An Ethical Dilemma Involving Academic Dishonesty and Professional Protocol

Jeffery F. Sarahs

Bridgewater State University
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Ethics are most commonly recognized as the perspectives and values that govern human conduct and distinguish moral behavior from immoral behavior. Throughout the course of one’s life there are often poignant situations, scenarios, and dilemmas where one is challenged to make the most ethical decision in the given situation. Often times these decisions are difficult to make and there can be a multitude of contextual factors to consider when developing the most ethically appropriate decision or solution to the matter. Given the case involving Barrett in which he is an active professional for ENEU and stumbles upon some information online indicating that there may be academic misconduct on behalf of two of his students he advises. Barrett encounters mental and emotional turmoil as he struggles to determine what exactly transpired between his close friend and supervisee and what his ethical response should be. However, this issue is complex and will need to consider many contextual factors in order to provide the most well informed ethical judgment and action if need be. This course of action will require Barrett to utilize a series of methodological decision-making steps in order to give this case the most thorough and just interpretation. In the realm of student affairs, professionals often rely on such ethical decision-making models to help navigate their way through difficult dilemmas. Two ethical decision-making models that grant a student affairs professional a comprehensive guideline to follow when addressing an ethical issue are Rae, Fournier, & Roberts (2001) and Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson (2009).

Recognizing Barrett’s present concerns and the nature of this particular dilemma, Barrett can optimize his solution to the ethical dilemma he has encountered via following steps from the Rae, Fournier, & Roberts (2001) model and the Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson (2009) ethical decision-making model. Therefore, in the following, I will demonstrate the procedural course of action that Barrett may benefit from using in order to effectively address the ethical dilemma involving a potential academic misconduct involving his students.
Structure and Purpose

To begin this process, I began by analyzing the decision-making model presented by Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson (2009) as Barrett must confront his Ethical Worldview. Clearly Barrett must have a moral and/or ethical code as evidenced by his struggle with the presented scenario, his conflicting feelings regarding this message online, and how this message pertains to his professional and personal ethical obligations. Perhaps cheating, deception, and/or academic dishonesty are just a few of the more salient factors that he denounces within his ethical worldview. Judging from the manner in which Barrett is struggling, the likelihood that Barrett is not aware of his professional obligations in their entirety is a highly likely possibility. In return, Barrett may be acting out of motivation to prevent professional misconduct from occurring on his behalf, since he is considered to be an employee and representative of ENEU. Barrett may also be aware of the “potential problem” but may not be positively certain that an issue even exists until he undergoes further analysis of the situation, which will then provide him with some confirmation as to the reality and legitimacy of the circumstances. With this in mind, I believe it would be essential for Barrett to further interpret why and how his student’s behavior can be construed as being unethical.

Understanding and Interpreting Ethical Dilemmas

Interestingly enough, in this case, there appears to be a problem within a problem and stage two of Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson (2009) “Identify the dilemma” would be the next step required for Barrett to initiate. First and foremost, if Barrett’s friend Paul received a paper from Steve and presented that paper as if it was his own, he essentially engaged in academic dishonesty, which is frowned upon in almost all institutions and among most ethical and moral codes. Secondly, if this act did occur, Paul and Steve have violated student conduct guidelines and must be dealt with according. Bruhn, J. G., Zajac, G., Al-Kazemi, A. A., & Prescott Jr., L. D. (2002) identify a disruption in ethics as an ethical failure usually depending on some degree of malevolence or negligence on the
part of mentally competent actors, resulting in harm to (usually innocent) others” (p. 476). I would further remark that this behavior has caused Barrett emotional turmoil. As far as Barrett’s internal dilemma, he is struggling to recognize and fulfill his professional/institutional obligations as an active employee on campus while also trying to protect the loyalty and respect of his friendship he has with Steve. Depending on the course of action Barrett takes, he is at-risk of losing a potential friend. Stage three of Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson (2009) “Weighing competing ethical principles” will allow Barrett to see how his “friend” Paul’s behavior impacted their relationship on an ethical level. Essentially in this stage, Barrett would determine that his professional integrity is competing with his trust, loyalty, and integrity as a friend, as he obviously worries about the well being of his friend and his future. Having identified the potential ethical dilemma, Barrett can select relevant ethical guidelines and/or professional standards that indicate where Paul and Steve’s behavior is represented under certain codes of organizations that Barrett may subscribe to. For example, if Barrett is a member of ACA, ACPA, or NASPA there may be a set of ethical codes of conduct that Barrett is required to protect as a result of his affiliation within that association. Since each organization is unique from the other, different codes may find the students in violation and may find Barrett responsible to act. If ENEU, has a code of conduct manual that outlines the codes, Barrett may benefit from researching those codes to see if the students did in fact breach those codes of conduct. In future paragraphs, relevant codes from the three organizations listed above will be assessed to see how they would apply to Barrett’s dilemma.

