

Instruction for Ethics Advisors – Session 2

For your second discussion, you should again emphasize the *choices* that the engineers make in choosing their project, creating their design, and testing its effectiveness. Your job is NOT to tell them what to do, to police them, or to tell them what is right or wrong; rather, your job is to help facilitate a better understanding, first, of their own ethical agency and responsibilities in the course of the project, second, to encourage their “moral imagination,” and, third, to help them recognize the ethical and social issues that might be relevant.

Again, you should focus on asking questions “Socratically,” about the choices the students made and the potential consequences of those choices, e.g., for the users, for society, for the environment, for the professional reputation of the designers and the engineering profession as a whole. One of you should take point in the discussion, while the other two should focus on taking notes. If you prefer, a different person can take point than did in Session 1.

As each team will be different, you may find that you need to adapt these instructions over time .

1. Increase Rapport with the SDP Team
 - Re-acquaint yourselves with the team. Tell them how your semester is going. Tell them what you came away with after the last discussion.
 - Ask the team how their project is going.
 - Bring them food.
2. Ask Questions about their Project
 - Ask questions about what problems they have solved since you last met, and why they choose to solve them the way they did. What are the pros and cons of their choice over other options?
 - Ask questions that re-direct discussions from technical issues to potential consequences for users, society, the environment, etc. Encourage them to think imaginatively about possible positive and negative consequences of their design.
3. Explore Ethics Issues in the Project
 - Ask the SDP team what ethical issues they think they face, and how they address them.
 - If you notice any ethical issues that they have omitted, ask open-ended questions that get at those issues, e.g., “What about the environmental impacts?” Or “Supposing the user adopts this technology and uses it correctly. Could it still have a negative impact on X,Y, or Z?”
 - Go through the Ethics Worksheet with them. Answer any clarificatory questions they have for you (i.e., “Are safety issues *ethical* issues?”), but redirect any substantive ethical questions to the team; ask them what they think, what other stakeholders would think, or what the social consensus is. Encourage them to take responsibility for their decision, to do what they think is right, and not to avoid or shift blame to the users or someone else.

NOTES: