A Handbook for Student Management Teams

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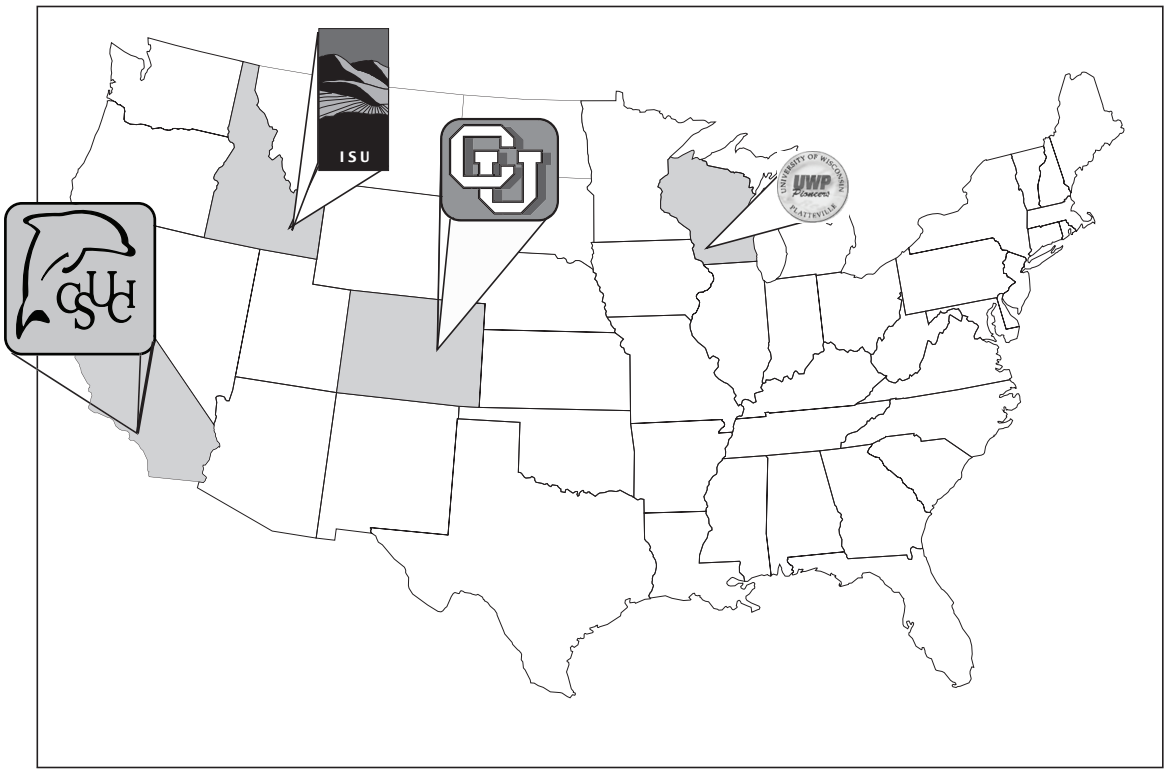

For needed assistance in use of this manual contact

Edward Nuhfer
Director of Faculty Development
California State University Channel Islands
One University Drive
Camarillo, CA 93012
805/437-8826
ed.nuhfer@csuci.edu

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Edward Nuhfer
California State University Channel Islands
Camarillo, CA
Phone (208) 241-5029
email: ed.nuhfer@csuci.edu

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PREFACE

This manual now results from over twelve years' combined experiences of scores of researchers and over 400 faculty users. The Student Management Team project began through a University of Wisconsin System grant to the senior author who was then a faculty member at U-WI at Platteville. Faculty there alone ran about 50 student management teams over the course of two years. The preceding version of this manual was mentioned in *Teaching Professor* in March of 1992. Since then, about 300 universities from the U.S. and Canada procured the manual, which was created after the initial system grant. Faculty involved with the pilot project first presented student management team results in educational divisions of their own disciplines of engineering, agriculture, business and economics, and since then users from other universities have also published research on these (see Appendix D) in disciplines. This version has some updating of Appendix E and cited references. I thank Ruth Streveler of CO School of Mines for bringing Edward De Bono's work to my attention during the 1998 *Boot Camp for Profs*. Mitch Handelsman of CU-Denver has done much to educate me about the applicability of ethics to teaching and learning, and t his influence accounts for the section on ethics.