In stage five of the decision-making process, Barrett would be required to examine any/all potential cultural and contextual issues impacting the ethical dilemma under the Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson’s (2009) model. I believe Rae, Fournier, & Roberts (2001) stage one “Gathering information” can be inserted in conjunction with stage five to better comprehend and understand the contextual factors. An essential aspect
of this particular case involves the remark, "Hey Steve, thanks for saving my ass and letting me "borrow" one of your lit papers for my class. The prof totally thought it was mine and said it was the best paper in the class! I totally owe you bro!!", which has the potential to be false or inaccurate. However, it is the possibility that truth exists in this matter that has challenged Barrett to feel as though he needs more information before he can fulfill his ethical obligations. Certainly most persons are intellectually competent enough to decipher when an act or verbal statement appears phony or genuine in person. However, the world of Facebook has been a social media source that has proved to be an instigating network creating similar types of dilemmas, as communication is often posted via words/comments and very rarely ever accounts for one’s true intent or the context of their words. Consequently, the information can be misinterpreted and/or misleading for those individuals whom encounter the information. Perhaps, these students were joking or perhaps there are additional factors that Barrett in unaware of that may cause unnecessary action. By gathering all the facts from the online conversation and printing out the message exchange between Paul and Steve as evidence, Barrett can present the conversation to both students if he decides to confront them, to avoid any potential confusion. In conjunction with this fact gathering, considering any cultural influences may provide a rationale for the behavior. Perhaps, Barrett would assess both of his student’s backgrounds, their culture, and/or their religious affiliation to better understand a motive for the sharing of academic information. The possibility is present that one or both of the students comes from a culture or educational background where students actively help one another. By considering all of the elements that may contribute to the dilemma, Barrett can exercise informed judgment when developing a proper course of action.

The remainder of the ethical decision-making steps that Barrett would deem most appropriate would be derived from Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson (2009). As outlined in stage six, it would be important for Barrett to be aware of his professional obligations
to the institution as a GA, which would require Barrett to consult with his employee handbook to determine if he is bound by ENEU to respond to this matter in any particular manner. Here, policies and procedures, campus regulations, and student code of conduct would be assessed and evaluated to see where the infraction of academic dishonesty is noted, what the punishment is, and what is required on his behalf of Barrett in regards to action. Barrett could become better familiarized with his essential job functions and where and to whom he is required to report relevant incidences to. In determining specific policies Barrett can maneuver his way through stage seven by developing a procedure conducive with the academic and employee policies, while upholding Paul and Steve’s right to respect, privacy, and confidentiality. The ethical or professional precedence may reinforce or further educate Barrett as to any legality issues his students may be facing or that may arise from his decision to act or not act. In understanding the policies, procedures, and any legal implications in the matter, Barrett can construct a framework in which he can fulfill his obligations to the institution, while also providing the best possible outcome for his students. Although this framework places a lens or perspective on what may be professionally required, it may be important for Barrett to continue to educate himself to the best of his ability in terms of the ethical violations of his advisees.

**Developing a resolution.** During this ethical decision-making process, Barrett may want to seek collaborative consultation and brainstorm his options as to the most ethical decision he should make, as represented in stage eight. Barrett may wish to discuss the dilemma with a supervisor to see how typical cases are handled and also receive clarification on his role as a GA and how compelled he is to the employee guidelines and regulations of ENEU, especially when the issue pertains to academics. Barrett may want to do his own research to see if there is any literature or articles that have similar contextual issues that have taken place and what the procedures and outcomes were in that case, thus granting him a more insight on the issue. There are
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many colleagues that Barrett can bounce ideas off of; he could ask for general guidance or advice that relates to general issues involving academic violations, keeping his students’ identities confidential and gaining perspective from other higher education professionals. In addition, Barrett could “request consultation from the ACPA Ethics Committee, which would require him to write a detailed description of the ethical dilemma as well as his struggles as a GA. In seeking out counsel and information directly related to his case, Barrett can better understand his professional boundaries and what may be expected of him as a student affairs graduate assistant.

