

Description of the DFEI-related Activities

As my principle activity as a Daniels Fund Faculty Fellow, I developed an ethical simulation exercise for students, wherein they must apply DFEI principles to a realistic workplace situation. Specifically, students assume the role of a project manager at a struggling tech firm, tasked with leading a project team to develop a new cloud-based storage platform. This project is critical to the continued survival of the company, so the CEO has promised the project manager (i.e. the student) with a bonus for successfully delivering the project; for students, this takes the form of extra course credit for making certain decisions.

The challenge comes when students are informed by their team that the project would not be able to be completed by its end-of-quarter deadline, forcing them to make a decision about how to proceed (e.g., deliver an incomplete product, force the team to work overtime for several months to complete the product). What follows is akin to a “choose your own adventure” exercise, where the scenario continues to evolve depending on the choices of the student.

Further, depending on the choices of the student, extra course credit can be earned. While students are informed that a “bonus” will be awarded for the successful launch of the project and resulting financial success, the reality is that the extra course credit is gated behind ethical choices, aligned with DFEI principles. Specifically, the scenario was written such that the most expedient courses of action (e.g., releasing the project in an incomplete state, failing to take responsibility for project problems) leads to escalating negative consequences for the student and, subsequently, result in poorer performance for the company. By contrast, following DFEI ethical principles results in greater financial performance for the firm. The use of extra credit thus serves a dual purpose. Since students are implicitly told that they must make “unethical” choices to earn the extra credit, there is a realistic opportunity cost for making ethical choices.

This simulation incorporates a number of DFEI principles. For example, the principle of Integrity is central to a number of the decisions students will face; at points students are given the opportunity to either obfuscate the truth or outright lie about the situation. Failing to take the path of greatest integrity leads to continued negative escalation of the situation. Meanwhile, the principle of Accountability is likewise central to the simulation; for instance, students have the option to take responsibility for a negative situation, and doing so results in more positive outcomes. The principle of Transparency is similarly captured in these and other scenarios presented in the simulation. As a final example, I incorporated the principle of Rule of Law into the simulation. As certain branches or situations within the simulation continue to deteriorate, students are presented with the option to engage in illegal activities (e.g., breaking into the company after hours); doing so results in either their “termination” from their job, and the simulation ends without earning extra course credit. The simulation can be found here:

https://uwyo.sjc1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8H8bPuBFerk3hNb

In addition to developing the above simulation, I also engaged a series of other DFEI-related activities as part of my fellowship this year. For instance, I participated in the annual DFEI summit in October of 2020, hearing from a series of outstanding speakers including Dr. Scott Gottlieb – formerly of the FDA. Meanwhile, I also served as a mock judge for a DFEI case competition, featuring University of Wyoming students.