

Ethics Editorial

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CHANGE Exchange

By Lane Mayfield, CHANGE President

The Creating Habits and Norms to Guide Ethical Decisions (CHANGE) Student Group is excited to be back on campus for the Fall 2021 semester! We have missed meeting and hosting our programs in person and are ready to be with our fellow students again.

We want to congratulate three members of CHANGE who graduated in the Spring. Kendra Gordillo graduated from the College of Science, Paige Kimble graduated from the College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Sciences, and Landan Hydrick graduated from the College of Education.



We also had several new students join the group last spring and over the summer. Lane Mayfield is the new president of CHANGE and they started in August. Jason Frady joined as a member from the College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities, Kayla Anfinson joined from the College of Sciences, and Lindsey LeShack joined from the College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities.

CHANGE is always open to new members and we are particularly recruiting members from the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences and the College of Engineering, Computing and Applied Sciences. More information about how to apply to join CHANGE can be found on our website at clermson.edu/ethics/change.

FALL 2021 EVENTS

Rutland Events

- 10/13- Annual Ethics Day
- 12/31- STAR Model Video Contest Deadline
- 12/31- Cherry Braswell Rutland & J.T. Barton Jr. Student Award Applications Deadline

CHANGE Events

- 11/9- Temple Grandin Movie & Discussion
- TBD- Critical Race Theory Discussion

Rutland Institute and CHANGE Tabling
9/22, 10/20, 11/2, 11/17



You can follow CHANGE on Instagram @clermsonchange or their website (clermson.edu/ethics/change) for more information about their events!

Meet the RIE Advisory Board

Interview with Advisory Board member, Debby Dubose

Why are you passionate about ethics?

As lame as it may sound, it's something that has always been ingrained in me. Since I was old enough to remember, my parents strongly encouraged me to think about the right way to treat people and to be mindful of my reputation. My entire career has been in public relations communications, and 30 years of my 45 year career has been in fundraising. When you are working with someone and accepting a monetary gift from them, the level of ethical behavior goes up astronomically because you are the caretaker of their investment. I have always believed very strongly in the ethical code of conduct as it relates to fundraising.

Earlier in my career, someone older and wiser told me that I should always conduct myself so that if something I said ended up on the front page of the newspaper, I would not be embarrassed by it. So I think part of it would be my upbringing, and the other part would be the fact that my whole career has been based on being held accountable for what I'm saying. That has made ethics something that I'm fascinated by. I'm particularly interested in how my view of an ethical issue might be very different from yours. I think that's so interesting! I just think there's so much more that I can learn from your generation and about how our circumstances and our experiences factor into what we consider to be ethical behavior or not.



What is an example of an ethical dilemma you have faced?

I used to be the alumni director at Clemson, and I did that job for 15 years, and for about eight of those years, I was also in charge of the development office at Clemson. I remember very distinctly someone contacting me and expressing a great deal of interest in making a sizable gift to Clemson. Of course, I was thrilled. We continued discussing where the gift would be directed and what the donor anticipated that gift would accomplish for Clemson and its students. Then, as the conversation neared the end, he basically said that he would expect a seat on the university foundation in return for that gift. I said, well, you know, that's just not how it works, and that's not how I work. You may speak with others that would feel differently than I do, but it's not a quid pro quo. You are chosen to sit on the foundation based on your credentials and what you could bring to the university. I remember that because I wanted the gift, but I didn't get the gift. That's not the only time; I just had one recent example in my church where someone said that he would give X amount of dollars to help with debt retirement, but in return for that, he expected a personnel action to be taken. I thought, "This is the church!" I said, "No, sir, you know, that has never worked with me, and it's certainly not going to work for me in this setting. We'll be fine. We'll raise the money if we're meant to". I was so happy, we exceeded the goal by \$30,000 without him, so ethics won in the end.

Why did you become involved in the advisory board?

