

# Ethics Editorial

Vol. 5, Issue 2



## Growing With CHANGE

Jasmine Sampson, CHANGE Interim Vice President



Rutland Institute for Ethics's student organization, CHANGE (Creating Habits and Norms Guiding Ethical Decisions), has gotten the ball rolling this year. We are making intentional efforts to sustain CHANGE and increase engagement. Continuing past members' aspirations, I'd like to highlight the growth trajectory the organization is on and what we have in store this Spring semester. As chief marketing officer and interim vice president of CHANGE, I am grateful to be among other student leaders promoting ethical culture and leadership.

This semester CHANGE will host our annual Ethics Case Competition on the moral complexities of transplant tourism. We hope the high school teams participating this year are as excited as we are, and we look forward to their proposed solutions. In addition, two CHANGE members, Hely Patel and Tyler Simmons, were awarded the J.T. Barton, Jr. Memorial Ethics Scholarship to help execute their events regarding pre-law and first-generation students, respectively. We are incredibly proud of them and their vision for integrating ethical leadership in their respective colleges. CHANGE has grown in numbers, and we are delighted by the diverse perspectives our new members contribute to decision-making and discussions. In the room where it all happens, we have been working hard to develop creative ideas for outreach, such as visiting an AP Research high school class to discuss principles of research ethics or having a 19-foot-tall slide to embody incrementalism in ethical standards.

Along with event strategies, we have toured the Woodland Cemetery and African Burial Ground to broaden our understanding of Clemson's history and the ongoing efforts to conceptualize African American history in the Clemson area. Furthermore, we've held round tables on various topics such as cryptocurrency, exotic pet ownership, and campus issues. CHANGE is making the most of this semester and remains steadfast in our mission to encourage ethical decision-making and leadership in students. There's growth within CHANGE, and we've embraced it.



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### Spring 2023 Events

#### CHANGE

High School Ethics Case  
Competition  
March 10th

Pre-Law Association Trip to State  
Senate, March

Connections and CHANGE: First  
Generation Student Talk, April

COB Movie Night: The Social  
Network, March

Ethics Shark Tank with COE USAB,  
February

COS and CECAS talk with High  
School AP students, April

#### RUTLAND INSTITUTE

TIDE Conference  
April 3rd-6th

# An Interview with Clete Cordero

Lane Mayfield, Graduate Assistant



Clete Cordero is the Vice President of Pricing for Southeastern Freight Lines and the Chair of the Rutland Institute for Ethics' Advisory Board. Clete holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Tennessee in

Transportation Logistics. Clete has seen the importance of ethics within his career, family, and social life. He believes that doing the right thing, "makes everything easier in life." When you do the wrong thing, you create a complex situation that is harder to deal with. At Southeastern, they hold integrity to a very high standard. Clete says that making a half million dollar error is one thing but treating someone the wrong way or doing something unethical is a much bigger deal. Making an error in the business may be corrected, but being unethical is a larger issue. Along with ethical behavior, Cordero believes that with honesty comes a more meaningful relationship down the line. If he has a counterpart at work whom he trusts, he can get much more done than with someone else who lacks that trust.

Clete said, "we had a team member call out of work due to her husband being in the ICU. The ethics were obvious and we don't care about her missing work. We care more about her wellbeing." Other companies may choose to penalize her absence from work but ethically, he doesn't.

With the current economy, Clete reflected on the ethical approach that Southeastern takes when dealing with finances.

"When it comes to a decline in the economy like we are seeing now, many companies may decide to layoff drivers and greatly reduce expenses in order to compete financially", Cordero said. At Southeastern, Clete has found that the ethical thing to do is to take care of their workers and do everything they can to prevent layoffs. While there is no policy stating that they will never lay off workers, the company has made every effort to avoid doing so, even during the 2008 economic crisis. They were the only trucking company that did not lay off workers or cut pay during that time. While they were placed on an unequal playing field, they stood by the decision they made to prevent families from losing money.

During his time with the Rutland Institute, Cordero has enjoyed talking with business students, presenting in classes, and teaching others about the STAR model. He is very excited about the information we are sharing with the Clemson Community and he hopes that this continues in the future. As a business professional, Clete believes that ethics education is essential for Clemson students and that this education will help elevate students in the workforce.



## An Interview with Nancy Whitworth

Lane Mayfield, Graduate Assistant



Nancy Whitworth is a current member of the Rutland Institute for Ethics Advisory Board. She originally earned a degree in psychology and sociology from Clemson University. After her undergraduate

career, Nancy found herself with the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology.