Evaluating possible consequences and options of action/inaction in stage nine would be Barrett’s next focus. If Barrett does not take action or pursue this potential issue, he may no longer be acting in compliance with his employee conduct manual. It may be easier for Barrett to disregard the issue and act as if he had never seen the comment made on Facebook, however, in doing so he will jeopardize his professional integrity. Depending on ENEU’s policies and procedures for these matters, if Barrett does not act and Eastern New England University becomes aware of his failure to act, his career could be jeopardized as well. If Barrett is to act, and find Paul guilty or not guilty, in either case his friendship could be jeopardized as Paul may interpret his questioning and action as betraying their friendship. Depending on how Barrett proceeds with appropriate action, Paul and Steve could become entangled in a vast amount of academic and extracurricular trouble. Acknowledging the above, Barrett may realize that the underlying issues behind his students’ behavior needs to be corrected, which is where he may feel he should focus his efforts. Barrett would then determine how he would approach these students to work towards that goal.

Implementing a productive resolution. At stage ten and eleven, Barrett is required to chose a course of action and then implement that course of action. After deliberating over the potential consequences and the options of action/inaction, I believe choosing to utilize an informal resolution in this matter would be appropriate, based on
Paul and Steve’s willingness to cooperate. As an active leader and role model to his students, Barrett would speak with or request to set up a time to speak with Paul and Steve individually. As the meeting(s) take place I believe it would be appropriate for Barrett to present his gathered information in a non-accusing manner and ask the each individual directly, whether or not the statement is true. For purposes of this paper it will be predetermined that the breach of academic integrity did take place. Barrett may then hold a conversation as to why they engaged in this behavior which may lead into an opportunity for the students to self-reflect on their thought processes before, during, and after the academic infraction took place, as well as when the message was constructed online. In addition, Barrett would want to educate both students on the severity of their behavior and the potential consequences for their involvement in this matter under school regulations. While educating Paul and Steve in relation to the consequences, I would advise Barrett to also discuss his role as a GA and how his role requires him to act in accordance within the guidelines of school personnel. In doing so, Barrett can discuss with Paul and Steve how they have placed him in a highly complex and emotionally draining situation. Barrett can inform the students how they too are held to a higher standard as a result of their active campus involvement and remind them of the expectations of the organizations they are affiliated with. Educating both students on social media and the potential drawbacks of posting online would also be an ideal topic to discuss with these students as they may be unaware of how their messages online can be held against them at any point in time. Lastly, I would ask each student what they have learned from this experience, seek to find out whether or not this will behavior with reoccur, and if they are genuinely apologetic and what they have learned as I believe that will be a more appropriate and productive solution. Barrett may want to have Paul and Steve together after these individual meetings take place and it will be essential to for the two to acknowledge their wrongdoing and to converse about how they plan to redirect themselves in the future when similar situations arise. I believe it is more important to
focus efforts on educating and rehabilitating these students so they grow as individuals and learn from their mistakes rather than punishing them because ENEU or I may be upset with them because they undermined school conduct. In understanding his fairly new role, it would be important for Barrett to be aware of any bias or impartiality he may have in reprimanding his students to avoid any conflict of interest. Author Harry J. Canon (1996) identifies the student affairs professional’s approach to a situation involving ethical misconduct by writing, “the essential task is not to impose punishment (and most certainly not out of punitive motives) but rather to change behavior, to ensure that a more ethical course of action is taken on future occasions” (p. 123). Helping students grow as productive and ethical adults is a motivating reason why student affairs professionals enter the field, therefore even amidst times of ethical misjudgment we should use those times as teachable moments rather than go to any extreme of suspending or expelling the student, as that message doesn’t productively provide an opportunity for the student to grow or redeem his or her integrity as a student and even more importantly, as a person.

In stage twelve, the final course of action for Barrett to take would be to assess all of his prior action, experience, and potentially develop strategies to avoid future ethical dilemmas similar in nature. Even though Barrett considers Facebook to be the “pulse” on what students are doing on and off campus, perhaps now that he is a representative of ENEU, that insight could cause many future boundary issues that could be easily preventable if he is to use Facebook differently. Perhaps, creating a social group(s) via Facebook pertinent to the clubs and organizations he leads, making them accessible to only his students in those organizations. This will keep a divide between personal and professional boundaries while on Facebook. Another option is for Barrett to withdraw his own personal Facebook account and/or his student friends, which may create some disconnect via social web, but it will help protect his own privacy, his students privacy, and prevent future issues similar in nature from burdening or obligating him to act. Barrett should also take the time to revisit or better familiarize with his job duties and
also reflect on his role and what he aspires towards professionally to give himself a realistic idea of the sacrifices he may have to make. Finally, Barrett is a leader and must possess certain have qualities that allow him to effectively communicate with his students; being honest with his students about his new role or transition as a staff member may be a preventative measure that will inform his students about his professional obligations and how their relationships is now different than when he was an undergraduate student.

