

# Teacher and student ethical case study

Business



The ethical case issue I chose deals with consensual relationships between students and instructors or educators. In my opinion, consensual relationships between the two have been going on for decades. Although colleges and universities have created policies aimed at discouraging or preventing these kinds of relationship, ethical misconduct will probably continue. I can remember my Junior college days where consensual relationships, though not excepted, were very common.

The question I have is who is victim and who is the villain because, honestly, both student ND the instructor initiate consensual relationships.

Therefore, it's fair to explore the pros and cons of this issue. There will always be varied opinions to consensual relationships policies of academic institutions. Some are opposed to consensual relationship policies of any kind. There are those who favor policies that discourage but do not altogether prohibit these relationships.

Others favor prohibiting consensual relationships but only in supervisory capacity but may or may not support discouraging consensual relationships In unsupervised situations.

Finally, there are those who favor leslies that prohibit consensual sexual relationships between professors and students under any and all circumstances. As a matter of practicality, those with opinions against any policy response on the part of Institutions are probably In the minority. This includes those in favor of prohibiting consensual relationships under any circumstance. A more moderate and popular view proposing that consensual

relationships between instructors and students are more or less appropriate depending on the circumstances of the relationship.

Those who oppose consensual relationships policies of any kind typically argue that such policies violate individual and constitutional rights to privacy and freedom of association (Olsson 1998; Hoffman 1986; Title 1997).

Therefore, when adult professors and students voluntarily choose to enter a consensual relationship, attempts to prohibit them are legally problematic (Keller 1988). This is due in part to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The ACLU argues that rights surrounding privacy and freedom of association should be kept in the forefront as institutions consider implementing consensual relationships policies.

In addition to concerns about individual rights, some opponents of consensual relationships policies argue that these policies are paternalistic, especially toward female students, who are believed to be most frequently involved in these relationships (Dank and Fully 1997). Hoffman (1986) contended that prohibiting all consensual relationships between professors and students because some students might be hurt by such relationships “runs counter to almost two decades of effort on the part of colleges and students to move beyond the paternalism of earlier eras in higher education” (p.

12). Dank and Fully (1997) argued the prohibitive policies disempower female students but that they tend to ignore the rights of individuals to engage in relationships that are built upon trust, equality, and mutual respect. In contrast, many advocates use other arguments to voice their opinions to prohibit teacher-student consensual relationships. They argue

that because of the inherent power and hierarchical They view these consensual relationships as a form of sexual harassment or sex discrimination (Pallid 1996; Salk, Derrick, and Pallid 1991).

To them, where power differentials exist, there is no mutual consent. A consensual sexual relationship between professors and students is seen as unprofessional, unethical, and even immoral, particularly when a supervisory situation exists (Blends-Knave 1992; Dixon 1996; Sites AAA).

The most common viewpoint comes from those who see the importance of maintaining professional and ethical standards and avoiding situations that present conflicts of interest. They believe the environment ensures educators will behave in a professional manner and maintain appropriate boundaries with students.

A survey revealed that most faculty and students view nonsexual relationships between professors and students in supervisory situations as unethical (Bowman, Hadley, and Bowman 1995; Fitzgerald et al. 1988; Quadrille and Wentworth 1995). Survey respondents at one institution found that 60 percent of male faculty and 57 percent of female graduate students would accept a policy that prohibited consensual relationships in supervisory situations.

About 42 percent of the faculty and more than half of the graduate students believed a policy would violate individual privacy rights.

Over 80 percent of both groups favored a discouragement policy instead. My research concludes that many colleges and universities are not totally

unified in their stance on consensual relationships between instructors and students. Regardless of court rulings, legal vulnerability of faculty, administrators, and other educators, many institutions still do not incorporate or seriously address consensual relationship policies. Aside from strict, religious institutions, I believe consensual relationships between instructors and students will be as prevalent as ever.