I credit Edwards Deming and Joseph Juran for the ideas that led to student management teams. Many other professors have read books by these authors or by others on the concept of management through "quality circles." All of these readers must have realized that the quality circle concept might have some application in the college classroom, and a few tried it in their own classes, mostly without publishing on the results. However, developing the concept to the place where it can be taught as an applied development tool to students, faculty and faculty developers is the original work of the authors listed in this book. Our work is hardly complete because we have much to learn about use, benefits, and pitfalls of student management teams in the college classroom. This manual will prevent users from having to reinvent many of the wheels (both round and square) that we researchers discovered for ourselves during 1990 - 2003.

As noted later in the manual, student management teams are not for everyone. If you start one and it either doesn't produce solid results or, worse, starts moving you to a place you don't want to be, there are ways to intervene constructively that will get a runaway team to work as it should. Despite this caution, the vast majority of faculty who have been through both the very worthwhile faculty development procedure of student rating analysis by questionnaire — in-class videotaping — follow-up consultation and the student management team path to teaching improvement noted that the latter gave them more benefits and satisfaction.

I am very grateful to my coauthors and fellow faculty at U- WI at Platteville who worked with me on my initial research grant, and to those from CU-Denver and other schools who contributed later. Their combined shared experiences made this manual possible.

Edward Nuhfer
May, 2008 ed.nuhfer@csuci.edu

A MANUAL for STUDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Edward B. Nuhfer — **CSU-Channel Islands, Camarillo, CA 93012, Phone (208) 241-5029**
with
Carl Allsup, Russ Burgett, Theresa Caylor, Mary Dalles, Tom Goltry, Nick Johansen, Steve Kleisath, John Krogman, Louis Nzegwu, Madonna Perkins, Sue Price, John Simonson, Kathy Winz, and David Zierath — **University of Wisconsin at Platteville, Platteville, WI 53818,**
Mike Cortés , Mitch Handelsman, Deborah Kellogg—**University of Colorado at Denver, Denver, CO 80217, and** Marilyn E. Cunningham—**University of Miami, Middletown, OH 45042**

Introduction

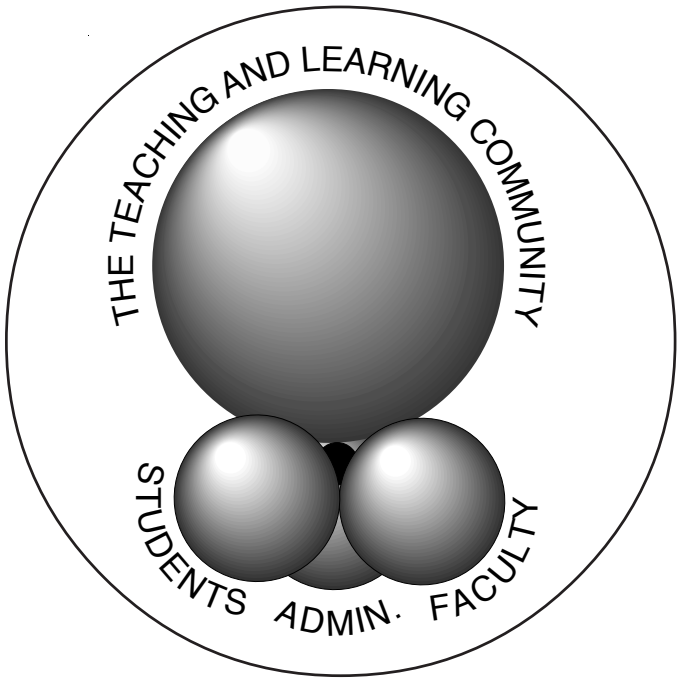
In our study of these teams, we found that over eighty percent of problems that students expressed about learning or that professors noted about teaching are problems in *communication*. We who have passed through the higher educational system to become faculty and administrators have become very accomplished in critical thinking (sometimes too accomplished in criticism!), in questioning, and in independent and often creative thinking. Unfortunately, even this is not enough to survive happily together in a university, a classroom or even in a family. Any group that does not develop good systems of open two-way communication soon finds members of the group behaving in dysfunctional ways. Without positive intervention, the unit itself can become dysfunctional, no matter how well-educated its members may be. Communication problems in the college classroom frustrate the ability of people to meet their goals and reach their dreams together. Communication problems are, unfortunately, common throughout a typical university community. Every individual who has spent much time as a professor on campus has seen, or experienced firsthand, misunderstandings between colleagues, between departments, and between faculty and administrators that grow to tear the self-confidence and enthusiasm right out of good-hearted, talented and normally productive people.

