Ethics

Clerks – Masters Program

CVIOG
About the Instructor: David W. Key, Sr.

Key has more than twenty years of experience in visionary leadership and organizational development. Some of his skills include strategic planning, public speaking, curriculum design, systems theory, contextual analysis, motivational techniques, and conflict resolution. While pursuing his Ph.D., Mr. Key has researched urban sociology, conflict theory, experiential education, and organizational sociology.

Mr. Key has considerable training experience ranging from personal coaching to large group retreats to the classroom setting. For the five years previous to joining the Institute, he was the primary trainer for the Child Support Enforcement New and Veteran Employee Training Program. In this program, he was responsible for delivering content training without any prior experience with the agency. Having served as chair of the board for Georgians for Children, in addition to his experience with state government and child advocacy, gives Mr. Key vital insight into the workings of state and local government, policy makers, and non-profits.

Mr. Key started a creative, multi-denominational church at Lake Oconee in 2001. This entrepreneurial experience has further developed Key’s understandings of group motivation and working with volunteers.

Fields of interest: long-range planning, customer service, ethics, group problem solving, team building, program evaluation, personal improvement, empowerment, family/child advocacy, and spirituality in the workplace.
CODE OF ETHICS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Any person in government service should:

I. Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or government department.

II. Uphold the Constitution, laws, and legal regulations of the United States and the State of Georgia and of all governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.

III. Give a full day’s labor for a full day’s pay and give to the performance of his duties his earnest effort and best thought.

IV. Seek to find and employ more efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished.

V. Never discriminate unfairly by the dispensing of special favors or privileges to anyone, whether for remuneration or not, and never accept, for himself or his family, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of his governmental duties.

VI. Make no private promises of any kind binding upon the duties of office, since a government employee has no private word which can be binding on public duty.

VII. Engage in no business with the government, either directly or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of his governmental duties.

VIII. Never use any information coming to him confidentially in the performance of governmental duties as a means for making private profit.

IX. Expose corruption wherever discovered.

X. Uphold these principles, ever conscious that public office is public trust.
ETHICS EXERCISE

1. Ethical people are always ethical regardless of what goes on.
   True  False

2. Appearing to do wrong & actually doing wrong are different matters.
   True  False

3. Ethical values are personal only.
   True  False

4. Ethics cannot be learned, taught, or even discussed in any meaningful way.
   True  False

5. Ethics discussions contribute little, if anything, to productivity, morale, or problem solving.
   True  False

6. An ethical workplace can be achieved easily or quickly.
   True  False
ETHICS DEFINED

Ethics refers to principles that define behavior as right, good and proper. Such principles do not always dictate a single "moral" course of action, but provide a means of evaluating and deciding among competing options.

The terms "ethics" and "values" are not interchangeable. Ethics is concerned with how a moral person should behave, whereas values are the inner judgments that determine how a person actually behaves. Values concern ethics when they pertain to beliefs about what is right and wrong. Most values, however, have nothing to do with ethics. For instance, the desire for health and wealth are values, but not ethical values.

The Importance of Universal Ethics

Most people have convictions about what is right and wrong based on religious beliefs, cultural roots, family background, personal experiences, laws, organizational values, professional norms and political habits. These are not the best values to make ethical decisions by — not because they are unimportant, but because they are not universal.

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ETHICAL REASONING

People have lots of reasons for being ethical:

- There is **inner benefit**. Virtue is its own reward.
- There is **personal advantage**. It is prudent to be ethical. It’s good business.
- There is **approval**. Being ethical leads to self-esteem, the admiration of loved ones and the respect of peers.
- There is **religion**. Good behavior can please or help serve a deity.
- There is **habit**. Ethical actions can fit in with upbringing or training.

There are obstacles to being ethical, which include:

- **The ethics of self-interest**. When the motivation for ethical behavior is self-interest, decision-making is reduced to risk-reward calculations. If the risks from ethical behavior are high — or the risks from unethical behavior are low and the reward is high — moral principles succumb to expediency. This is not a small problem: many people cheat on exams, lie on resumes, and distort or falsify facts at work. The real test of our ethics is whether we are willing to do the right thing even when it is not in our self-interest.

- **The pursuit of happiness**. Enlightenment philosophers and the American Founding Fathers enshrined the pursuit of happiness as a basic right of free men. But is this pursuit a moral end in itself? It depends on how one defines happiness. Our values, what we prize and desire, determine what we think will make us happy. We are free to pursue material goals and physical sensations, but that alone rarely (if ever) leads to enduring happiness. A deeper satisfaction lies in honoring universal ethical values, that is, values that people everywhere believe should inform behavior. That unity between principled belief and honorable behavior is the foundation for real happiness.
SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER

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Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the most complicated of the six core ethical values and concerns a variety of qualities like honesty, integrity, reliability and loyalty.

