



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Struggle over Data

Author(s)

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Year

2000

Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about ways of responding to a conflict over data between a faculty member and a student.

Body

Grady is a graduate student in the department that you chair. Grady has had a research assistantship with Professor Junior and planned to use the research data from that project as the basis for her thesis. Professor Junior, who is untenured, has now come into conflict with Professor Power, a senior member of the department. The conflict has affected the working environment for some of the graduate students in the department, including Grady, and consequently the relationship between Grady and Professor Junior has become strained. Grady has asked to switch thesis supervisors, now that her experimental work is complete.

Until now, the department has always allowed students to switch advisors, if another faculty member was willing to take them on, and another senior faculty member, Professor New, agrees to take Grady on. Grady is fearful that Professor Junior will not let her have the primary data for her thesis, some of which is in a form that cannot readily be copied in a way that preserves all the information. Professor New advises

Grady to take from Professor Junior's lab everything she needs to finish her thesis.

When Professor Junior discovers that the data is missing she comes to your office demanding the data, and points out that as PI for the grant under which the data collection was funded, she has the responsibility for it in the eyes of the funding agency.

What do you do and how do you go about it?

Notes

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

Contributor(s)

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Resource Type

Case Study / Scenario

Parent Collection

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

Topics

Data Management

Mentors and Trainees

Organizational Climate

Discipline(s)

Research Ethics

Publisher

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