowenstein who contributed in the past to the content in this presentation.



---

---

---

---

---

---


---

---

## Today's Topics

Participants will have an increased understanding of:

- Definitions related to Ethics
- Five Ethical Ideals
- Ethical Principles
- Resolving Ethical Dilemmas



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What is Ethics?

According to Webster, ethics is

- The study and philosophy of human conduct
- A basic principle of right action
- A system of moral principles or values
- The study of the general nature of morals and the specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others
- The rules or standards of conduct governing the members of a profession

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### What is Ethics?

Lowenstein defines ethics as:  
*“...the attempt  
to think critically  
about what is right and what is wrong,  
what is good and what is bad,  
in human conduct.”*

**Simply stated, “How should people act?”**

Lowenstein, 2008

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Definition of Ethical Terms

- **Legal**—rules based “rightness”
  - right and wrong determined by others
- **Moral**—right vs. wrong
  - how we live our lives
- **Values**—honor and morality
  - “rightness” (varies with individuals)
- **Ethics**—right vs. right
  - the theory about right and wrong

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### A Few Definitions

- Agency Law – **principal-agent relationships**; advisors are agents of their **institutions**
- Fiduciary Law – focuses on **relationship** to students
  - The person who is the fiduciary (advisor) owes duties of faith, trust, confidence, and candor to another (student)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Legal Implications**  
(not the focus of this presentation)

In the "Legal Implications" webinar in March, we learned that:

- Courts traditionally indicate the contractual relationship between the student and the college is evidenced in the institution's written documents, including catalogs, bulletins, brochures, and handbooks.
- Oral statements issued by an advisor will be deemed binding if the student demonstrates justifiable reliance on the statements and the representative issuing the state acutally or reasonably appears to have authority (Latourette, 2012)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Importance to Advisors...**

Advisors ask,  
*"What is the right thing  
and how do I know it?"*

**General Rule of Thumb...**

**Always maximize good  
and minimize harm!**

Lowenstein, 2008

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5 ETHICAL IDEALS  
(FUNDAMENTAL STATEMENTS)**

1. Beneficence
2. Non-Maleficence
3. Justice
4. Respect for Persons
5. Fidelity



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### #1 Beneficence

**Beneficence**—always bring about as much well-being as you can among all of the people who will be affected by your actions, both directly and indirectly and in both the short and long term.



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

#### 1. Case of Maria "Developmental Math - Does it Count for Graduation?"

A new advisor unknowingly counted a developmental math class as fulfilling the only math requirement in a specific program of study. When Marie's graduation application was reviewed, she was told she did not have the college-level math required to graduate in her program. Marie could not graduate.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### #2 Non-Maleficence

**Non-Maleficence**— always avoid or minimize the harm caused by your actions to all of the people who will be affected by them, both directly and indirectly and in both the short and long term.



Beneficence and non-maleficence take into consideration the consequences

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 2. Case of Akeem "Things Change"

Akeem, one of your advisees who is double majoring, contacts you with concern. He has completed all paperwork for both majors and expects to graduate at the end of the semester.

His concern centers on waivers that were signed to allow course substitutions for degree requirements in his second major. A new department chair reviewed his records for graduation and wants to rescind some of the substitutions. The advisor for the second major is reluctant to disagree with the new department head. The student is very frustrated and does not know to whom to turn.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### #3 Justice

**Justice**—treat all individuals fairly or equitably, granting no one any special rights or privileges that are not open to all.



“Equitably” does not have to mean “the same;” it just means that differences must not create inequalities and should have a defensible basis.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 3. Case of Saura "It is all in the Family"

Saura comes for advising and is disappointed that she did not get to see Mr. Jones for advising. Saura goes on to explain that she wanted to see Mr. Jones because students say that Mr. Jones, who is a relative of the Registrar, registers students before registration opens by calling his spouse. Students appreciate getting a seat in advance in the classes that fill the seats quickly.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### #4 Respect for Persons

**Respect for Persons**—treat individuals as ends in themselves, never solely as means to your own end. Treat them as rational, autonomous agents, not as things that can be manipulated.

- Always tell the truth
- Respect privacy (confidentiality)
- Support individual autonomy




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 4. Case of Antoinette and Anthony "Everyone is Unique"

Antoinette is the sister of Anthony who saw a particular advisor regularly the previous year. Anthony stops by and remarks that Antoinette is just following what Anthony did for his courses and does not feel she needs advising.

The advisor calls Antoinette and explains that she is an individual and equally important as Anthony. She too needs to come for advising and discuss her own situation.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### #5 Fidelity



**Fidelity**—live up to all the commitments you have made, whether explicitly or implicitly.

An explicit commitment is a stated promise, like a wedding vow, but what is an *implicit* commitment?