When I worked with Clemson for 15 years, I was very involved. The only reason I left was because I was just exhausted. If you're going to be a good alumni director, you need to work when other people are not working in addition to your regular hours. So after 15 years, I was just exhausted and wanted more of an eight to five job. I left to go create a foundation at the hospital. I wanted to distance myself a little bit from Clemson because I didn't want my presence to be a detriment to those following after me.

I was asked to do a few things, and the one thing that I said yes to was the Rutland Institute for Ethics. There were several individuals who I had worked with over the years that were on the board.

I had such great respect for them that if they believed in the institute's mission and what it could do for students and Clemson's reputation, then I wanted to be a part of that. What really drew me in was the vision that Clemson could have a program that allowed all of our students to think about ethical decisions within their major and how ethics was a part of everybody's profession, regardless of what that was.

I was always so anxious to brag about our students and how much better they were than anybody else's students. I just felt like it could give a real edge to have a graduate go into an interview and be able to talk about his or her experience in exploring ethical decision-making within his or her field of study. That attracted me more than us being a resource for the industry.

As one of the institute's founding members, how have you seen the Rutland Institute grow/change over the last 20 years?

Well, it goes back to what my original hope was when I was first involved with the institute. The initial focus was on us being able to compete with other universities and to go into industries to teach employees about ethical decision-making. As I recall, that was the primary focus and what I have seen with Dr. McCoy is that there's so much focus on our students now. It pleases me to read what students have to say about it and how we are touching so many students in impactful ways. I think that's the most gratifying thing to me over 20 years and the fact that we are more well-known on campus. That wasn't the case when we started.

What would you like to see the institute accomplish in the future?

Well, I would ideally like our programs to be so embedded in each department that we do have that name recognition and that we are recognized among our peers as an institution that values ethical decision-making; to let them know that this institute leads the university and can dialogue on those tough



issues. I would like us to grow in our outreach to students and our name recognition as a recruiting tool.

As you continue to serve on the advisory board, what impact would you like to make on the Rutland Institute for Ethics?

I value education so much, and I am eager to learn from younger people. When I graduated from high school, my father was convinced that I wanted to get a degree in public relations. But back in 1971, I would have had to go to the University of South Carolina or the University of Georgia. My dad, a 1953 Clemson graduate, said, you can go anywhere you want, but I will pay for you to go to Clemson, and I wanted to go to Clemson anyway.

I actually have a secondary education degree, which I've never used, but I have always enjoyed working with young people. I've always enjoyed working with high school to college-age students. Up until the pandemic, I taught a high school and college-age Sunday school class. I am so interested in what I can learn from you and how your generation sees the world, and how an experience that I had somewhere along the way could help enlighten you or how we could enlighten each other. I think that the best thing I could offer is dialogue and exploration of ideas and human nature. Growing together would be something that would be very rewarding for me. Maybe it would be rewarding for someone younger.

Interview by Graduate Assistant, Lane Mayfield

McCoy's Corner

Saying What We Meme...And Meme What We Say
By Dr. William McCoy



I strive to be fun, fair, firm, and flexible in the classroom. My students at NIU knew that I was strict in the classroom, but I cared about their success. I couldn't reach all of them, but it wasn't because I did not try. One student named Derek captured the essence of my teaching standards, and even though the meme he created was done in jest, it underlined the serious nature of my teaching philosophy – a philosophy I hold dear to this day.

Every year the staff members of the Rutland Institute for Ethics are fortunate to address Clemson students about the true nature of ethical dilemmas. True ethical dilemmas are not black and white, but a mixture of both – a grey area, if you will. Addressing a true ethical dilemma might find you at the crossroads of indecision and bewilderment, but many people confuse what they deem as tough decisions to be ethical in nature.