Today, it is almost expected that some university representative will state that "Students are the most important people on campus; they are our 'number one' priority!" If one reflects about what this communicates to the other groups that are essential to the campus community, it consigns them to second or even third-rate status. Ultimately, such rhetoric does not bring optimum service to students. When members of groups are labeled between-the-lines with second-rate status, they are being programmed to respond in kind, with a lower level of commitment and expectation—all in accord with how they learn they are appreciated.

Our paradigm is different; we suggest that *the quality of the experience within the teaching and learning community* is the most important concern, and that administrators (including staff), faculty and students are jointly and equally responsible for that. Everyone must be part of the working class; there is no room for celebrity status for any group that makes it less accountable than another. Our concept is modeled by the "molecule" on the next page. Note that the community is larger than all three groups combined. This arises from a significant public composed of present and future citizens that are served well or not so well in accord with the quality supported by all of the three present basal groups. If one group becomes larger through being "more important" than another, the weight and responsibility for maintaining the community shifts onto other groups, and the

community is destabilized and can even "collapse." To support a solid community requires high morale, and for this it is essential that the forces that support the community be stronger than any and all inherent forces that tend to drive the three supporting groups apart or that might cause disintegration within any group.

The solid black sphere within the molecule represents the attraction that helps to bring the basal groups together. It is the area in which "faculty development" or "teaching effectiveness" centers can have the most significant effect. Note that the "attractor" maintains a low profile; it doesn't get between the three groups or interfere with their direct interaction with one another. While faculty might be the main clients of such a center, the ultimate functions of the center lie in improving the experience of teachers and learners within the community.



Student management teams are designed to strengthen the entire academic community, in the course of improving teaching and learning within individual classes. Students are thereby helped to achieve their dreams through better acquisition of skills and knowledge, and professors are aided in achieving their dreams to become highly successful teachers. What is being "managed" in the student management team is the improved quality of the community. The professor is <u>not</u> being "bossed" by students. Professor and students are coming together to discover how teaching and learning might be improved and to define positive actions that will help reap immediate and long-term benefits. If a contest over power or control develops, it is likely because the ultimate goal of supporting the teaching and learning community has been temporarily forgotten by involved parties.

Edwards Deming, the guru of "Japanese management" was one of the first

people to recognize that quality cannot be "inspected in" by looking for flaws in products at the end of a manufacturing process. Instead, quality comes only from an ongoing process of review and improvement that begins with design and ends with validating customer satisfaction. "Student evaluations" given at the end of a course are analogous to the efforts of "inspecting in" quality by looking for flaws at the end of manufacturing processes. "Inspecting in" has proven to be a failure as a means to improve quality in manufacturing, and there is no reason to believe that this approach is any better for education. Student evaluations are often used as a means of "looking for flaws" in professors. "Correcting" these flaws too often takes the form of punishment— lower pay raises; denial of tenure, or freezing an individual in lower ranks. Such "corrections" are presumed by faculty on review committees and by some administrators to be a means to obtain improvement. Yet no research demonstrates a beneficial correlation between embarrassment or punishment of faculty and their subsequent improvement as teachers. A punishment-oriented philosophy can be an institution's worst liability against creating a quality academic community, because it destroys enthusiasm and self confidence of individuals.

