



College of
**AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY
AND LIFE SCIENCES**

ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING TOOLS FOR OUR CHANGING WORLD!

Ethics Beyond Compliance:

Building Trust When Facts, Perceptions, and Stakeholders Collide



Thank you to our Conference Host and Sponsors



I am Kirby Player & I am SUPERCHARGED with Enthusiasm!!!!

1. From Lee County in South Carolina
2. '83, '86 and 2015 Clemson Grad
3. Employed 38 years at Clemson!
 1. Nearly all Tracks of NAADA
4. Faith, Family and Friends are my priorities!
5. Currently a Lecturer in AGED – Teach Ethics & Issues in Agriculture & the Food & Fiber System
6. I try my best to be an AgEvangelist!!!!



My Desire is to Make a Difference in Your Life!

 AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY
AND LIFE SCIENCES

Palmetto Leadership for the Environment, Agriculture and Forestry (PLEAF)





"A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes." — Commonly attributed to Mark Twain

"The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic." — John F. Kennedy

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

DISCUSSION PREMISE:

- In the digital age, reputation travels at the speed of a tweet, while truth still moves at the pace of verification.**
- For higher education and college athletics, the challenge is no longer simply generating knowledge—it is preserving public trust in it.**
- Thus, our personal critical thinking and ethical decision-making tools are vital.**

Who is willing to share:

- An ethical issue**
- Public relations nightmare**
- Misinformation juggernaut**
- Similar type negative behavioral event**

that has had an impact on their institution, professional role or effectiveness within the last few years.

Those willing to share will earn a special Tennessee Volunteer/Clemson Tiger/Florida Gator Colored Pampered Chef Kitchen Tool to unlock an orange Florida Citrus!

A Sample of Tools to Engage in Critical Thinking for Professional Challenges & Ethical Issues

- **The STAR Model** – *We will visit in-depth later*
- **Consulting Experts** – You are not alone!
- **Precedent: Observing History** – There is nothing new under the sun! – The Book of Ecclesiastes – Translate the past to the present
- **Social Entrepreneurship** – Innovate!
- **The White Paper** – Thoughtful Media
- **Conversations for Consensus –A Constituent Motto** - Near, Dear and Clear

ALL applied with Critical Thinking at the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy



Critical-thinking Lens for Ethical Decision-making in Complex Environments- The Real World is not Dualistic

Things Considered “Good”

Justice

Kindness

Wisdom

Freedom

Respect

Peace

Courage

Love

Hope

Things Considered “Bad”

Injustice

Cruelty

Folly

Slavery

Selfishness

Murder

Cowardice

Hatred

Despair

Ethics is not simply about avoiding wrongdoing. It is about choosing wisely when every option carries consequences.

The most effective leaders use an ethical compass grounded in justice, wisdom, courage, respect, and hope to navigate uncertainty while preserving the public trust to our institutions.

Your Position in the Story????????????????????

You must determine your role in the story and process.

- Am I directly a part of the issue and or the response?
- What influence do/can I have in the process/decisions?
- How do I manage above and below in the organization?
- Do I have internal conflict with the choices being made?
- In my role I represent the institution – Beware of your words!
- Am I part of the solution or the problem?



STAR Decision Making Model

S

Stop – Recognize, Identify, and Develop

T

Test – Use at least three ethical tests

A

Act – Make a Decision

R

Reflect – Consider the Outcome, Take Responsibility, and Adapt for the Future

“The purpose of the Institute for Ethics is to encourage discussion on campus, in businesses and in the community about how ethical decision-making can be the basis of both personal and professional success.”

–Robert J. Rutland



TEST GRID: Use **X**, **√** or **=** to document your evaluation. You can add notes to each box if you like to justify your Mark.

SELECTED SOLUTIONS:	Harm Test	Legality Test	Precedent Test	Respect Test	Golden Rule Test	Peer/Colleague Test
Solution 1:						
Solution 2:						
Solution 3:						

CASE STUDY 1:

The Influential Donor

- A major donor has committed \$25 million to support a new agricultural innovation center.
- During discussions, the donor requests significant influence over faculty hiring priorities and program direction.
- University leadership is excited about the gift because it could transform the college.
- Some faculty members express concern about academic independence.

Discussion Questions

Who are the stakeholders? What facts do we know?

What information is missing?

CASE STUDY 2:

The Social Media Storm

- A trustee serves on the board of a private company that becomes involved in a controversial local project.
- The university has no formal role in the project but has explored possible collaboration for a campus located in the project.
- Social media posts begin alleging conflicts of interest and institutional involvement.
- Local media outlets amplify the story.
- Alumni begin contacting the advancement office.
- Donors ask whether the allegations are true.

Discussion Questions

What are facts? What are assumptions? What should be disclosed? How quickly should the university respond? How can trust be preserved?

CASE STUDY 3:

The Naming Opportunity

- An alumnus offers a transformational gift that would result in naming a college facility.
- Several years later, allegations emerge involving the donor's business practices.
- No criminal charges have been filed.
- Students/faculty/alumni begin calling for removal of the donor's name.

Discussion Questions

What obligations exist to the donor? What obligations exist to the institution? Should public pressure influence decisions? What policies should guide action?

What I Hope You Remember

✓ **Facts Matter More Than Noise**

Verify before reacting.

Separate facts from assumptions.

Seek truth, not merely consensus.

✓ **Trust Is Our Most Valuable Currency**

Trust takes years to build and moments to lose.

Every decision either strengthens or weakens institutional credibility.

✓ **Most Ethical Dilemmas Are Not Simple**

The challenge is rarely choosing between good and bad.

More often, it is choosing between competing values and competing stakeholders.

✓ **Your Role Matters**

Understand your influence.

Represent your institution wisely.

Be part of the solution, not part of the confusion.

When faced with a difficult decision, ask:

Is it truthful?

Is it fair to all stakeholders?

Does it align with our mission and values?

Would I be comfortable explaining this decision publicly?

Will it strengthen trust in our institution over time?

Final Thought

"Ethics is not simply about avoiding wrongdoing. It is about choosing wisely when every option carries consequences."

Lead with wisdom. Act with courage. Communicate with integrity.

Preserve the public trust. BE NEAR; DEAR; & CLEAR!



The Grain Commission of the AgEvangelist

As a graduate of Clemson University, South Carolina's Land Grant Institution, you have been given a knowledge, ethos and inspiration to go therefore and make agriculturalists of all people, influencing them in the name of the Thomas Green Clemson, Frank Lever, E. M. Tiffany and a host of past and present AgEvangelists.

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Teaching these new agriculturalists to be tillers and keepers of the land, informed consumers and citizens, and inspiring them to practice self-care and demonstrate concern for their neighbors, next door and around the globe.

•

And in unity, faith, hope and love – we AgEvangelists, in conjunction with agriculturalists, can employ stewardship, critical thinking and ethical theory, and an enthusiastic work ethic to face the challenges of the future and advance our professions.

And behold, with grace and blessings, we will feed, clothe and supply food and fiber for all the world till the end of the age.”

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(Adapted in humility from Matthew 28:19-20 – The Bible)

Questions and Comments!

Kirby Player
kplayer@clemson.edu

Cell Number:
864-650-0932



Please take one minute
to complete our session
evaluation and
committee interest form