Respect

Respect prohibits violence, humiliation, manipulation and exploitation. It reflects notions such as civility, courtesy, decency, dignity, autonomy, tolerance and acceptance.

Responsibility

Ethical people show responsibility by being accountable, pursuing excellence and exercising self-restraint. They exhibit the ability to respond to expectations.

Fairness

Fairness implies adherence to a balanced standard of justice without relevance to one’s own feelings or inclinations.

Caring

Caring is the heart of ethics, and ethical decision-making. It is scarcely possible to be truly ethical and yet unconcerned with the welfare of others. That is because ethics is ultimately about good relations with other people.

Citizenship

Citizenship includes civic virtues and duties that prescribe how we ought to behave as part of a community. Such a commitment to the public sphere can have many expressions, such as conserving resources, recycling, using public transportation and cleaning up litter. The good citizen gives more than takes.
1. Public Interest

Public servants should treat their office as a public trust, only using the power and resources of public office to advance public interests and not to attain personal benefit or pursue any other private interest incompatible with the public good.

2. Objective Judgment

Public servants should employ independent objective judgment in performing their duties deciding all matters on the merits, free from avoidable conflicts of interest and both real and apparent improper influence.

3. Accountability

Public servants should assure that government is conducted openly, efficiently, equitably and honorably in a manner that permits the citizenry to make informed judgments and hold government officials accountable.

4. Democratic Leadership

Public servants should honor and respect the principles and spirit of representative democracy and set a positive example of good citizenship by scrupulously observing the letter and spirit of laws and rules.

5. Respectability

Public servants should safeguard public confidence in the integrity of government by being honest, fair, caring, and respectful and by avoiding conduct creating the appearance of impropriety or which is otherwise unbefitting a public official.
ETHICAL STYLE ACTIVITY

A= Agree    D= Disagree

___1. It really bothers me when someone ignores or breaks one of the government’s rules. It’s the same kind of feeling I get when I see someone run a red light, even if no one else is on the road.

___2. I get so irritated when one of the bureaucrats at the Commission Office insists on following the rules when there just isn’t any point to it. The important thing is service, not always following policy and procedure.

___3. My feeling is that anyone who can’t stand behind government policy 100% just shouldn’t be here.

___4. You always have to ask “How will this benefit us in the long run?” I don’t believe in short-term solutions.

___5. I always ask, “Will I be able to look at myself in the mirror in the morning and say, I’m proud of you.”

___6. I just know when something’s wrong. It’s like I can smell it.

___7. I always put myself in the other guy’s shoes. It’s not that I’ll always give in if I know he’s hurt, but I have to know how he feels.

___8. Rockefeller and Carnegie- I mean you’re not talking about nice guys who fought a clean fight. They did what they had to do to win.

___9. Sometimes the rules and laws which man has developed just are not right and you know it in your heart. Then you have to refer to a higher power to determine what to do.
ETHICAL STYLE

1. Rule of Law

Thinking and acting on the basis of rules and principles, paying only secondary regard to circumstance or expectations.

2. Utilitarian

Weighing probable consequences, both to the organization and to the public well-being. The greatest good for the greatest number.

3. Loyalist

Evaluating all decisions first in terms of benefit to the organization and its reputation.

4. Prudent

Weighing probable consequences to oneself and one’s own concerns but always including long-range considerations of organization policies, public trust, and citizen relations.

5. Virtuous

Every action is measured in terms of its reflection on one’s character without immediate regard to consequences and often without paying much attention to general principles.

6. Intuitive

Making decisions on the basis of “conscience” and without deliberation, argument or reasons.

7. Empathetic

Following one’s feelings, in particular, feelings of sympathy and compassion.

8. Selective

Whoever wins or survives must be right.

9. Rule of God

The laws of man are always superseded by the laws of God and teachings of one’s religious faith.
CORE PRINCIPLES FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Core ethical principles are ground rules of decision making, not merely factors to take into account.

• These principles require personal discipline and the application of proper decision-making skills.
• These principles are useful when it appears that ambition and drives of the ego force one to a position of compromise.
• Since ethical conduct is a personal responsibility, improvements in the quality of the organization depend on how effective individuals are in informing, inspiring and empowering others to act responsibly.

TWO CORE PRINCIPLES

1. We all have the power to decide what we do and what we say, and
2. We are morally responsible for the consequences of our choices.