Kenneth A. Feldman (1986—see Table 1) of SUNY at Stony Brook provided an outstanding study that demonstrated the link between student satisfaction and professors' personalities. His study identified the traits and demonstrated how differently these traits are seen as important by professors (self-evaluation), their students, and their peers. The most significant traits that produce success are self esteem and enthusiasm. These are the primary personality traits upon which professors, their peers and their students agree are important to success. **Self esteem and enthusiasm are the first casualties in any punishment-oriented evaluation process**. Use of end-of-course evaluations to rank professors competitively against one another not only fails to produce improvement as an "inspecting in" process, it often creates an environment that monkey-wrenches any nurturing of the kind of spirit needed to improve. Negative personality changes (worry, defensiveness, emotional instability, neuroticism) developed by punishment-oriented management are traits correlated negatively by students and peers with teaching success— Table 1).

In addition to personality traits, there are a number of classroom behaviors that affect student satisfaction. Erdle and Murray (1986) show that behaviors (greatly abbreviated in Table 2) that affect student satisfaction are complex and subtle. The answer to *"Why are my student evaluations lower than I would like, and what can I do to raise students' satisfaction with my teaching?"* are not always intuitive to the instructor of a class.

Midterm "formative" surveys (those surveys designed to help professors improve rather than to inspect professors' performance) are helpful because a well-designed form can pinpoint many of the obstacles to student satisfaction. The research cited in Tables 1 and 2 is affected, in a composite way, by the abilities, expectations and aspirations of students and diversities of student populations in

many classes. These tables would not be produced from the same study involving just a single class, although there would be similarities. In a similar vein, it is not likely that a form designed for general formative use will define problems and lay out the same basis for improvement as would regular discussions with our own students. Further, the act of completing evaluation forms does not build spirit or academic community. Students and teachers working together to share ownership of the teaching and learning process produces academic community along with improvement. A formative survey, however, can be a good starting point for a team.

Researchers in education are concerned with having good statistical data, and it is in vogue to disparage "anecdotal" evidence— which usually means evidence provided through individual observations and experience. Researchers can afford this attitude when their objective lies in establishing a general factual trend that can be symbolized as the "best fit" line through a large number of points. In faculty development, however, one is concerned with helping professors to improve individually, and, it is no comfort to realize that in any "best fit line" with a significant correlation of 0.30 to 0.60, almost no points actually fall on the line, and there are many that are not even near the line. The concern of the faculty developer is less the best-fit line through the points and more the concern for an individual point (*i.e.* a person and how to help that person change in a beneficial way). "Anecdotal evidence" (the experience of the individual) may be spurned and abhorred by researchers looking for trends in large populations, but this information is very important to the faculty developer who must do consultation **at the individual level.** Personal experience should never be dismissed in a cavalier manner.

PERSONALITY TRAIT	IMPORTANCE AS SEEN		
	BY SELF	*BY STUDENTS*	*BY PEERS*
Self Esteem	.30	.51	not rated
Energy (enthusiasm)	.27	.62	.51
Warmth	.15	.55	.50
Cautiousness	-.09	-.02	-.26
Leadership	.07	.56	.48
Sensitivity	.07	.53	.47
Flexibility	.05	.57	.46
Emotional Stability	-.02	.47	.54
Friendly	.04	.42	.49
Neuroticism	-.04	-.49	-.35
Responsible/ Orderly	.06	.31	.25
Brightness	-.05	.36	.22
Independence	-.12	.01	.08
Aggressiveness	.23	.05	.02

TABLE 1. Correlations between personality traits and success in teaching as perceived by self, students and peers. (from Feldman, K. A., 1986, Research in Higher Education, v. 24, n. 2, pp. 139 - 213.) numbers greater than about 0.2 are statistically significant and useful.