After graduating with her master's from Clemson, Whitworth began working with the City of Greenville. While working for the city, Nancy witnessed the growth of Greenville and the changes that have occurred over the years. She has enjoyed working with the communities and neighborhoods of Greenville and has been an instrumental part of the city's growth.

Before retiring, Nancy faced ethical dilemmas in her work with the city. Nancy says, "While I did not have the STAR model to follow, I always considered the public's best interest and followed my intuition when making decisions." She is a direct leader who shares her honest perspective with others. She often tells people to consider how they would feel if their actions were on the front page of the newspaper and to consider public perceptions of ethics.

Nancy's passion for ethics comes from her parents who taught her the importance of her actions and how they impact others. As small business owners, Whitworth's parents

respect. The lessons that her parents taught her have made a lasting impact and she often thinks to herself "what would mom and dad say?"

Whitworth is happy that ethics is being integrated more into the university and believes that it is extremely valuable. She has enjoyed being on the board and learning about the different perspectives that fellow members bring to conversations. Her hope is that the institute can create a larger outreach and expand into the business community.

If she could give advice to current students, Nancy would say, "Be open to new ideas and directions in life. You never know where life might lead you and you will be led to more opportunities if you have an open mind." She also tells students to never stop learning. She believes that continuing to learn throughout your career is exceptionally important.



## A Word From Our Seniors



"Hello, my name is Zion Kaauwai and I am a senior Financial Management student and the current President of CHANGE. I have been with CHANGE since the first semester of my freshman year when the then-GA and president of CHANGE, Tim Switzer, asked me what I thought about ethics at the Fall 2019 Tiger Prowl. Since then, I have been an active servant leader bringing ethical discussions to the forefront of student discussion. My favorite thing that we do is collaborating with other students from other clubs, universities, and even high schools to make ethics a critical part of discussion and education in an increasingly polarized world."

Zion Kaauwai, President of CHANGE, Bachelor's degree in Financial Management



"I'm so grateful for the learning experiences I had during my time in CHANGE. It really helped me change the way I view situations and think more about the ethical aspect of any given circumstance. Through the ethics-based class requirement to the case debates, there was always a thought-provoking moment that made you challenge your opinion on different real-world situations. These are valuable life lessons that I will carry with me through my upcoming graduation from Clemson, and into the next phases of my life and future career. I want to thank Lane Mayfield for being such a great facilitator of the group, and Dr. McCoy for all of the opportunities that were provided to learn about ethical dilemmas and the repercussions of the decisions we make. Go Tigers!"

Lori Thompson, Secretary of CHANGE, Bachelor's degrees in Accounting and Finance with a Corporate Emphasis



"I joined CHANGE during the Fall semester of the academic year 2022-2023. While my time in CHANGE has been short since I learned about the organization, I was intrigued to join. CHANGE allows me to be surrounded by peers in different majors and different schools and that broadens the discussion of ethics and brings in many different viewpoints and experiences to learn from. I look forward to the rest of this semester before graduation quickly approaches and I hope to learn more from CHANGE and the people in this organization even after my time at Clemson University is over."

Hely Patel, Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

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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](mailto:mayfie2@clemson.edu) or 864-656-5379.



# Layoffs, Labor, and Logistics

Zion Kaauwai, CHANGE President

Photo from Freepik.com



The recent headlines regarding massive layoffs from Big Tech firms bring many questions regarding not only the state of the economy, but also the relationship between the employee and the employer. As the Federal Reserve has continued to increase the interest rates to wrangle down inflation (with varying results), the pressure has come down hard on both the corporations and consumers; the costs of operations have gone up for businesses and the cost of buying a home and credit becomes more expensive for households. Amidst the Fed's fight against inflation, they have announced that they want to lower consumer spending from higher wages which will drive down inflation. While this makes sense from an economic

perspective, we must consider American citizens who will be pushed from their jobs. Are working citizens just financial collateral to taking the hit during an economic downturn?

These companies also outsource their labor to places where they are not subject to the union-reinforced wages and benefits as they are in the United States, which is another way to keep costs down (Josephson, 2022). In a downturn, given the choice between the expensive wages of US citizens and much cheaper labor abroad, the choice is obvious to a company looking for quick ways to cut costs (Murra, 2023). Should they keep labor in the US? Why? What about outsourcing is upsetting (or not upsetting), especially if competitors are doing the same thing?

