



INSTITUTE FOR
GLOBAL ETHICS®

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN POLICY DECISION MAKING - UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

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Questions of the day

How should one think about an important policy level decision such as divestment from an ethical perspective?

If divestment is one possible tactic among a number of possibilities in an overall strategy to impact climate change, how does one weigh various approaches from an ethical perspective?



Defining ethics, part 1

What is ethics?

- Dictionary – the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation
- Common – right versus wrong, law, obedience to the enforceable, moral temptations
- Institute for Global Ethics – right versus right, obedience to the unenforceable, moral dilemmas



Defining ethics, part 2

What are values?

- **Values are the basic building blocks of ethical decision-making**
- There are all kinds of values
- Ethical values are unique, they are good unto themselves
 - Positive
 - Fundamental
 - understandable



Examples of DU's values

IGE's:

- Honesty
- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Equity, and
- Compassion

From the Taskforce on this issue:

- Rule of Reason
- Marketplace of Ideas
- Decisions Informed by Data
- Civil Discourse

From the DU website:

- Excellence
- Innovation
- Engagement
- Integrity, and
- Inclusiveness.

From the Divest DU website:

- Alignment between Univ. Mission & Investment,
- Student power,
- Institutional transparency, and
- Shifting the conversation around how we can fight against the injustices of climate change.



Knowing the difference

What is an Ethical Dilemma?

- Right versus right
- Values in conflict
- Two equally valid, opposing choices with no clear resolution

What is not an Ethical Dilemma?

- Right versus wrong
- Moral temptations
- Positive values in conflict with greed and fear



Practice in ethical decision-making, part 1

Eight Checkpoints

- **Awareness.** Is there a moral issue?
- **Actor.** Whose dilemma is this?
- **Facts.** Gather relevant details.
- **Analyze.** Determine the 4 paradigms.
- **Resolution.** Apply the 3 resolution principles.
- **Trilemma.** Is there a third way out?
- **Decision.** Decide what to do.
- **Reflection.** Revisit the decision later.



Practice in ethical decision-making, part 2

Checkpoints 1 - 3

- **Awareness.** Is there a moral issue?
Combating climate change, providing scholarship dollars to talented students, and more.
- **Actor.** Whose dilemma is this?
Is the decision maker the Divestment Task Force? The DU Board of Trustees? The Divest DU student group? Someone else?
- **Facts.** Gather relevant details.
The hearings that the DTF have been presenting have and will continue to elucidate facts. What are the most important facts on this issue and how should we arrange and appraise them?



Practice in ethical decision-making, part 3

Checkpoints 4 - 5

- **Analyze.** Determine the 4 paradigms.
 - Truth vs. Loyalty
 - Short Term vs. Long Term
 - Individual vs. Community
 - Justice vs. Mercy
- **Resolution.** Apply the 3 resolution principles.
 - Ends Driven
 - Rules Driven
 - Empathy Driven



Practice in ethical decision-making, part 4

Checkpoints 6 - 8

- **Trilemma.** Is there a third way out?
One of the two initial questions asks how to evaluate additional options regarding combatting climate change and divestment.
- **Decision.** Decide what to do.
Divest, do not divest, or a different option?
- **Reflection.** Revisit the decision later.
Policy decisions can be revised.

