Vignette: Safe Space?

The Scenario

As part of a conference devoted to exploring ethics in global health volunteer experiences hosted by your university, student leaders representing several health professions schools and pre-professional programs host a lunch conversation with the conference's keynote speaker. The session is designed to support open discussion of:

- personal or peer experiences of clinical and/or pre-professional global health volunteer trips,
- stated and perceived motivations and gains from participation and,
- positionality of student leaders within student-led programs, including their sense of comfort/discomfort with specific elements of their program experience and the responsibilities they shoulder within and across programs.
- resources they'd like to have in order to increase their sense of efficacy when they are confronted with challenging situations.

The student groups organizing this session have agreed to allow you, and a couple of other faculty/staff involved in the conference, to sit-in on this session to gain a more robust understanding of student leaders' experiences and perspectives. The lead groups organizing the discussion are directly connected to and supported by your office.

At the onset of the meeting, the keynote speaker and students state that students don't need to worry about their frankness of their comments…it is a safe space. While most of the participating students are from university-recognized student-led volunteer and service-learning programs, the buzz about this event has been circulating through student peer networks. As a result, it happens that a 2nd year medical student, we'll call her Josie, has come to the event in the hope of recruiting additional students for an upcoming trip a group of fellow students are organizing to Nicaragua the following month to offer care in a temporary "clinic." This trip has been taking place for a few years. The more Josie shares about the experience, the more you realize it is not an approved international experience at your school. In addition, there are several dimensions of the experience that expose the students to risk.

As a paid employee of the university, you have a responsibility to share the possible implications with the student of operating without approval and uphold university policy, and yet you also understand the need to honor the safe space agreement everyone entered into for this discussion.

What do you do given what you know?

Questions to consider:

- What are the key ethical issues to consider here?
- What are some of the implications that Josie and her fellow sojourners may or may not be aware of? For themselves? For the university? For the community and the community project?
- What responsibilities do you have as both a mentor and a university employee?

Price, M.F., Leslie, S., Brann, M., Mulholland, J., Christy, L., Custer, J., Brann, M., & Besing, K.L. (2018). Supporting university-wide institutional change in global health volunteerism: A case in progress. Global Service-Learning Summit 5, Notre Dame, April 16th, 2018

- What responses offer a balance of your commitments/responsibilities in these roles?
- To what degree do the **core principles** offer you assistance in responding to this scenario?

Some Tension Points

  o Scope - Expressed university authority may not lie in your hands or may be unclear
  o Mentorship role – To what degree to respect the space to encourage students to ask for advice
  o Guilt by association – Agencies, host communities, etc. may see the students as agents of the university even when they aren't sanctioned by the university to do so.

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The Scenario

While visiting a campus event, an administrator notices a booth for a local organization that offers service programs in a variety of locations around the world. The administrator has worked with this organization before and has concerns about the group and the experiences they offer.

As the administrator considers the situation, she notes several concerns. These include: 1) volunteers are operating outside the scope of their knowledge 2) host community members are not treated as equal partners in the project 3) the services the group provides don't seem to meet the needs of the local community.

Based on these concerns, the administrator reaches out to the event organizer and alerts them to the concerns. She also suggests that it would be helpful to have a review process for outside organizations that want to exhibit at the event. While the event organizers acknowledge their own concerns with this local volunteer sending organization, they aren't sure that a implementing an exhibitor review process is practical for event staff.

As the event exhibitor, what would you do?

Questions to consider:

- How might you use the **core principles** in responding to this scenario?
- If you decide to move forward with developing a review process:
  - What criteria would be used?
  - Who should vet the organizations?
  - Who should tell the organizations, and in what way, that they did not meet the standards?
  - What might the political costs be of refusing a group permission to exhibit on campus?

Some Tension Points

- Time – it takes time to vet exhibitors
- Living ethical standards – it isn't always easy to walk the talk
- Campus-community politics – lost opportunities to collaborate or future donors

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Vignette: When Partners Have Real Autonomy-Managing a Program Cancellation

The Scenario

You are the program manager for a medical student clinical rotation that occurs in a developing country. This program embeds US medical students, under the supervision of local physicians, into government-sponsored health care facilities for low income families. One month before the beginning of your program, you receive word from your local partner that the government has temporarily suspended the necessary approvals for foreign doctors and students to see patients in government hospitals and clinics. Though the government says the suspension is for the reevaluation of such programs, there are rumors that this action may be in retaliation to recent US foreign policy.

As the program manager, you are experiencing pressure from administrators and students to "rescue" the program. Your concerns include:

- How do you ensure that your students have a positive an international global health experience?
- How do you respect the autonomy and concerns of your international partners?
- How do you help the University administration understand the political complexities of the situation?

How do you respond to this pressure?

Questions to consider:

- How might you use the **core principles** in responding to this scenario?
- How do you use this as a "teachable" moment for students?
- What resources are available for you in responding?

Some Tension Points

- Organizational/Program Survival- often ethics are overlooked in order to keep organizations and programs alive
- Campus and Community relationships- is it possible to stay in relationship with communities and organizations now that the program is not active?

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Vignette: Why the Hell are We Going? Ethical Concerns during Orientation

The Scenario

You are asked to provide a pre-departure orientation on ethical cross-cultural engagement to a student-led service-learning group a few weeks prior to their traveling to Central America. They are traveling under the auspices of an international travel entity of which you know very little. As you present the ethical considerations in cross-cultural engagement, you notice that some of the students, including the student leaders, are becoming uncomfortable. From the questions they ask, you realize that their partner organization is likely violating some of the ethical standards you have just presented.

Your concerns include:

- What are the dynamics at your university that have allowed this disconnect?
- What, if anything, can you do in response to this disconnect?
- How do you handle the student's present discomfort and misgivings?

Finally, one of the students asks, "If what you are saying about the ethics of cross-cultural engagement are true, why the hell are we going on this trip?"

How do you respond to the student?

Questions to consider:
- What does this experience suggest to you about your university's present screening, preparation and global education process?
- How do you help students that are already committed to a questionable trip navigate and learn from the potential ethical conflicts in that experience?
- What resources might you draw upon in our response?
- How might you use the **core principles** in responding to this scenario?

Some Tension Points
- Power – student autonomy vs. institutional priorities
- Campus policies – determining the location of appropriate monitoring and regulation
- Educator's role – providing ethical guidelines vs. setting ethical boundaries