It is a commitment that is built into a role one has taken on even if one did not realize it.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5. Case of Hatef**  
**"You Will Thank Me Later when you Need that Math"**

An advisor fails to provide Hatef information that he could possibly waive a specific math class that he has been dreading and considers excessive because the advisor feels the math might be helpful to Hatef in the future.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**5 ETHICAL IDEALS**  
**(FUNDAMENTAL STATEMENTS)**

- 1. Beneficence
- 2. Non-Maleficence
- 3. Justice
- 4. Respect for Persons
- 5. Fidelity



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Ethical Principles**

**Specific to Academic Advising**

**What principles guide your work?**

- 1. Seek to enhance the student's learning whenever possible
- 2. Treat students equitably
- 3. Enhance student's ability to make autonomous decisions
- 4. Advocate for the student
- 5. Tell the truth (advisees and others)
- 6. Respect the confidentiality of communication with the student
- 7. Support the institution's educational philosophy and policies
- 8. Maintain the credibility of the advising program
- 9. Accord colleagues appropriate professional courtesy and respect

Lowenstein, 2008

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---

**According to** 

The CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards) guidelines for academic advising programs require that advisors:

- Ensure privacy and confidentiality
- Impart accurate information while complying with departmental and institutional policies and rules
- Adhere to highest principle of ethical behavior
- Consult standards of relevant professional organizations
- Uphold policy, procedures & values of dept. & institution
- Handle funds responsibly

Continued...

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

 (Cont.) 

- Abide by Human Subjects Research Policy
- Avoid personal conflict of interest
- Ensure fair and impartial treatment of all persons
- Perform within limits of training and refer when necessary
- Hold all staff members accountable
- Practice ethical behavior in use of technology

---

---

---


---

---

---

---

---



- Be knowledgeable about and responsive to laws and regulations that relate to advising
- Inform users or programs and services of legal obligations, limitations, institutional policies, and laws related to advising
- Be reasonably informed to limit liability
- Institution should provide access to legal advice
- Institution must inform about changes with respect to legal obligation or potential liability

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**According to NACADA Core Values**

NACADA Core Values challenge advisors to:

- Treat students and colleagues with respect
- Honor the concept of academic freedom
- Learn about and understand the institutional mission, culture, and expectations and interpret the institution's values, mission, and goals to the community
- Obtain education and training
- Be knowledgeable and sensitive to national, regional, local and institutional policies and procedures related to harassment, technology, personal relationships with students, privacy of student information and equal opportunities

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**NACADA Core Values (cont'd)**

- Be knowledgeable and sensitive to national, regional, local and institutional policies and procedures related to harassment, technology, personal relationships with students, privacy of student information and equal opportunities
- Respect student confidentiality rights regarding personal information and practice an understanding of institutional laws and policies such as FERPA.
- Seek access and use student information only when relevant to the advising process.
- Document advising adequately

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Ethical Pitfalls**

- Inconsistency
- Not treating students equitably
- Dishonesty/Not giving complete information to the student
- Making an inaccurate or ill-informed assumption
- Triangulation (or unwanted advocacy)
- Inappropriate role with student (power differential, sexual, etc.)
- Poor professional respect for colleagues or institution

*When in doubt, check it out! Listen to that inner voice!*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Ethical Dilemmas in Advising

- Boundaries and definition of roles
- Competency of self or colleagues
- Duty to warn
- Referrals
- Confidentiality
- Campus conflicts (values and actions of staff vs. the institution's values and policies)
- Personal values vs. appropriate professional response and/or values and expectations of students

**Consider the dilemmas on your campus!**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*So, when faced with an ethical dilemma, how should we begin?*

- Assess the situation and define the problem.
- Check the rules – are there currently some rules or procedures in place for this?
- What might a reasonable person think about this?
- Consult with colleagues and review the literature. Is your thinking rational?
- Be honest and immediate. If you don't know – refer!
- Remediate where appropriate.

*continued....*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*So, when faced with an ethical dilemma, how should we begin? (cont'd)*

- Consider all possible solutions.
- Consider consequences of various decisions.
- Document all situations, not just problematic ones.
- Continue to review your personal ethics and their fit for your environment.
- Act in a timely manner.
- Follow-up.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Case of the Colleague

During a new student orientation, your colleague advisor, is asked to provide an overview of the University's publications. You notice that the description of the purpose and information contained within one of the publications is not accurate.

What do you do?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Training Advisors for Ethical Decision-Making

Advisors should be encouraged to solve dilemmas by:

- Considering what is at the heart of the matter
- Applying relevant policies, rules, or laws
- Weighing guiding principles and values
- Determining what is ethical or unethical
- Follow legal guidelines



Paula Landon, 2007, NACADA Clearinghouse

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

General Guiding Strategy can be:

*When confronted with conflicting principles,  
do the best you can  
to follow all of them  
to the greatest extent possible.*

Lowenstein, 2008

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Ethical Decision-Making

For tougher decisions, advisors may find these three principles helpful:

- **The Rules of Private Gain**—if you are the only one personally gaining from the situation, is it at the expense of another? If so, you may benefit from questioning your ethics in advance of the decision.
- **If Everyone Does it**—who would be hurt? What would the world be like? These questions can help identify unethical behavior.
- **Benefits vs. Burden**—if benefits do result, do they outweigh the burden?

W. Hojnacki, 2004, Three Rules of Management

---

---

---

---

---

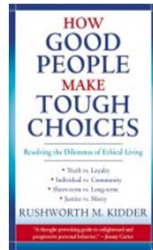
---

---

---

### Kidder’s Resolution Principles

- **Ends-Based Thinking**
  - The greatest good for the greatest number
- **Rule-Based Thinking**
  - Follow only the principles you want others to follow
- **Care-Based Thinking**
  - Do to others what we want others to do to us




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### JOHN S. WESLEY

DO ALL THE GOOD YOU CAN,  
 BY ALL THE MEANS YOU CAN,  
 IN ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN,  
 IN ALL THE PLACES YOU CAN,  
 AT ALL THE TIMES YOU CAN,  
 TO ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN,  
 AS LONG AS EVER YOU CAN.

\*\*\*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---