Introduction to the Ethics Case Studies

This set of cases is in partial fulfillment of NSF project 9810253, *Interdisciplinary Research and Training Program in Ethics for Business, Science, and Engineering in the Puerto Rican Context*. These cases were prepared during a retreat held December 14-19, 1998 funded by the NSF, or as a result of post retreat dissemination workshops held at University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez in spring of 1999, or by students in a graduate seminar, *Business, Society and Government*, offered in the summer of 1999. The editors of this booklet wish to thank all those who contributed cases as well as those whose thoughtful discussion led to substantial revisions.

The project began with three objectives: (1) to integrate ethics into the business, science, and engineering (BSE) curricula; (2) to integrate BSE components into practical and professional ethics classes; (3) to find different ways in which the Puerto Rican cultural context influences both BSE teaching and practice and the understanding of practical and professional ethics. This current project was structured during a planning grant in 1996 provided by the NSF to structure a broader proposal that would address these aims. Helping us out in this workshop were Vivian Weil, Michael Pritchard, Michael Rabins, Robert Ashmore, Deborah Mayo, John Perhonis, Mauricio Ramos, and Nestor Ortiz. In the 1996 workshop, we addressed three problems: (1) the selection and development of case studies relevant to BSE practice in Puerto Rico; (2) the structuring of an interdisciplinary retreat in which ethicists could get together with BSE teachers and practitioners and devise strategies for integrating ethics across the curriculum; (3) ways in which the integration activities identified in our retreat could be implemented and assessed. Our current project has benefited greatly from this the efforts of the participants in this workshop.

We would like to give special thanks to Rachelle Hollander and John Perhonis of the National Science Foundation, Division of Societal Dimensions of Technology, for their support of this project and helpful advice. Our ethics initiative is the result of a close cooperation between two organizations working out of the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, the Center for Philosophy in its Interdisciplinary Function (CEPHIF) and
the Centro Hemisferico de Cooperación en Investigación y Educación en Ingeniería y Ciencias Aplicadas (CoHemis). CEPHIF contributed through its staff of ethicists. Professor Elena Lugo, Director of CEPHIF and a principle investigator of this project, set the stage for this initiative through the countless interdisciplinary ethics congresses, conferences, and panels that she has organized over the years. Professors Hector Huyke, Carmen Vanessa Santiago-Rodríguez, and William Frey compiled these cases, edited and translated them, and organized the pedagogical materials. CoHemis provided essential logistic and infrastructure support, including the planning of our retreat and post-retreat events and the editing and publishing of this case booklet. Special recognition is due to CoHemis Co-director, Professor Jorge Vélez-Arocho, a principal investigator on this project, to past CoHemis Coordinator, Luz Leyda Vega, and current CoHemis Coordinator, Blanca Colon. The University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez and the University of Puerto Rico merit mentioning as the home institutions of this project.

A short word on how these cases were developed. At the beginning of our December 1998 retreat, we held workshops to identify what our BSE stakeholders considered to be outstanding ethical problems and issues in their areas. These stakeholders included retreat participants who represented the areas of business, engineering, biology, chemistry, agriculture, and academic administration. A workshop was held to explore ethical issues in the private sector; panelists and presenters in this workshop were Paul Davis from Sandia National Laboratories, Ida Calero from Hewlett Packard, and Victor Tossas from Banco Popular de Puerto Rico. Finally, a group of students discussed ethical issues they encountered during Hurricane George and its aftermath. These workshops provided the exploratory background out of which the cases in this book emerged.

Next, workshops were held during the December retreat during which interdisciplinary breakout groups wrote cases that responded to the issues identified by the BSE stakeholders. These were discussed and refined at the small group level and then, later, before the entire retreat group. Our outside advisors, who had considerable experience in writing cases, participated both in the small group writing activities and in the plenary discussion. Finally, many of the cases in this booklet have been used in classes
held during the Spring semester, 1999; both formal and informal student reaction has been obtained.

Finally, a word about the pedagogical materials. The editors of this booklet wanted its users to have access to schemas and short summaries of the ethical approaches, ethical issues, and decision-making models presented during the retreat. The goal has not been to present ethical theory in a systematic way that can be defended in a philosophical context. Rather, we have assumed that the users of this booklet will be teachers and practitioners from the BSE context and have accordingly responded to their needs. We have provided just enough theory to get the conversation going. During our retreat we decided that BSE professors did not need to master ethical theory to integrate ethics effectively into their classes. The materials in the appendices are geared toward the integration projects we identified during our retreat.