

# Ethical Principles and Practices in Student Conduct Administration



## ***Preamble***

*The Association for Student Conduct Administration (ASCA) is an organization of professional educators, many of whom hold responsibility for administering standards of student conduct within colleges and universities. Other members work in allied areas, such as training or technological support, but are bound by the same ethical principles as practitioners. The ethical administration of standards is the cornerstone of ASCA. Since the association's founding in 1987, ASCA has committed to ensuring principled conduct amongst its membership. The membership of ASCA believes that a primary purpose for the enforcement of standards of conduct is to maintain and strengthen the ethical climate and to promote the integrity of institutions of higher learning. Clearly articulated and consistently administered standards of conduct form the basis for behavioral expectations within an academic community. The enforcement of such standards should be accomplished in a manner that protects the rights, health, and safety of members of the campus community so that they may pursue their educational goals without undue interference. When professionals act in accordance with ethical principles, the quality of administration of the student conduct system is enhanced, and students are better served.*

*Acceptance of membership in ASCA signifies that the individual member agrees to adhere to the principles contained within this statement.*

## ***Use of This Statement***

*This statement of standards is to be used in assisting members in shaping their behavior and professional practice. While student conduct professionals are expected to exercise reflective judgement in the conduct of their own daily practice, they are ethically obligated to consider the impact of their own conduct as well as that of their peers. Should one member observe conduct by another member that may be contrary to these established principles, the member is obligated to bring the matter to the attention of the person allegedly committing the breach of ethics. If unethical conduct continues, the matter may be referred to the offender's institution for appropriate action. Members and officers of the Association are expected to be exemplars of these principles.*

## ***Ethical Principles and Practices***

In addition to their responsibility for fidelity to appropriate institutional policies and legal concerns, members of ASCA should be observant and attentive to their Institution's mission and goals, culture, and community values as they influence decisions and actions of professionals. Membership in ASCA also implies agreement with and adherence to the following ethical principles and practices, derived in part from the seminal work of

Kitchener, 1984. The accompanying principles are provided as standards of good practice. They are not intended to be all-inclusive.

Integrity is foundational to an intellectual community. Members should be conversant with ethical principles and be willing to accept responsibilities for their actions regardless of personal consequences. Members who act with integrity adhere to and are guided by the following principles.

### **Autonomy**

Responsibility for one's own behavior, freedom of choice, and decision making imply that the individual is at liberty to choose their own course of action. The principle of autonomy can be inferred to reflect a freedom to do what one chooses to do as long as such choices do not interfere with the similar freedom of others.

*In practice*, the principle of autonomy compels ASCA members to support both the mission and goals of the employing institution and the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the students within that institution.

- Members must make every effort to balance autonomy with the developmental and educational needs of students and the institutions' need to protect the safety and welfare of the campus community.
- Members having supervisory responsibilities shall clearly define job responsibilities and regularly evaluate performance in accordance with institutional policies for this principle.
- Members must maintain and enhance professional effectiveness by improving skills and acquiring new knowledge so that they may better understand and serve both their students and their institution.
- Members shall engage in professional opportunities and seek to become active members of their institutional communities and professional associations and/or societies.
- Members are expected to understand the limits of their professional competence and to refer students appropriately.

### **Non-Maleficance**

Members should pledge to avoid causing harm to others. The principle of non-maleficance submits that ASCA members recognize that the avoidance or alleviation of harm is generally a stronger ethical obligation than simply providing benefit to those in one's care.

*In practice*, ethical codes generally do not define what constitutes harm to others or under what circumstances harm is justifiable. An ethical dilemma is created whenever a professional has to choose among competing "goods", some of which may involve potential discomfort or some degree of harm to the individual. Finally, any such rules, procedures, and standards shall reflect the commitment to equity, fairness, respect, honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility.

- Members shall seek to avoid private interests, obligations, and transactions which are, or appear to be, in conflict of interest with the mission, goals, policies, or regulations of their employing institution and which, in turn, may potentially bring harm to the institution or the community members.
- Professionals shall clearly distinguish between those public and private statements and actions which represent their personal views and those which represent the views of their employing institution.
- In the event that a member is unable to perform their duties and responsibilities in a fair and just manner, whether due to prior involvement with a party or parties, or other conflicts of interest, they shall remove themselves from the decision making process.

### **Beneficence**

Contributing to the welfare of others, even where such contributions must be balanced with potential discomfort is a critical part of student growth and conduct administration.

*In practice*, the principle of beneficence obligates ASCA members to treat others courteously and accept students as individuals, each with rights and responsibilities, as we seek to create and maintain a campus climate in which we work towards positive learning and personal growth.

- Members shall fully comply with the rules, regulations, and procedural guidelines of the institution in enforcing its standards of conduct.
- Members shall not exceed their express authority in taking such actions.
- Members shall conduct their professional duties and responsibilities in a manner that complies fully with applicable law and demonstrates equal consideration to individuals regardless of status or position.
- Members shall work to protect human rights and promote an appreciation of diversity and pluralism in higher education. Members do not engage in or tolerate harassment in any form nor do they enter into intimate or inappropriate relationships with those for whom they have any disciplinary, supervisory, evaluative, or instructional responsibility.

### **Justice**

"Individuals should be treated the same, unless they differ in ways that are relevant to the situation in which they are involved," Velasquez, 1990.

*In practice*, the principle of justice commands ASCA members to treat others with respect and fairness, preserving their dignity, honoring their differences, and promoting their welfare (CAS Statement of Shared Ethical Principles, 2015).

- Members support adherence to community standards and the necessity of disciplinary interventions when those standards are violated. Such interventions should be just and fundamentally fair while contributing to the educational and personal growth of the student. However, it is understood that in situations where the behavior of a student poses a risk to self or others, justice may well involve a change in the status of that student, consistent with applicable laws and the general mission and policies of the employing institution.

### **Fidelity**

Many ethicists hold that fidelity, or trustworthy conduct, is the foundational principle of all human relationships, and the one upon which every social contract depends. Since ethical principles may at some time come into conflict with one another, there must be a commitment to fidelity resulting in trust in the individual administrator who is to resolve such conflicts. Essentially, without trust or fidelity in professional relationships, growth and development cannot occur.

*In practice*, the principle of fidelity instructs ASCA members to act in a manner that demonstrates the intention of fidelity (loyal, faithful, honoring commitments) and which therefore builds trust among community members.

- Members must ensure that confidentiality is maintained with respect to all privileged communications and to educational and professional records considered confidential. They must inform all parties of the nature and/or limits of confidentiality.
- Members must share information only in accordance with institutional policies and relevant statutes, when given informed consent, or when required to prevent personal harm to themselves or others.
- Members shall strive to assure that information provided to students, faculty, employees and employers, colleagues, and the public is accurate and is accompanied by appropriate contextual material if needed.
- Acceptance of employment at an institution of higher education requires that members accept the general mission and goals of the institution and agree to adhere to the terms and conditions of the employment contract or letter of agreement for employment. Members shall adhere to the lawful tenets of the employee handbook or similar documents of the employing institution.
- Members respect and acknowledge all lawful authority. Members refrain from conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, misrepresentation, or unlawful discrimination.
- Members should seek the advice of counsel as appropriate. Further, members must demonstrate concern for the legal, social codes, and moral expectations of the communities in which they live and work even when the dictates of one's conscience may require behavior as a private citizen which is not in keeping with these codes.

- Members need to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Members must honor commitments to the employing institution and ASCA's mission.

#### References

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