Take Choices Seriously

Recognize Important Decisions

Good Decisions are Ethical and Effective

Know What to Do and When to Do It

Recognize What is at Stake
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

1. You have been asked to speak to a Sunday brunch of another county’s board of commissioners. Their County is considering changing their salary compensation system to the type that your County is now using. In fact, you chaired a committee that proposed your County’s new system. At the conclusion of the meeting, the chairperson hands you an envelope containing an honorarium of $300 cash and explains, “this is in appreciation for you giving up your Sunday morning.”

2. Hazel Stevens is a valued employee. She has worked for the County for 17 years and is the kind of worker that can be depended on to put in extra time and effort when it is needed. She has stood by your side several times in crisis situations. Recently, Hazel came to you and admitted that for some time, she has been “borrowing” money for the petty cash fund and writing false receipts to cover it. It was never much, usually $10 or $15, and she always repaid it. But her conscience has bothered her so much that she had to confess. Under the County’s personnel policies, her action is clearly a cause for dismissal.

3. Last fall, your County’s financial difficulties came to light to both the board and the public. The finance director resigned amidst extensive media coverage. After a long recruitment and selection process, the County’s offer has been accepted and a new finance director is ready to report for duty. Robert R. Daniels has an M.B.A., impressive resume, and while he has been living in another part of the country for quite some time, was raised in a nearby county. You were mentioning the County’s good fortune to your cousin who asked the name of the appointee. After comparing “notes”, your cousin recognizes this person to be someone he knew as Ricky Daniels. Ricky Daniels left his hometown about 10 years ago after two of his small businesses went into bankruptcy. While you were not part of the hiring process, no mention of this history was presented to the Board during the recent executive session approving Mr. Daniels’ generous starting salary.
ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

4. It has come time to replace the county’s 3 large tractor mowers. Technology has advanced considerably since the last time this type of equipment was replaced. You have been making some pricing inquiries so you can have a feel for the magnitude of the expense that the county is considering. You get a call from a mower manufacturer in Utah (who was contacted by one of your area’s local dealers). The manufacturer offers to pick you up in their company’s corporate jet and fly you to Utah for an all expense paid trip so you can actually see the manufacturing plant where the mowers are made.

5. Your county commission unanimously votes to swap several parcels of land with the state in exchange for a state road project. On the day of the vote, all commission members were present. After the project has begun, you are made aware that a fellow commissioner has a subcontract with the state to provide hauling services for the road project. The commissioner did not disclose this to anyone at the time of the vote.

6. Your position on the commission takes you away from your family on many occasions. You take public service seriously and attend as many workshops and conferences as possible so that you may best serve the people you represent. The county’s travel rules allow for a maximum single meal expense of $12. You travel to a conference where a reasonable dinner costs $20. That same morning, you had no out-of-pocket expense for breakfast because you stayed in a hotel where breakfast is provided. A colleague suggests that to “stay whole” you should claim an $8 breakfast.

7. You serve on a local authority that owns and operates a hospital. Your community has experienced significant population growth lately with many young families relocating to the area. There is an obvious need for a neo-natal unit in the county hospital. Already this year, there have been several infant deaths while premature babies were being transported to hospitals in other counties. An article recently appeared in a regional newspaper describing this situation. Someone who is willing and able to donate the $8 million needed to construct the wing has contacted the authority’s board. This person will donate the money under only one condition: the new wing must be named in his honor. The donor is a reputed (but, unconvicted) member of an organized crime family.
8. Your county recently sought requests for proposals for a new financial software package. You have attended a workshop where the pros and cons of each of the three qualifying proposers have been outlined. You have made the decision to support staff’s recommendation for Vendor X. Two weeks before the commission vote, the president of Vendor X calls because he has one extra ticket to a Braves game and knows you are a real fan. He will not be attending and, if you take anyone with you, you will need to pay for that person’s ticket.

9. A controversial zoning issue comes before your board. It involves a restaurant owner who would like a variance to occupy space for a small new restaurant in an area recently zoned for residential use (there are several small businesses that have been grand-fathered in). Because you were in the restaurant business many years ago and your daughter currently owns a downtown café, a fellow commissioner advises that you enter into the board’s discussion of the matter to share your knowledge (even though you will abstain from the final vote).

10. A homeless person recently died in your county. This person was widely known as suffering with alcoholism. Local police were familiar with this individual. A few also knew that this person had Hepatitis C. One cold morning a police officer was called over by a passerby to help the homeless person whose heart had stopped. The officer hesitated because she knew of the person’s medical history and decided that, as a mother of 3 children, she could not administer CPR and risk getting sick herself. (She did not have her breathing apparatus.) The officer then called the EMS service. By the time EMS arrived, the homeless person had died. The local media have picked-up on this story and ask you to comment on the situation.
11. After a lengthy recruitment process, the public works director is excited to have found an employee as skilled, enthusiastic, and dedicated as Carlos. Carlos began work just three months ago. He has 3 days of sick leave banked and no vacation leave. Carlos’ widowed father, who lives outside of the United States, suddenly becomes very ill and has only a month to live. Carlos is an only child and would like to be with his father during his last days. Carlos asks whether he can take leave for up to 4 weeks. Policy does not allow for leave requests (paid or unpaid) for employees with less than one year of service.

