

Additional Case Studies for Graduate Students

Please read the following case studies and try to determine the best course of action. Several ideas are suggested, but feel free to propose other resolutions if you desire. Please be prepared to defend your choice. The first three case studies are related, and the later ones build on the first one. So please try to answer the first completely in the space provided before moving on to the second, and answer the second before moving on to the third.

- Michael is grading homework using an answer book the department provided him. It's now late October and he feels confident grading from the answer book without even reading the questions in the book. However, on exercise 11.4 he finds that the first several good students have the same answer, and it is radically different from the answer book. When he looks at the question in the book he realizes that the answer book is answering a completely different question, perhaps from the exercise 11.4 in a previous edition. The students had correctly answered exercise 11.4, so he marks them correct. In the next batch of papers he finds two students, Mark and Shannon, who have the exact same answer as that in the answer book, even though there is no question in the book with that answer. Thinking back, Michael realizes that Mark and Shannon have often had very similar papers and often done extremely well on their homework, despite low scores on the first midterm. He notices that their wording on all problems matches the answer book exactly, and even finds a typo in the answer book which is repeated by both of them but by no other students. Michael is now convinced that these students have a copy of the answer book. What should Michael do? The syllabus does not prohibit collaboration or receiving help from any source on the homework, so there has been no honor code violation. Yet these students have achieved the highest homework average in the class, and done so by cheating. Should Michael grade them harshly for any minor mistakes to make up for all their ill-begotten homework grades? Should he grade their next exams more harshly?

- Michael decides to bring the evidence of cheating to the course instructor, Professor Maddox. Professor Maddox thinks bringing cases to the honor board is a waste of time, and prefers to spend his time on his research rather than on these teaching matters. Michael is worried that these students are on a dangerous path, which may lead to them failing the final exam. Should he leave a note on the homework telling the students that he knows they are cheating? Should he try to meet with them in person?

- Two weeks later the students take their second midterm. Michael grades the in-class portion of the exam and grades Mark and Shannon together to see if taking shortcuts on the homework has hurt their understanding. He finds that both done very poorly, and also that their papers are far too similar for them to have been completed without collaboration. For instance, both students have the same answers on all problems, and have shown the same work, even when this entails very uncommon mistakes. Furthermore, there are places where Mark's writing makes no sense but appears to the eye similar to Shannon's writing, e.g. Mark takes the integral of " $\ln(x) 2x$ " where Shannon correctly takes " $\ln(x) dx$ " and Mark at one point gets an answer of "61" while Shannon gets the correct answer of "6!" (which should have been evaluated to 720). Mark brings the evidence of cheating to Professor Maddox, who still prefers to handle this matter without the honor board. Professor Maddox tells Michael to grade Mark and Shannon very harshly on all remaining homework and on the final exam. However, Michael has been reading *Teaching Matters* and knows this is against university policy. Should he carry out his instructions? Should he ignore Professor Maddox's instructions and grade all students the same? Should he go over Professor Maddox's head? If so, should he report to the honor board? To the department chair? How else can he resolve this situation?

- Vicki has been working hard all week. She had to take an exam today but didn't have time to study for sufficiently because her TA responsibilities required her to hold extra office hours to prepare her students for an exam of their own. She decides to go out and take a night off. On her way to the bar she sees an undergraduate party and a senior she knows from Amnesty International invites her in. She decides to come in for a quick drink, figuring that this party is probably mostly seniors and her students are mostly freshmen. Vicki immediately regrets the decision: inside she sees several of the students in her class and all are dangerously drunk despite being underage. Furthermore, she sees one of her poorer students sitting up sharply from a table which has some white powder on it. Vicki decides to get out of there in a hurry. Outside she wonders if there's something she's supposed to do. She knows this party is giving copious amounts of alcohol and potentially illegal drugs to underage students, and she cares about these students. Should she try to convince them to leave? Or call Public Safety to break up the party? Is she required as a student to report breaches of the code of non-academic conduct? Should she try to talk to her students next week about these destructive decisions they are making? Or should she just pretend this never happened?

- Catherine is rotating through Professor Balaban's lab as a part of her first-year requirements, even though she plans to work with Professor Dwyer in the long run. Catherine is starting to feel overwhelmed by how much he expects of his students. It seems like all the other students are much smarter than she is, and are producing research much faster. She decides to start working longer hours and one night in the lab she finds that a third-year student, Carl, has left his computer on with his data charts open. Carl is rarely in the lab, and mostly ignores the other students, but seems to be Professor Balaban's favorite because of how many papers he has written. She doesn't want to do anything which will ruin his experiment, so she takes a peek at the charts to see what he's running. She realizes that the data in this chart requires the use of a machine which she has been monopolizing for the past month and which she knows no one else has used. Yet Carl has data entered for each day, and in another window is already writing a paper where that data completely supports his thesis. Catherine strongly suspects that Carl is falsifying his data. What should she do? Should she bring her suspicions to Professor Balaban? Or to her mentor Professor Dwyer? Or to the graduate judicial board? Should she confront Carl on her own?

- Charlie is the TA for an upper level course and many of his students are struggling. The professor covers the material very quickly and doesn't seem to care if students do not understand it. Charlie does care, and so he holds twice as many office hours as he is required to, and often stays late to help students understand. One student, Jeff, came to many early office hours but has stopped coming lately and has stopped handing in homework. One night Charlie is working late on his own research and Jeff shows up unannounced. He looks haggard and sleep deprived. He comes into Charlie's office and closes the door behind him. Charlie is not comfortable with this, but before he can say anything Jeff bursts into tears. Jeff tells Charlie that he has been diagnosed with HIV and that's why his work came to a stand-still. He didn't know who else to turn to, and always viewed Charlie as someone who was caring and wise but still cool. Jeff is very ashamed of his diagnosis and is too afraid to tell his recent sexual partners of this development. He also seems very guilty because he has had several sexual partners recently and is almost positive that he has infected them. He makes a comment about taking an "easy way out," but instead of elaborating on this goes back into his self-pitying and guilt, now focusing on how he's let his teachers down by not being strong enough to control his emotional reaction. Charlie is able to calm Jeff down and send him home to get some sleep. After Jeff is gone, Charlie tries to decide what to do. He doesn't feel comfortable betraying Jeff's confidence to his advisor or to the professor running the class, but he doesn't know who else he can ask for advice. He's also concerned that there may be others who are HIV positive and don't know it. Charlie is worried about Jeff's state of mind; he doesn't know Jeff very well, but this comment about taking the "easy way out" has him worried that Jeff might cause harm to himself. What should Charlie do?