



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

## Switching Advisors?

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### Year

2000

### Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about situations where a student might be justified in switching advisors.

### Body

You are a research assistant working in Professor Taskmaster's lab. You are pursuing a Master's Degree. He has agreed to support you through graduate school for performing research in his lab. During your first year at school, you are busy taking courses and cannot spend as much time doing research in Professor Taskmaster's lab as you or he wishes. You plan to complete your coursework first and then focus entirely on your research. During the first year, you hear endless complaints by Professor Taskmaster that you are not paying attention to your research and constant reminders that he is paying for your studies. He doesn't hesitate to call you on weekends, asking you to come in. You try to do your best to get some fruitful results from your experiments, but with a full-time 9 credits of course load, you do not have enough time to concentrate on your research.

Your lab is on the same floor as that of Professor Snatchy who is also a faculty member of your department. You bump into him and some of his students a couple of times and become interested in his research. You would like to leave Professor Taskmaster's lab and join Professor Snatchy as a research assistant. Up to this point, Professor Taskmaster has paid for 18 credits of your coursework and has received back nothing substantial in the form of research work. Professor Snatchy will benefit greatly by your switch. He has a reputation for taking on as research assistants only those students who have completed their coursework. At the end of this semester you will be finished with your courses.

- What do you do now?
- How explicit was the agreement you made with Professor Taskmaster when you joined his group? If explicit, what did it say?
- What, if any, are the established procedures and expectations for changing advisors?

## **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**

Mentors and Trainees

### **Discipline(s)**

Research Ethics

### **Publisher**

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