12. A fellow council member and friend recently attended an economic development conference in New Orleans. Your colleague’s re-election campaign was a challenge and she continues to devote more time to the business of the City then to her own small business. It has been brought to your attention that at the last minute (before leaving) your colleague was made aware that the conference was officially canceled. No presenters were available but a group of those registered from counties across the country did attend. (You recall that the original conference was lightly scheduled.) Turns out those non-refundable airfares had been paid, as had a block of hotel rooms. Your colleague has made no mention of the conference since her return.
SEVEN STEPS TO BETTER DECISION MAKING

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1. Stop and Think

2. Clarify Goals

3. Determine Facts

4. Develop Options

5. Consider Consequences

6. Choose

7. Monitor and Modify
If It’s Necessary, It’s ethical

The False Necessity Trap

If It’s Legal and Permissible, It’s Proper

It’s Just Part of the Job

It’s All for a Good Cause

I’m Just Fighting Fire with Fire

It Doesn’t Hurt Anyone

Everyone’s Doing It

It’s OK if I Don’t Gain Personally

I’ve Got it Coming

I Can Still Be Objective
AVOID wrong doing… violating laws, rules or policies.

AVOID conflicts of interest… failing to exercise independent professional judgment on the merits and for the public interest when a decision is affected by:

- Personal economic interests
- Personal friendships and associations
- Inappropriate or irrelevant attitudes
- Personal political ambitions

AVOID violating common standards of propriety.

AVOID appearance of wrongdoing… any act that creates in the mind of a significant number of reasonable impartial observers a perception that the public trust has been violated

- Calculated evasions of the spirit of laws and rules
- Exercising official authority in circumstances where it reasonably appears that independence and impartiality could be affected by personal, financial, social or political interests.
- Expressions of prejudice or attitudes inappropriate to the exercise of public authority.

DISCLOSE POTENTIAL CONFLICT

CONSIDER SELF-DISQUALIFICATION
THE MOTIVATION OF MORALITY

Check the six items below that you find most important in motivating you to remain aware of ethical issues for you and your organization.

___ 1. Fear for your job.

___ 2. Explicit, clear and applicable policies.

___ 3. Knowing that the organization expects it of you.

___ 4. Knowing that your family expects it of you.

___ 5. The sense that your role in the organization is important.

___ 6. Living up to the responsibilities that you know are yours.

___ 7. The knowledge that you'll be rewarded.

___ 8. Your concern for the organization's reputation.

___ 9. Knowing your organization is already fair, and wanting to keep it that way.

___ 10. Strong pressure to "toe the line."

___ 11. Knowing you'll get caught.

___ 12. High personal standards of ethics.

___ 13. High corporate standards of ethics.

___ 14. You really respect your manager and wouldn't want to get him or her in trouble.

___ 15. The dictates of your religion.

___ 16. You always hear your mother's/ father's voice in the back of your mind.

___ 17. You'd hate to be on television for such a reason.

___ 18. You welcome the opportunity to show what a good person you are.

___ 19. You're being paid to uphold organizational standards.

___ 20. Ethics helps motivate everybody; unethical behavior turns people into cynics.
Evaluate your answers in light of the following principles. There are no absolute answers.

1. Morality is a living phenomenon, no matter how ancient its codes and principles. Our primary moral precept is the autonomy of each individual and every generation to rethink and decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong.

2. Morality is what one does, not what one says or how loudly and publicly one regrets doing wrong afterward -- a recent fashion. Apologizing on the national news after being convicted of a crime is not necessarily a mark of morality.

3. Morality is a shared sense of values. It is possible that only one person in the organization is right and everyone else is wrong, but how do we recognize when that lone voice is indeed correct? Only because that lone voice finds a much larger audience outside the company, and agreement on the moral principles with which the company itself will be condemned.

4. Morality isn't accidental. It is not what one does that counts but what one does knowingly. Promoting the right person by mistake isn't being moral. Giving money to a charity by mistake isn't charity.


6. Morality is a way of life, a state of character. It's not a matter of forcing oneself to comply. The self-satisfaction of being a "good person" is motive enough.

7. Morality is not a substitute for life. We are a "crypto-moral" society that delights in clever criminals and charming con men, and not only in the movies. We are a law-abiding society, but we are also attracted to people who break the rules. No one who knows our society should ever expect a morally perfect business world. But such characters and their stories provide the spice of business life, not its substance.

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