To better understand the difference between a tough decision and an ethical decision, I describe the person who does a month's worth of grocery shopping and places a case of water under a full basket. During checkout, the shopper's attention is diverted and he or she legitimately forgets to purchase the case of water under the basket. Subsequently, the grocery scanner at the exit door does not beep upon departure. The groceries are unloaded when the person realizes that the water was never paid for. It is at this point that I share with students the lack of an ethical dilemma in this scenario. The right thing to do is to take the water back into the store and pay for it – plain and simple. This may have been a tough decision for someone, but there is no ethical dilemma in this scenario.

On the other hand, I like to share the story of the administrative assistant who was caught fraudulently taking advantage of a weak fiscal accountability system to pay for something of a personal nature. Normally it doesn't take much thought to fire the individual for misappropriation of funds; but in this case, the administrative assistant was the glue holding together an extremely fragile staff. To dismiss her might send the staff in full revolt. Besides, she is the only person in the office who knows how to pay bills. To dismiss her will only set the office back even further. Can the person be salvaged if she expresses enough remorse for the damage she has caused? Can she simply repay the funds while the supervisor exercises greater oversight so that this cannot/will not happen again while keeping the office running smoothly? In short – should she receive a second chance? These are the contributing circumstances that a supervisor may have to contemplate when considering the right action to take. This is the formulation of an ethical dilemma.

The Rutland Institute for Ethics is proud to help our students identify what an ethical dilemma is AND provide them with a deliberate and methodical way to work through such dilemmas. Our faculty have endorsed the STAR decision-making model designed to help students work through such dilemmas. Our job is to integrate ethics education throughout all curriculum, and we will continue to help our students make good decisions and develop into ethical leaders. We will continue to say what we "meme".....and "meme" what we say!

An Argument for Personal Responsibility & the Ethics of Choosing to Vaccinate

By Louise Franke, member of CHANGE

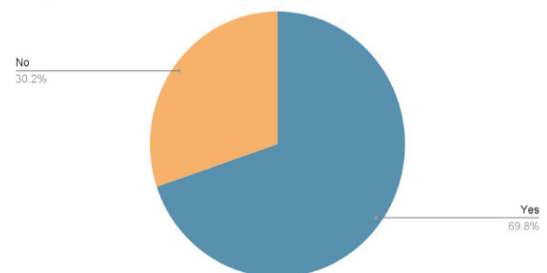
In last fall's edition of the Ethics Editorial, another member of the CHANGE Student Ethics Committee of the Rutland Institute for Ethics and I posed the following two rhetorical questions: What, if anything, do we owe the people around us? Does everyone have an ethical responsibility to "reduce the spread" or does this come down simply to preference? These questions have only become more relevant as we enter into our second year dealing with the externalities of the COVID-19 pandemic, but now rather than only considering mask-wearing, our circumstances allow us to consider vaccination. In this short piece, we will discuss arguments—grounded in the ethical theories of utilitarianism and beneficence—for the individual's choice to vaccinate.

Utilitarianism¹ is the ethical model that determines the morality of an action primarily in reference to its outcome, such that the best action is the one that yields the greatest net good. Consequentialism is a certain kind of utilitarianism which takes consequences to be the only standard by which an action can be morally judged. At the time of the writing of this article, COVID-19 has been the documented cause of death of 692,458 American individuals since February 29th, 2020². Through the lens of utilitarianism, the individual choice to vaccinate is clearly the moral option. If an individual has access to vaccines and vaccination is not detrimental to their health, the net consequences of vaccination are positive: An individual's vaccination impacts the concept of herd immunity³, which occurs when a large portion of a community becomes immune to a disease, making the spread from person to person less likely. One vaccinated individual may save the lives of a vaccinated or unvaccinated individual by making them statistically less likely to catch COVID-19, for no cost at all. The net good for the community can be even greater than the lives saved, however. The effect of widespread vaccination would allow for the reopening of businesses, schools, and communal gathering places, improving the community both economically and culturally.

