



IUPUI

Conflicted Faculty Advisor

An Ethics in Action Case Example

The Scenario:

You are the faculty advisor for a university-recognized national undergraduate student organization that participates in global health volunteerism each year. Students state that they typically participate in the program because they are excited about immersing themselves in a new culture, learning new health care practices and systems, and helping locals gain access to medical care. As students begin preparations for this year's trip, you come across a news report detailing some unethical practices uncovered by commercial global health volunteerism programs. Some of the students recall witnessing similar behaviors on previous trips.

As you discuss ethical practices with students, you begin to question some of the activities that the national organization endorses and in which students have engaged. When discussing your concerns, students present you with questions about their roles in global health volunteerism; what responsibilities they have to the program, the community, and themselves; and how to ensure that participants recognize and engage in ethical behaviors. The students' inquiries prompt you to question your role and responsibilities as a faculty advisor. Do you have the time and capacity to offer the support and guidance they appear to need?

As the group's faculty advisor, what action do you take?

Questions to consider:

- How should you respond to the students' inquiries?
- What specific types of support could you provide students?
- How can you assist students in identifying appropriate behaviors?
- To what degree do the **core principles** offer you assistance in responding to this scenario?

Some Tension Points:

- Educator role
- Living ethical standards
- Capacity given competing commitments

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One Resolution:

The faculty advisor met with the student leadership team on multiple occasions to discuss concerns raised by both the students and the advisor. They discussed ethical practices and used research by Judith Lasker as a framework for assessing the ethical behaviors witnessed. By carefully evaluating the program's impact on both host partners as well as participants (principle 6), the faculty advisor and students recognized the potential negative effect that their participation may have. Based on this assessment and their discussions and additional investigation into the practices of the organization, the faculty advisor decided to resign from the role and the students disbanded the student organization. The students' overwhelming concern for potentially unethical practices and the lack of transparent communication from the national organization led to the decision to not renew their university-recognized student organization status. The faculty advisor supported the students' decision and cited frustration and feelings of inadequacy in trying to invoke change within a larger national structure in which she did not agree.

How did your response compare to the one above?

This case example was adapted from: 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