"On regular occasions we ought to confront and wrestle with the ethical issues raised by the nature of the objectives of the educational enterprise... Our profession does not require us to answer each other on those matters, but we do owe answers to ourselves - honest, soul-searched responses."

excerpted from *The Teaching Professor*, January 1989

**Ethical Dilemmas In The University**

The question of University ethics has, by all accounts, not been discussed widely at this University. Faculty concerns over student plagiarism or cheating, graduate student/faculty interactions over authorship and exportation, larger University faculty pressures of the reward structures, weighting of teaching and research, workload and other pressures which may seem to encourage unethical behaviour - the list of ethical dilemmas is long. These issues intrude on our daily university work lives, yet are seldom discussed in an open and positive way.

Recently, a multidisciplinary group of UBC academics, has worked together to design a seminar series addressing some ethical dilemmas appropriate to the UBC setting. The committee hopes to provide a forum for discussion and a way of looking at creative solutions to some of the ethical dilemmas facing all of us.

We invite you to attend this series, and to bring along your own case studies and ethical concerns.

**Classroom Ethics**

In a recent (January, 1989) issue of *The Teaching Professor*, the question of classroom ethics is addressed. According to the article, there are front-line, bottom-line moral concerns "facing faculty as they enter the classroom. Although we tend to spend little time or effort wrestling with these issues, they are with us constantly. A selection of obvious classroom ethical issues raised in the article is listed below:

1. "Do I abuse my position of superior status to the student by treating him or her as a moral or social inferior?"

2. "Is my relation to other teachers one of cooperation in a great common task of transmitting and extending the knowledge structure of society, or am I jealous and suspicious of others? Am I conscious of my citizenship in the academic community? Do I insist on doing only those things that will lead to my personal advancement?"

3. "Am I careful to avoid using my authority to force factual acceptance of propositions which may be only opinion or hypothesis?"

4. "Am I myself interested in the subject matter that I am teaching?"

5. Do I enjoy learning more about it, and do I carry over to the student my own enthusiasm for the subject?"

6. "Do I convey to the student the importance of technical skill and, at the same time, leave him/her problem-oriented rather that technique oriented, the master and not the servant of the skills that he has acquired?"
Reprinted here are two of the ethical dilemmas created by the planning Committee for discussion during the April series.

Ethics Case #1

A Helping Hand

Tim has been a student in several of your classes. He is a pleasant and hard-working fellow but not particularly talented as a major in your field. By this time you know his work up to well. On the midterm exam, in current course with you, Tim performs at his usual low second-class level. His term paper, however, is surprisingly good - clear, beautifully organized, and well argued. It is very much better than anything you have received from him in the past. You return the paper with a note attached asking to see him. He comes by your office the following day. At the meeting you state your concerns, explaining that you do not recognize any unacknowledged sources for the arguments of the paper but that nevertheless, it is difficult for you to credit him with having produced this paper on his own. Tim explains that he did "talk things over and got some help" from other members of the class. And, of course, he reminds you that you have always encouraged the people in the class (which is a small seminar style class) to discuss the topics of the course with one another and to help each other out with difficult material. Further probing reveals that, in this case, Tim has had three other members of the class, all strong first-class students, read several early drafts of his paper and make extensive critical comments and suggestions for change. In this way, by stages, he produced the work he turned in to you.

How ethical is Tim's behaviour? What should you do?

Ethics Case #2

Every Academic's Dilemma?

Don was hired into a tenured position as an associate professor and division head two years ago from an Eastern university. Clearly the teaching program which he inherited was in need of a thorough review and revision. While his track record in acquiring research monies and publishing were the principal reasons he was appointed, his reasons for entering an academic career focused on teaching and interacting with people. His chairperson, Dr. Madeline Noble, was truly interested in seeing improvement and changes in the teaching program, including the introduction of new courses. However, Don was keenly aware of the need to continue to produce in his research interests. He believed that if he could land a couple of big grants in the next few years he would be ready for promotion to full professor. It became common knowledge to him rather soon after his arrival that the Senior Promotions Committee would look at the tangibles of research productivity long before they would value the improvements Don might initiate from a rigorous curriculum review.

Given the realities of limited time and the lack of financial incentives possible merit increases, Don decided to write grants and publish papers. He gave no serious consideration to committee work at the departmental, faculty, university or national levels, and he did what was necessary to get by in his teaching.

Is Don's behaviour ethical? Why?