



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Taking a Position of Influence

Author(s)

Michael Pritchard

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Description

You teach in the department of Engineering Technology at Western Tech. Although you are well known nationally for your research, your heavy teaching load has prevented you from undertaking a major project you have been interested in for some time. So, you begin working on a proposal. Later you find out that you are going to serve on the review panel for this program.

Abstract

This case is one of thirty-two cases which address a wide range of ethical issues that can arise in engineering practice provided by the Center For the Study of Ethics in Society, Western Michigan University.

Body

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Western Tech is anxious to upgrade its status as a first-rate research institution. So, the Office of Research has just announced a summer faculty fellowship program.

Faculty may now submit proposals for research projects they wish to undertake. Fellowship awards are \$6000 for two months of research in the summer.

You teach in the department of Engineering Technology at Western Tech. Although you are well known nationally for your research, your heavy teaching load has prevented you from undertaking a major project you have been interested in for some time. So, you begin working on a proposal.

As you are working on the proposal in your office, the phone rings. It is David Jackson, Vice-President for Research at Western Tech. He says: "I'm calling to ask you to serve on the review panel for our new faculty fellowship program. It's important to have people on the panel who are highly respected and know good research when they see it. So, I'd really like you to be on the panel."

How do you respond?



You explain to Vice-President Jackson that you are working on a research proposal yourself. He replies, "Since this is a new program, we haven't worked out all the wrinkles yet. But it doesn't seem fair that our best people--the ones we want on the panel--should not have a chance at the fellowships. You can still apply. All we require is that you not be involved in evaluating your own proposal. Just leave the room when your proposal is being considered. The other panelists will rank your proposal in your absence, and you won't know where yours ranks until the entire process is complete."

Does this solve the problem? What is the problem?

Notes

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Contributor(s)

Michael Pritchard

Editor(s)

Michael Pritchard

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