Behavior	Perceived importance to teaching by students of:		
	Humanities	*Social Science*	*Science*
Rapport	.43	.70	.59
Interest	.50	.71	.37
Disclosure	.30	.65	.25
Organization	.51	.56	.47
Interaction	.48	.51	.34
Pacing	.53	.45	.62
Speech clarity	.53	.45	.62
Expressiveness	.58	.59	.51
Emphasis	.61	.58	.51
Mannerisms	-.53	-.42	-.28
Use of Graphics	.22	.35	.37
Vocabulary	.16	.35	.37
Presentation Rate	.23	.14	.31
Media Use	.30	.23	.11

TABLE 2. Correlations between various classroom behaviors and overall teaching effectiveness as measured by a global question. (from Erdle, S., and Murray, H. G., 1986, Research in Higher Education, v. 24, n. 2, pp. 115 - 127). Correlations greater than 0.25 are statistically significant and useful.

The data in tables 1 & 2 tell us that there are useful traits and practices to develop; the data also reveals that the student-teacher relationship is a highly individual experience with many variations. There is no single area to develop that guarantees lasting success; quality teaching involves continuous improvement that at one time focuses on one aspect and another time on something different.

If there are effective ways in which a class can be improved, teachers and students working together as a team will likely find any major obstacles to teaching and learning in an individual class, and the team will further provide suggestions on how to overcome obstacles. As diversity issues bring professors to consider difference and how it affects teaching, speaking with affected students may be the most proactive way to produce good outcomes. In accord with Deming, teams are a means for continuous reflection, and in accord with Feldman, these teams can support faculty to help restore enthusiasm and self esteem. Speaking with students about teaching can kindle spirit by providing regular support on a personal level.

Spirit is not just a warm, fuzzy idea; self-confidence and enthusiasm are paramount to our own satisfaction and to that of our students. We have much to gain by working with our students to improve teaching, and the principles of Edwards Deming (Table 3) can provide powerful insights as to how to work effectively with our students to truly improve our classes.

Edwards Deming's 14 Principles

1. Create constancy of purpose.
2. Adopt new philosophy of quality.
3. Cease dependence on final inspection.
4. Consider total cost, not just initial price.
5. Find problems; improve constantly.
6. Institute on-the-job training.
7. Institute leadership across the organization.
8. Drive out fear.
9. Break down communication barriers between units.
10. Eliminate slogans, targets, exhortations for workers.
11. Eliminate numerical goals.
12. Encourage pride of workmanship.
13. Encourage education & self-improvement.
14. Take actions needed to make transformations.

Table 3. Edwards Deming's 14 principles of management (condensed from Walton, M., 1986, The Deming Management Method: New York, Putnam Perigree). These were developed over the course of nearly fifty years. The appropriate use of Deming's 14 principles in higher education comes from recognizing them as guidelines that help people work together in ways that are productive and satisfying.

The proper role of students in student management teams is as our colleagues, not as "customers" of the institution. By thinking of our students as our coworkers in producing the product of high quality education, the 14 principles of Deming provide very liberating opportunities for both teaching and managing the enterprise of learning. Universities and colleges are different from businesses, and unfortunately, "The student-is-our-customer!" jingle began to be heard with increasing frequency from administrators within the ivory towers. Reflection shows that we cannot regard students as "customers." Universities exist because of societal demand and are supported by a society that desires skilled, educated participants. Customers usually have little vested interest in the ethics or atmosphere inside the corporate environment, and certainly do not form quality circles to address these issues. Students, like faculty and unlike customers, are inside the teaching-learning environment. They have an inherent interest in the processes that occur there. The student-as-customer model is often used by those who are seduced by the observation that students pay tuition. Customers pay the full costs for the product they receive, but tuitions of those students currently present at a university are minute contributions when compared to society's cumulative investments in the institution that the current students are free to use and enjoy. There are rarely consequences to customers if they reject a product. On the other hand, if

students "reject the product" by cutting classes, or by otherwise not giving sufficient effort, then society is harmed through having to absorb poorly prepared participants. Learning and the process of becoming educated can occur ONLY in the mind of the student and ONLY through willful participation in construction of that knowledge---in acquiring the mental capital. Unlike a service or a material product, an education cannot simply be bought. It can be obtained only by taking the responsibility through exerting considerable effort--effort so great that it must take time away from other endeavors both pleasurable and important. This places a responsibility on a student that no customer can claim. When students abrogate their responsibilities, the same harm occurs to society as occurs when professors give only halfhearted efforts to teach effectively—we are colleagues in more ways than we realize! The true customer of the university is society in general, including employers, alumni, and future students.

