

**The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University** works with professionals and organizations in many fields, as well as students and educators to promote ethical reflection and action. The Center does not tell people what to think; rather we suggest what to think about and how to think it through. We focus on:

- Bioethics and Health Care Ethics
- Business Ethics
- Campus Ethics and Student Life
- Character Education
- Government Ethics

**Extensive resources on these and other topics:**

#### Articles and Cases

[www.scu.edu/ethics/focusareas](http://www.scu.edu/ethics/focusareas)

#### Ethical Decision Making Resources

[www.scu.edu/ethics/decision](http://www.scu.edu/ethics/decision)

#### Events (Open to the Public)

[www.scu.edu/ethics-center/events](http://www.scu.edu/ethics-center/events)

#### Blogs

[www.scu.edu/ethics-center/ethicsblog](http://www.scu.edu/ethics-center/ethicsblog)

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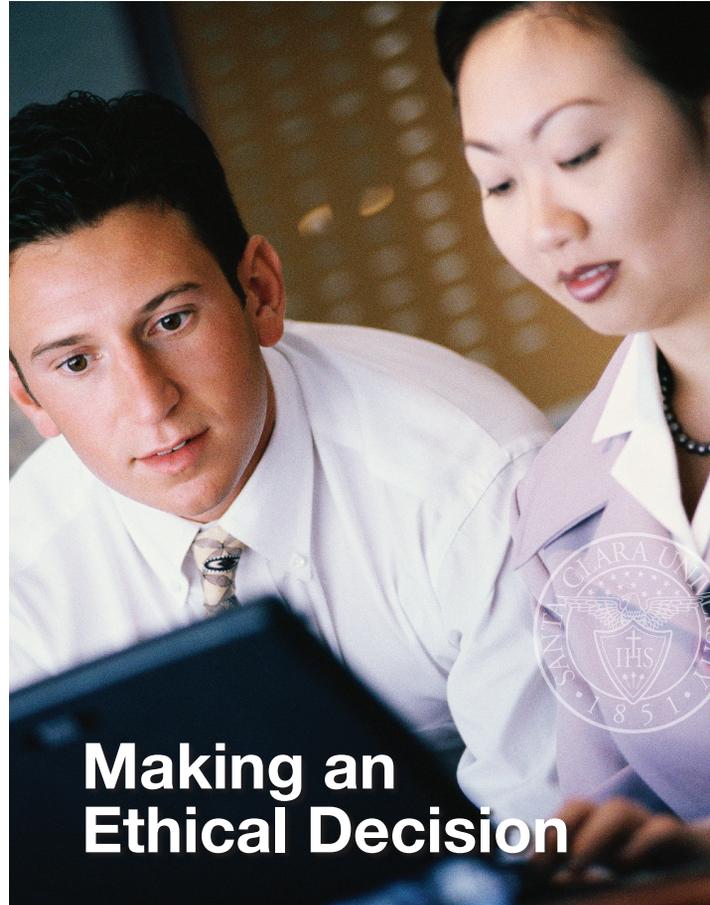
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*This framework for making an ethical decision is the product of extensive dialogue at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics since its founding in 1986. The Center is grateful to the staff, faculty, and friends of the Center who have contributed to its development. Permission to reprint this pamphlet is granted for non-commercial purposes, as long as credit is given to the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University.*



## **The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics**

Providing practical tools for ethical living

# Making an Ethical Decision

## Recognize an Ethical Issue

1. Could this decision or situation be damaging to someone or to some group? Does this decision involve a choice between a good and bad alternative, or perhaps between two “goods” or between two “bads”?
2. Is this issue about more than what is legal or what is most efficient? If so, how?

## Get the Facts

3. What are the relevant facts of the case? What facts are not known? Can I learn more about the situation? Do I know enough to make a decision?
4. What individuals and groups have an important stake in the outcome? Are some concerns more important? Why?
5. What are the options for acting? Have all the relevant persons and groups been consulted? Have I identified creative options?

## Evaluate Alternative Actions

6. Evaluate the options by asking the following questions:
  - Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm? (The Utilitarian Approach)

- Which option best respects the rights of all who have a stake? (The Rights Approach)
- Which option treats people equally or proportionately? (The Justice Approach)
- Which option best serves the community as a whole, not just some members? (The Common Good Approach)
- Which option leads me to act as the sort of person I want to be? (The Virtue Approach)

## Make a Decision and Test It

7. Considering all these approaches, which option best addresses the situation?
8. If I told someone I respect—or told a television audience—which option I have chosen, what would they say?

## Act and Reflect on the Outcome

9. How can my decision be implemented with the greatest care and attention to the concerns of all stakeholders?
10. How did my decision turn out and what have I learned from this specific situation?



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