



IUPUI

Vetting Campus Exhibitors

An Ethics in Action Case Example

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 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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One Resolution:

In follow up conversations, the event organizers agree that some level of review is appropriate for exhibitors. At the time of writing this statement the final resolution is not complete. Current thinking is that:

- 1) Exhibitors must “apply” for a space at the event rather than “sign up” which begins to lay the foundation for a formal review.
- 2) A statement such as the following will be added to the exhibitor application:
“USE OF SPACE: The event organizers reserve the right to decline or prohibit any group, exhibit, or part of an exhibit that is not in keeping with the character of the event or the Office of International Affairs.”
- 3) The office will draw upon its mission and values statement to identify guidelines or criteria for exhibitors.

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