Experience has permitted us to recast Deming's principles into eight principles for student management teams (Table 4). One familiar with Deming's principles (Table 3) will see that virtually all of them are embodied in Table 4, but this particular condensation allows one to more clearly apply Deming's principles of participatory management to the college classroom.

The participants who sincerely engage in a student management team as a means to obtain improvements have a high likelihood of having a satisfying experience that produces unusual benefits.

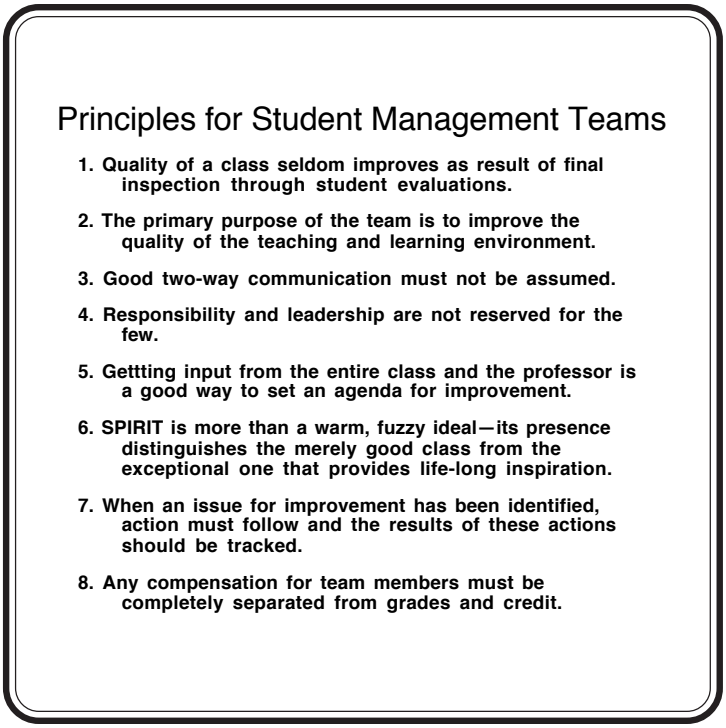


Table 4. Principles for student management teams. These are an outgrowth of Deming's ' principles (Table 3) restated on the basis of experience with over 200 student management teams.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

All teaching practices, including the use of student management teams, require consideration of ethical principles. Although most laypersons will react to "ethics" as a term that implies a moral and perhaps idealistic view of life, the power of the knowledge of ethics goes far above and beyond any simplistic "nice" or "feel good" philosophy. Rather, it provides a framework that allows one to take effective action in difficult situations that require the highest levels of judgment. A working ethical framework can save the day when situations bring forth emotions that threaten to hijack reason. Ethics are to "emotional intelligence" what scientific methodology is to science. Actions that are taken without such a framework of reasoning are likely to result in less than optimal results. A good place to start to build an ethical framework lies in knowing four basic principles: **nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, and autonomy** (Beauchamp and Childress, 1994, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* 4th ed.: New York: Oxford University Press; see also Keith-Spiegel and others, 1993. *The ethics of teaching: A casebook*: Muncie, Indiana, Ball State University.). Several sources (Dowd, S. B., 1997, *Teaching in the Health-Related Professions*: Carolina Academic Press, p. 25) list more than four, but the other principles can be derived from the basic four we provide. In this section we briefly introduce each of these principles and illustrate how SMTs may actualize them in practice.