_Relevant ethical standards and codes._ The most important insight to be aware of as a student affairs professional is that ethical issues are often complex and require a specific methodology that will allow that professional to pursue ethical resolutions in the most ethically sound manner, as did Barrett. Although each case involving a student(s) dilemma is unique and often requires a number of important variables to be considered when following the steps of a particular ethical decision-making model, it is always important to support and pursue the situation in an appropriate and respectful manner to give those students involved the most just and fair treatment. The ACA, ACPA, and NASPA ethical guidelines provide a framework by which a student personnel worker can refer to and identify with the ethical requirements under their role and duties as a student representative. In most cases, the utilization of a code of ethics will help that student affairs professional navigate thoroughly and properly through several decision-making steps in an attempt to develop a legitimate case and provide the most efficient outcome or resolution for each party involved.

In this case study, it is indicated that Barrett is struggling to form a professional identity since he has transitioned from an undergraduate student to a graduate assistant. The issue of being a “friend” and a GA to Paul that Barrett is experiencing may be blurred as he may fear the ramifications his students may be facing as a result of their actions, thus feeling compelled to protect Paul and Steve’s academic standing. On the contrary, a friendship is best known as a mutual relationship where each friend
contributes to their friend’s well being, making that person be the best that he or she can be. In this case, Paul has placed Barrett in a very difficult position by forcing Barrett to be faced with this dilemma, which could be construed as a highly selfish and unfriendly act. Understanding that the action of cheating did take place on Paul’s behalf, it would be Barrett’s obligation as a “friend” to inform Paul about his wrongdoing, why it is wrong, how his actions can effect people other than himself, the education repercussions, and perhaps educating him on how to avoid acting in such a way in the future. In addition, it may be necessary for Barrett to discuss his role with Paul and discuss how he is now expected to conduct himself professionally and how that means that his friendship may need to be carefully monitored. For the purpose of this paper and for growth as a future student affairs professional, it will be essential to evaluate and apply the appropriate ethical standards from ACPA (2006), NASPA (1990), and ACA Code of Ethics (2005). Under the direct affiliation with the prior listed organizations, Barrett would potentially be obligated to act in accordance with those codes and ethical guidelines, as they may dictate the expected action to be taken in relation to academic dishonesty. Welfel (2010) explains how “the intent of a code is to guide the professional through the most common pitfalls in practice and to identify the ethical goals of the profession” (p. 10). These codes could provide Barrett with an objective insight as to what is needed to appropriate assess and address ethical issues.