Corporate conduct also brings into question the role of employees going on strike. Striking employees want higher wages and more benefits, driving up consumer spending and resulting in the costs being passed right back to those striking consumers in the first place: ergo, inflation. (Ho, 2023). Should companies choose to maintain their operations in the US or would it be better for them to move their most expensive operations abroad? While companies have certainly done this to become more competitive and have a stronger position in the global economy, dumping their American employees is a poor decision for their brand. The American people take pride in goods manufactured by American hands, and when companies leave, the people speak with their wallets (Newman, 2022).



Photo from Austin Diesel on unsplash.com

So, what does this all mean? Ultimately, with the Federal Reserve trying to prevent high inflation from eroding away household savings and losing control of the economy and companies trying to stay afloat as business becomes more expensive, some employees will be caught in the crossfire of two important systems coming to blows (Lane, 2022). Even more so, as employees vye for higher wages to keep up with inflation raising the cost of everything, employers are also trying to cut costs through layoffs. That is not to say that all are doomed however. Inflation rose in January due to employers hiring over 500,000 people, and many of the companies laying people off are working out decent severance packages to get people through the next few stages of the economic volatility.

Photo from J Comp on unsplash.com



How does ethics play into this? On a national and global scale, it would be difficult to point fingers at who could be responsible for innocent Americans losing their jobs while also looking at the consequences of doing something about it. Using government dollars to subsidize households would only bloat inflation due to the increase in money. Forcing companies to keep increasing wage expenditures could cause them to go out of business. Ceasing hiring of new employees would harm brand image, as would outsourcing labor abroad. Are companies more important than employees? Are employees more important than companies? Are more jobs more important than long term survival of a structurally significant firm? What is the human cost of any of these decisions? Being an ethically engaged individual asks that these difficult questions are considered, especially when no answer is clear.

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# Opportunities, Growth, and A Look Towards the Future

Lane Mayfield, Graduate Assistant



Around this time two years ago, I met with Dr. McCoy, Rachel, and their previous graduate assistant, Landan, for the first time. I remember interviewing for this position in my childhood bedroom during the pandemic.

It felt so strange to be thinking about my future in such an unprecedented and confusing time. When I received the offer to work at Rutland, my mom and I celebrated the good news. I was officially a Clemson Tiger and I was officially working in one of the best graduate assistant positions on campus.

During the on-boarding process, I quickly began to understand my role here at the institute. I became the student advisor of CHANGE, learning how to edit this editorial, and engaging with students on campus. Unfortunately, I unexpectedly lost my mom during my first semester at the Rutland Institute. This was hands down the most difficult time of my life and it was relieving to know that I didn't have to worry about work or losing my income during that time. Dr. McCoy and Rachel supported me, allowed me to take time to process, and welcomed me back when I was ready to resume my activities. At RIE, we make it a point to get to know each other better and to support one another. At the end of the semester you might see us dining together at a local restaurant or celebrating another great semester with our CHANGE students.

While working in this position, I have been a part of several activities and I have learned a lot from each and every one. The favorite part of my job is working with our CHANGE students. As the student advisor for CHANGE, I



have learned a lot about leadership. It is my job to ensure that CHANGE and RIE are working together seamlessly and that all of our objectives have been met. I have also planned events alongside CHANGE members such as our bounce house, tabling events, and our collaborations with the College of Education's Student Advisory Board. I also work with Zion, our current president of CHANGE, to run weekly meetings. I've learned that being a leader means to be persistent in your goals, to be kind to those you work with, and to find meaning in your work.

Another one of my favorite tasks is planning the Annual High School Ethics Case Competition. As a kid I enjoyed competitions such as National History Day and I remember how it felt to visit a college campus as a teenager. These visits made me excited to go to college one day and I thought that it was "so cool" to be a college kid. I try to envision my younger self when planning the case competition. I know how valuable it is for young people to engage in thought-provoking competitions.

As my time at RIE and Clemson comes to an end, I know that I will take this experience with me wherever I go. I will be graduating in May with both my M.Ed. and Ed.S. degrees in Counselor Education. Being a Georgia native, I'm excited to say that I will be staying in the Greenville area upon graduation. I plan to be a therapist with a group practice in the Upstate. I am certain that my growth in leadership, time management, public speaking, and event planning will assist me as I enter the professional world. It has been a pleasure working with RIE, CHANGE, and the students of Clemson University. Go Tigers and Go Ethics!

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