



Ethical Principles for College and University Administrators

As university administrators, we are committed to doing what is right in the exercise of our professional duties and responsibilities. Embracing higher education as both a profession and vocation, we recognize that high ethical standards are critical to maintaining the public's trust. These *Principles* describe the expectations we have for ourselves and our fellow administrators. They articulate the ideals to which we aspire and the ethical behaviors that define our profession.

By affirming these *Principles*, both individually and collectively, we hope to increase our capacity to make ethical decisions, particularly in those situations that may challenge our integrity or professional standards. We also intend for these *Principles* to stimulate a dialogue among university administrators on our shared responsibility to serve as ethical leaders, both within our institutions and throughout higher education.

Guiding Principles of our Profession

- ***We commit to the highest level of integrity.*** Honest behavior is the key to establishing trust among those with whom we work. We do not make false or deceptive claims or engage in rendering statements that are misleading or incomplete. We avoid actual or apparent conflicts of interest, especially in our personal and/or professional relationships. In all we do, we take responsibility for our actions and inactions and take relevant and prompt steps to correct any mistake, omission or distortion.
- ***We uphold the values of fairness and equity.*** We welcome and encourage diverse perspectives and respect the dignity of all individuals. We appreciate human differences and do not discriminate on the basis of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, ability, gender expression, race, class, religion, sexual orientation or economic status.
- ***We strive for accuracy and transparency.*** Information is the lifeblood of our profession. We are obligated to provide our constituents and stakeholders with information that is truthful, accurate, complete, objective, relevant, and understandable. Our information should comply with the rules and regulations of federal, state, and local governments, as well as other appropriate private and public regulatory agencies, and institutional constraints.
- ***We respect confidentiality and protect the privacy of information.*** We take active steps to respect and protect the legitimate privacy interests of all individuals and maintain appropriate confidentiality of institutional information and student records. We never use information acquired in the course of our work for personal advantage.
- ***We support the missions of our institutions.*** University administrators frequently act as stewards and sometimes as defenders or enforcers of institutional goals, policies and practices. Many of the ethical dilemmas we face occur when there is a perceived or real conflict between the students, faculty, staff, and public we serve and the reasonable interests of our institution. In all situations we demonstrate professional judgment and respond in ways that meet the highest standards of our profession.
- ***We actively seek support when concerned about an ethical issue.*** Gross ethical violations are relatively easy to recognize and report. Most ethical issues, however, are not so clear cut. There is frequently a “gray area” between the letter and spirit of an institutional practice or policy. Whenever appropriate, university administrators seek guidance from a trusted peer, mentor or experienced colleagues in a manner that fully respects privacy concerns.
- ***We raise our voices when the ethical standards of our profession are not being upheld.*** Each of us has a mutual responsibility to hold our professional and institutional colleagues accountable. We do not look the other way or rationalize unethical behavior because of friendship or loyalty. We act with moral courage, even in the face of risk, danger, or fear.
- ***We pursue professional opportunities to acquire new ethical knowledge and practices.*** We all have ethical “blind spots.” As dedicated professionals committed to excellence, we actively seek out and participate in professional growth opportunities to increase our awareness and knowledge of ethical best practices and emerging ethical issues.
- ***We actively promote and disseminate these Principles.*** We have a responsibility to promote ethical conduct within our profession. These *Principles* have been written, in part, to engender conversation and dialogue on the ethical issues facing university administrators, especially individuals new to our profession.