Under the NASPA standards of professional practice, there are several appropriate ethical standards that grant direction and provide an obligation when a student affairs professional encounters a student suspect to academic dishonesty. In compliance with NASPA’s second guideline “Agreement with Institutional Mission and Goals”, I believe it would be important for Barrett to be cognizant of his role as a graduate assistant and to understand the mission and goals of Eastern New England University, as they will provide a framework by which he can work to protect and uphold that mission. To build upon this concept, standard three known as the “Management of
Institutional Resources” describes how “members inform appropriate officials of conditions which may be potentially disruptive or damaging to the institution’s mission.” Although this is broad, this may require Barrett to contact his supervisor and/or the teacher of the course where this paper was submitted depending on if his student’s behavior met the criteria of being “disruptive” or not. Standard five of NASPA describes “Conflict of Interest” and how any member must recognize his/her role within that institution and “seek to avoid private interests-and distinguish between statements and actions which represent their own personal views and those which represent their employing institution when important to do so.” Essentially, Barrett must be keenly aware of his “double role” as a friend and GA to Paul and in doing so Barrett will need to make sure he is making his decisions in conjunction with ENEU’s interest and not making decisions based on his personal friendship with Paul, as the bond of being a friend to Paul could influence or cause bias when making a well-informed ethical decision. The eighth standard “Student Behavior” discusses how any member of NASPA shall strive to ensure a student’s acceptance of responsibility for his/her own behavior as well as “inform and educate students as to sanctions or constraints on student behavior which may result from violations or law or institutional policies.” This standard relates to the ethical-decision making model stated above, as Barrett would hold Paul responsible for his own actions in relation to his academic dishonesty. I believe it would be an important aspect of the decision-making process for Barrett to inform and educate Paul in regards to his actions of displaying work that isn’t his, and the potential ramifications or disciplinarian action that schools typically takes with similar cases. Lastly, standard fifteen “Job Definition and Performance Evaluation” is a guideline that would help assist Barrett in understanding his professional role; this standard would help clear up any confusion or misconceptions that Barrett may have in regards to his professional identity. In understanding his job duties, responsibilities, and obligations he will better understand what is professionally expected of him.
Within the guidelines of the ACA Code of Ethics there are ample amounts of standards relative to the field of counseling and as a result, these codes tend to favor that of a client-counselor relationship, the code of conduct for a counselor, and codes protecting client rights. In all actuality, student affairs professionals share some similar working relationships with their students as do counselors with their clients and even though the general nature of the work does differ from that of a therapeutic environment, still there are some codes that a student affairs worker can apply to his/her craft, especially when conflicted with a ethical dilemma such as the one involving Barrett and his students. In revising these ethical codes of counselors, there a handful of significant principles that can be applied to the ethical dilemma involving Barrett and Paul. Under A.1.a. Welfare of Those Served by Counselors, “Primary Responsibility” describes the primary goal of a counselor, which is to respect the client and to promote the welfare of the client. Barrett must be aware that he should be primarily concerned with respecting the dignity of his students and the promotion of well being in every working relationship with his students. Barrett will need to avoid harm as stated under A.4 Avoiding Harm and Imposing Values, as Barrett must realize that even though Paul may have jeopardized his own academic integrity, Barrett must pursue the potential issue with benevolent intentions to provide for the best solution and prevent further harm from stemming from the preexisting issue. Under B.1 Respect for Confidentiality, counselors do not share confidential information without client consent or without sound legal or ethical justification. In B.3.c Confidential Settings, counselors discuss confidential information only in settings they can ensure client privacy. This relates to the course of action that would apply to Barrett when discussing student information and when determining a location to meet with Paul and/or Steve regarding the dilemma. Under D.1.g. Employer Policies, which pertains to one’s acceptance of employment at a particular agency or institution and how that acceptance implies that the counselor agrees with its general policies and principles. By accepting a position as a graduate assistant, Barrett could have
very well unknowingly registered himself as one who agrees with his institutions policies. F.3.a. Relationship Boundaries With Supervisees is a code that relates to engaging with supervisees in professional manner, and how employees are not to engage in any nonprofessional interaction that may compromise the supervisory relationship. Perhaps, the friendship Barrett shares with Paul far exceeds those regulations, which may require Barrett to brainstorm ideas to avoid those boundary issues. F.3.d. Close Relatives and Friends may be a code that Barrett should be mindful of as he struggles with his personal and professional identity. Any counseling supervisor should avoid accepting friends and supervisees. Clearly, mental health and student affairs are independent of one another but the concept of “conflict of interest” remains and Barrett must recognize the boundaries between his professional and personal relationships and perhaps find an alternative to supervising Paul if it is becoming too much of an issue. F.4.c. Standards for Supervisees describes how supervisors are responsible to make their supervisees aware of professional and ethical standards and legal responsibilities; this standard may have been exercised by Barrett during stage twelve of the decision-making model he followed. However, as in stage twelve, it may be important for Barrett assess how he will discuss his professional role with students to avoid any confusion among his students. Lastly, code H.2.b. Informal Resolution states “When counselors have reason to believe that another counselor is violating or has violated an ethical standard, they attempt first to resolve the issue informally”; even though this is not a counselor-client relationship, the same concept can apply to this given situation as Barrett can try to resolve the matter and provide a valuable and productive solution for everyone involved.

