Ethical Decision Making

- Gather the Facts (including laws, regulations, policies, and procedures)
- Determine the Ethical Issue(s)
- Explore Possible Solutions and Actions
- Identify Those Impacted
- Consider Ethical Principles, Responsibilities, and Penn State Values
- Take Ethical Action
Gather the Facts
• What are the important questions to ask?
• What facts do we know as opposed to opinions we may hold?
• Who may be more knowledgeable whom we can ask for more information?
• What do current PSU policies and procedures have to say about this (University, college, campus, unit, student, academic, etc.)?
• What legal obligations and rights are involved?
• Are there any legal implications?

Determine the Ethical Issue
• What personal or group biases may be impacting how I/we view this?
• What words or ideas have multiple or different meanings for different people that we need to clarify (e.g., fairness, justice)?
• What ethical values may be involved?
• What moral feelings or judgments does this situation bring out of me or others?

Consider Ethical Principles, Responsibilities and Penn State Values
• How does this situation relate to our Mission as a University?
• What are the rights, duties, and ethical obligations of everyone involved?
• Are there particular professional responsibilities or obligations that I must uphold?
• What important or relevant relationships do we have that we must honor or consider?
• What Penn State Values are relevant to this situation?

Identify Those Impacted
• Who will be directly impacted by our decision?
• How may this situation and/or our decision impact others outside of the immediate situation?
• Have we consulted with those who will be impacted by this?
• Have we considered other diverse voices and alternative viewpoints?

Explore Possible Solutions and Actions
• Think creatively about possibilities and ethical solutions
• What strategies may prevent this issue in the future?
• What are the potential consequences (intended and unintended) of each solutions?
• How will the final decision be communicated and evaluated?
• How does each possible solution:
  — Reflect the Mission of the University?
  — Embody Penn State Values?
  — Model the actions of an ethical leader?
  — Establish a precedent for future situations?
  — Impact all parties involved?
  — Address the moral feelings and judgments we had?

Do any Penn State Values conflict with each other? How do we resolve this?
What does our commitment to Penn State Values suggest we do?
How do our actions and possible decisions reflect Penn State Values?