

The highest
reward for a
person's toil
is not what
they get for
it, but what
they become
by it.

John Ruskin

ETHICS

The **ethical standards** you develop now as a student leader will **enhance** your leadership ability and will better prepare you for the workplace. Ethical decision making is always a matter of a particular situation.

- **Respect autonomy:** Respect your peers' right to decide how to live their lives as long as their actions don't interfere with the lives of others. If you respect them and give them autonomy, you will get the same in return.
- **Be supportive:** A good leader is one who gives support and encouragement to those who have taken on tasks and assignments.
- **Be Just:** Justice in the broadest sense means fairness. The three standards of justice are impartiality, equality and reciprocity (treating others as you'd like to be treated).
- **Be Faithful:** Be loyal, truthful, keep promises and respect everyone.
- **Set Boundaries:** This is especially important if a close friend is in the group you lead. You must draw the line between "this is my responsibility" and "this is our friendship." Many will want you to bend the rules because of your friendship. Let them know that you are responsible for the organization and you cannot make exceptions out of fairness to others.
- **Be Consistent:** If you bend a rule or make an exception for one person, everyone else will expect the same consideration.
- **Don't Gossip:** It is too easy to fall into the pattern of talking behind other's backs. Usually, the gossips in your group are not well respected. Be careful of falling into this pitfall.

What most influences unethical behavior?

- Behavior of supervisors
- Behavior of peers
- Ethical practices of one's environment
- Formal organizational policy (or lack thereof)

To make ethical decisions, ask yourself these three questions:

1. Is it Legal?
Will I be violating policy/procedure or breaking the law?
2. Is it balanced?
Is it fair to all concerned in the short term as well as long term?
Does it promote win/win relationships?
3. How will it make me feel about myself?
Will it make me proud?
Would I feel good if my decision was published in a newspaper?
Would I feel good if my family knew about it?

Office of
Student Life
and
Leadership

330 Student
Center
404.413.1580
[www2.gsu.edu/
leadership](http://www2.gsu.edu/leadership)