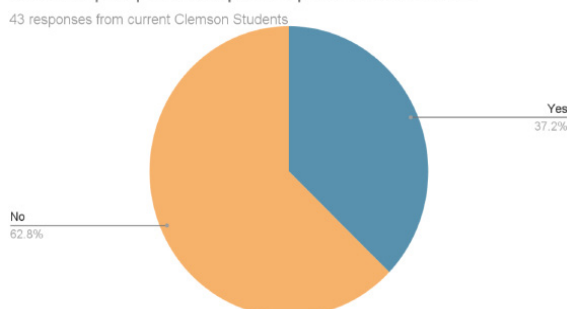
Beneficence⁴ is broadly understood in ethical theory to include the norms and actions which are chosen with the goal of promoting the good of others. Beneficence does not entail obligation, but does point to the choice-worthy nature of an action which promotes the good of others. Even for an individual at low risk of morbidity from COVID-19, vaccination is thus choice-worthy because it promotes the good of others. Exceptional beneficence is categorized as supererogatory, meaning performing beyond what is obligatory, with a view towards the ideals

of action. Thinking of vaccination as supererogatory action is an interesting perspective which may provide a persuasive argument for those who consider the "cost" of vaccination to be anything greater than negligible. Following the logic of the value of supererogatory action, vaccination could be the superior option even if it poses a cost deemed high by the individual. Acts such as uncompensated public service can be considered supererogatory, and vaccination may be seen as such to some—an action which "costs" some unit of time and does not provide the individual with benefits, but which confers benefits to the community.

Are you comfortable having to present proof of vaccination?
43 responses from current Clemson students



Do you think businesses, restaurants, concert venues, etc. should require patrons to present proof of vaccination?
43 responses from current Clemson Students



Continued on back

Neither of these arguments oblige the individual to vaccinate. However, both point to net positive effects to the community caused by the choice of an individual. There are valid arguments to be made for individual exemptions to what I have here deemed as the morally choice-worthy nature of vaccination, namely medical or religious exemptions. It would be unethical for this article to make a blanket demand on each and every individual to vaccinate, without taking into account their specific situation. However, the broad call to action to vaccinate—based on the net good for the community and relative ease for the individual—applies to the vast majority of Americans who hope to see their lives and the lives of their neighbors return to some state of medical, economic, and social normalcy.

The nature of vaccination is such that it poses either no net cost to most individuals, or a cost arguably worth the net benefit it yields. We hope that this article has shown that though study of ethics does not always offer clear answers to ethical dilemmas, it can help provide a framework for determining the morally choice-worthy option in difficult situations of everyday life, such as vaccination. Below we have included a list of sources referenced in this piece as well as further readings which may serve as reflection on the nature of ethical decision-making and vaccination. We have also included data from a survey of 43 Clemson students and their opinions on the ethics of vaccine passports in restaurants and other venues.

1. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/#WhaCon>
2. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
3. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/herd-immunity-and-coronavirus/art-20486808>
4. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/principle-beneficence/#ConcBeneBene>
5. <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/taxonomy/infectious-diseasesvaccine-refusal>



CLEMSON UNIVERSITY
CHANGE
CREATING HABITS AND NORMS GUIDING ETHICAL DECISIONS

CHANGE is an officially recognized student organization on campus. Among its activities, CHANGE is the creator of the Rutland Institute for Ethics bi-annual newsletter.



For more information about CHANGE, please contact Lane Mayfield at mayfie2@clemson.edu or 864-656-5379.

Scholarship Opportunities

Cherry Braswell Rutland Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship is designed to recognize a student at Clemson University who exhibits ethical leadership through excellent decision-making skills. A minimum of one award will be presented annually in the amount of **\$1,000** to an eligible student who embodies the spirit of ethical leadership.

J.T. Barton, Jr. Memorial Ethics Scholarship

This scholarship is awarded to a singular student and/or a student group on the Clemson University campus who programmatically uses the award to in part or fully advance good ethical decision-making skills. Three awards are provided annually in the amounts of **\$1,500, \$1,000, and \$500**.



Scholarship applications open September 1- December 31 at clemson.edu/ethics/awards-scholarships