Nonmaleficence means "above all, do no harm," and is basic to all professional ethics. We seldom intend to harm the learning environment, yet it is surprisingly easy for both students and teachers to do so unintentionally. To the extent that SMTs make instructors and students more thoughtful about their work and concerns in relation to one another, the teams can help instructors and students to minimize harm, even after a harmful action occurs. For example, one author of this handbook gave a test that was very different from his others. He certainly intended no harm, but his students felt betrayed, deceived, and not tested based upon what had been taught. Only the discussion with the SMT allowed the fact that harm— artificially low grades and a decrease in students' motivation—had in fact resulted. This is a classic case of using the framework to reveal harm in need of being addressed. The SMT for that class was able to work to develop a fair way to rescore the test and reduce the harmful effects. In the absence of an ethical framework, such an issue would likely be either unseen by the teacher or reduced to a bumbling contest of wills between students and teachers. However, once the issue of harm done was clarified through meaningful discussion, it became incumbent under this principle to minimize the negative effects.

Beneficence is the obligation to provide good, or benefit, for those with whom we work. Teachers first enter the profession to do good: to increase learning and thereby give students improved choices and expanded options. Colleges and universities were created to do good. Through the nurturing of knowledge and enhancement of thinking, they provide societal benefits and help individuals to have

improved awareness and quality of life. To the extent that SMTs allow all class members input into how a course progresses, and to make and implement suggestions before the end of the semester, they facilitate the benefits that students receive. The ability to do good is often increased by the brainpower involved in perceiving how to do just that. One brain has about 20% of the brainpower of five. An animal that acts based on 20% of its brainpower would probably receive the label "stupid." The attitude "I'm in charge and running this show" in any manager usually results in an organization that operates with relative stupidity in comparison to what it could become through use of available ideas. The obligation to do good comes with a responsibility to use available resources to fulfill the obligation. While obtaining group consensus is more difficult than making a decision by oneself or with one other chosen confidant, decisions reached by group consensus result in more thorough explorations of an issue, and hence the results are usually superior. The process of peer review in academic journals is closely aligned with beneficence; a better contribution to the knowledge base results from peer critiques.

Justice is a synonym for fairness, and it is often expressed as the obligation to "treat equals equally and unequals unequally" based upon specific legitimate criteria. Unequal treatment is justified when there are legitimate differences among students. For example, grades, if properly used, are measures of students' learning. To give students different grades because they performed at different levels on a test is just, because the differential treatment is based on a measure of learning. However, to give students different grades because of their physical attractiveness or their pleasant personalities is to award grades for reasons unrelated to learning. Hence such grading practice is unjust and therefore unethical. To the extent that SMTs allow all students to have input in a course, they can facilitate equal treatment by overcoming obstacles, such as shyness, that inhibit some students from participating more fully and by clarifying the criteria that reveal when equal or unequal treatment are the proper ethical actions. Justice is probably the ethical principle that needs to be most carefully addressed in SMTs. Because grades are a means to express measures of knowledge, the use of "extra credit points" or other forms of grade enhancement is an inappropriate means through which to compensate members of a student management team. There are many ways to devise appropriate compensation, but using a measure of learning as a means to provide compensation is inappropriate.

Autonomy refers to the ability of human beings to govern themselves and to make reasoned decisions. Individual autonomy is respected when people are allowed to make informed decisions, even ones that another might consider unwise. Autonomy is a cornerstone of academic freedom. This freedom presumes that a professor has authority of expertise, and this authority confers to any professor the right, within the bounds of an ethical framework and within the bounds of responsibilities and obligations to his/her institution, to decide what to teach and how to teach it. Therefore a professor may refuse to respond to a suggestion by the team, but an obligation remains to explain the reasons for refusal to the team.