Within the ACPA Ethical Principles & Standards I have chosen some of the most pertinent codes and principles relative to this case. Code 2.2 states that one should avoid dual relationships, especially supervisor/best friend relationships as it can create role confusion and conflicting responsibilities. Perhaps, Barrett should consider where his priorities lie and to see if he can adapt his personal life to meet the demands of his
professional life, this will help prevent Barrett from feeling so confused in regards to his occupational role. To build off of this preventative measure, code 3.11 requires defined “job responsibilities, mutual expectations, accountability procedures, and evaluation criteria with subordinates and supervisors” which will provide Barrett with the knowledge and information he needs to feel competent in understanding his obligation to the situation, his students, and his institution. Under codes 4.1 & 4.2 and the principle “Act to benefit others” relate to the assisting of students in becoming productive, ethical, and responsible citizens and a student affairs professional is required to demonstrates concern for the well being of all students and work for constructive change on behalf of students. These two codes encapsulate the mission any student affairs professional should have. Even though responsibility and accountability are essential functions under these codes, they may be triumphed by the greater concern for the student’s learning, growth, and improvement as a human being. Lastly, the principle “do no harm” is applicable in every instance as a graduate assistant as Barrett must realize that his ethical decision-making must not cause any harm to the students involved. This principle attempts to provide for a productive outcome to the ethical dilemma that will be more beneficial for everyone involved rather than approaching the issue in an authoritarian manner. Within the text of book *Maybe I should: Case Studies on Ethics fro Student Affairs Professionals*, editors Florence, H. A., & Benjamin, M (2009) provide a section pertaining in ACPA which discusses initiating a private conversation as a fundamental step in resolving an ethical misconduct. Florence, H. A., & Benjamin, M (2009) reveal that “unethical conduct often is due to a lack of awareness or understanding of ethical standards-a private conversation between the target of inappropriate action(s) and the individual being inappropriate is an important line of action” (p. 170). A large obstacle for Barrett was to facilitate a discussion with Paul and Steve and not that ignorance is a defense against academic infraction, however, it does allow for a period of growth for that unaware student.
Conclusion

When a student affairs professional encounters issues related to ethical conduct, Canon (1996) describes how a professional should be able to: recognize the ethical dilemma, refer to usable principles to guide one’s response to the dilemma, have an “ethical code” that addresses such matters, know if and how to intervene, understand how to respond to relevant co-workers that may play a role in the dilemma, and continually embracing an environment that supports and promotes active inquiry into ethical matters.

Barrett was faced with an immense amount of pressure as he clearly struggled with his ability to maintain personal relationships with his undergraduate students and assume his role as a professional leader at his institution. Perhaps, in understanding his active role, job duties, and professional obligations Barrett can best achieve a high level of professional competency and pursue future dilemmas with a high level of professional confidence. In addition, subscribing to ethical organizations such as ACA, ACPA, and NASPA can provide an ethical framework or guideline by which Barrett can mirror his own practice when pursuing dilemmas. Clearly, if Barrett’s occupational obligations required him to abide by the procedures and policies of ENEU, he would be restricted to those obligations and the outcome of the dilemma may have been different. However, in understanding Barrett’s role as a GA and leader of certain organizations that Paul and Steve are in, it would certainly be essential for Barrett to confront both students on their academic wrongdoings. Often higher education is associated with advancing one’s academic knowledge so it can be applied to their future occupation. As a student affairs student more concerned with the reasons why the academic dishonesty took place, I would argue that the college experience expands vastly beyond mere academics, and rather the collegiate experience contains formative years where the individuals grows and strengthens qualities that he or she will rely upon throughout their lifetime. I do not believe Paul and Steve’s academic misconduct should go unnoticed and they should be held responsible for their actions, as there is merit in learning that concept as well.
However, I would hope that ENEU would not automatically banish these students from ENEU, as I believe it is the college or universities position to also provide opportunities for one to develop and correct personal flaws. Whether Barrett was required to inform school officials of the matter or not, I hope that ENEU would recognize the procedure that Barrett chose and deemed appropriate as an active representative of their institution.

After having critically analyzed the case involving Barrett’s professional and personal obligations and the issues involving academic misconduct, I have been enlightened as to the overwhelming complexities of the ethical decision-making process. As an aspiring student affairs professional, I am now aware of how ethical dilemmas similar in nature, as well as dilemmas different from this case, will inevitably present themselves in the future as I work directly with the student population. However, in accepting the realities of being a student affairs professional, I realize that some answers or solutions to ethical dilemmas may never be easily identified. The process of pursuing ethical dilemmas in the most morally sound manner by using ethical decision-making models such as Kocet, McCauley, & Thompson (2009) and Rae, Fournier, & Roberts (2001) can help alleviate some of the confusion or burdensome distractions that student affairs professions may encounter when developing a plan of action. In addition, an ethical decision-making model will inevitably provide the parties involved in the matter with the upmost dignity and respect they deserve while granting them a well-informed solution. All in all, ethical decision-making in higher education is a process that requires a student affairs professional to strategically navigate his or her way throughout a dilemma via considering his or her essential job functions, obligations to the academic institution, the context of the ethical dilemma, codes and procedure, and several other significant factors in order to provide the parties involved with the most just, well-informed, and benevolent solution possible.
References