When people go to a professional, such as a doctor, psychologist, lawyer, or teacher, they trust that the professional will make expert decisions that are in their own best interests (not the professionals'). When a patient consults a surgeon, many decisions must be made and the patient's autonomy should be respected to the highest extent possible. Some decisions are expert decisions, such as the surgeon deciding where to make an incision. These choices are left to the professional. Other decisions are shared decisions, such as whether the surgery should occur at all, and whether to consult another doctor. Surgeons express their opinions based on their expert knowledge, but the ultimate choice is left to the patient. Other decisions are purely those of the patient, such as what to wear to the surgeon's office, and what to tell their friends about the surgery. Autonomy is practiced when the expert ensures that the client is informed and knows the benefits, risks and possible consequences. Once that is done, autonomy means that the client has the right to make the informed decision without being coerced, overruled, or gossiped about.

Teachers make many expert decisions in the teacher-student relationship based on knowledge, including course material to be covered. However, certain decisions rest with the student, such as how to schedule work and class time, and whether to come to class or miss class and suffer any penalties. Other decisions can be shared. At their best, SMTs provide an opportunity to both instructors and students to be as well informed as possible and to understand and continually clarify who has responsibility for various aspects and outcomes of the course. In this way, students retain and learn how to exercise an optimal level of autonomy (which may be considered one goal of a college education!).

The principle of autonomy leads to several other ethical principles and rules. For example, to make the best choices, students must have relevant and adequate information. Therefore, instructors are obligated to provide accurate and truthful information (the ethical rule of veracity) and to keep their promises (the rule of fidelity). A complete syllabus is an important way to provide critical information that enables students to make informed decisions about whether to take a course and how to approach the course material.

Some behaviors of teachers are prohibited by several ethical principles. For example, engaging in sexual relationships with students is unethical for several reasons. It violates nonmaleficence and beneficence to the extent that it does harm to students, and it violates autonomy because it violates the trust that exists between instructors and students (not only the student involved, but other students as well). Other "dual relationships" with students may also violate autonomy. For example, requiring that a student help an instructor to move may be unethical because it exploits the student, who may not feel free to decline a request that is obviously in the professor's but not the student's best interests.

Implications of ethical considerations

Student management teams can be a radical departure from "standard operating procedure;" It is useful to consider their use not only from a pedagogical standpoint, but from an ethical framework. The ethical framework applies to all team participants—both students and instructors.

When an SMT simply doesn't work well, the principles of nonmaleficence and beneficence can be compromised. For example, if an instructor is well meaning but simply too busy to implement an SMT, he/she may not have time to meet regularly, as agreed upon, or to implement any of the good suggestions made by students. Students may come to feel that they are not respected and that none of their suggestions are taken seriously. The harmful outcome that will likely result will be worse than not having an SMT at all. If team members promise to meet and then fail to attend, or if instructors promise to implement suggestions and then fail to do so, the principle of fidelity is violated and autonomy is also possibly disrespected.

The principle of justice may be violated, or appear to be violated, by treating SMT members in any way that makes it appear as if they get special privileges. Considerations of justice make it important for instructors to share information about meetings with the entire class, to invite all class members to SMT meetings, and avoid special treatment of SMT members.

Perhaps the most subtle and difficult ethical issues revolve around the principle of autonomy and the prohibition against exploiting students. Instructors need to be careful not to put too much pressure on the SMT, given that members are volunteers. It is a good idea to share the credit for successes with the whole team. It is unwise and unethical to place blame for failures on individual members of a team. The underlying value of a student management team lies in generating improvements, not in creating guilt or assessing blame; these latter actions simply do not well serve any part of the academic community.

SMTs increase the out-of-classroom contact instructors have with students. Thus, instructors need to be aware of the boundaries between appropriate student-teacher interactions and inappropriate ones. The temptation may be to become "friends" with student team members and perhaps to have that friendship include elements that do not belong. Such "boundary crossings" or "dual relationships" violate both autonomy and justice, and may violate nonmaleficence and beneficence.

Each of the ethical principles suggest that all team members take care that all their actions in regard to SMTs are undertaken for sound professional reasons, and are primarily in the interests of improved education. If a difficulty arises, analyzing the difficulty upon the framework of the ethical principles provided here may prove to be quite valuable.

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Table of Contents