

**VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY HCMC
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

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**ENGINEERING ETHICS AND  
PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

**TERM PROJECT 2 – CASE STUDY**

**Group number: 1**

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**Date:** November 2, 2021

**Semester 1, Academic year 2021 - 2022**

# **ENGINEERING ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

## **TERM PROJECT – NUMBER 2**

### **CASE STUDY**

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## A. Case study

### 1. Base case

Dr. Naseer is a chemical engineering professor at the University of Eastland. Traditionally, various professors from diverse institutions would visit Eastland to learn about research conducted by the University's scholars as well as explore potential collaboration. Last month, Dr. Naseer discovered that his department would be hosting a famous chemical engineering professor, Dr. Alston.

During his three-month visit, Dr. Alston observed various group meetings presented by Dr. Naseer and his students. More importantly, he learned a great deal about the research that Dr. Naseer was doing in the field of reactor design. At the conclusion of his stay, Dr. Alston returned to his institution without mentioning any plans for collaboration.

**A few months later, Dr. Naseer was ready to publish a paper he had written on his topic of research. However, through an online resource, he discovered Dr. Alston had published a recent paper that used identical theorems, background information, and results Dr. Naseer had written in his work. The paper did not make any acknowledgments to Dr. Nasser. (Ethic highlight)**

The Eastland's' professor was angry and felt betrayed. During his visit, Dr. Alston did not mention that he was conducting research or about to publish on the same topic in reactor design.

Dr. Naseer's colleagues expressed disappointment in Dr. Alston's actions, and in the field of higher academia in general. They urged Dr. Naseer to take action, but, since it was not **common practice**, there had not been a **non-disclosure agreement** between the two parties in conflict.

## 2. Summarized

- Dr. Naseer is a CE professor of University of Eastland, traditionally has meetings with many professors from all over the world for collaboration potential exploring and learning purposes.
- Dr. Alston, The CE professor paying visit to University and participating in many meetings conducted by Dr. Naseer and his student group in the field of reactor design, have learned a great deal of what Dr. Naseer is doing and leaving after the visit without any collaboration plan.
- The ethic issue appears: several months after Dr. On Alston's visit, he found out that Dr. Alston's recent paper had the same theorems, background information, and results of his paper and the paper and **did not make any acknowledgments to Dr. Nasser.**
- Disappointed in Dr. Alston's actions, and in the field of higher academia in general. But because this is a non-common case, not a **non-disclosure agreement** between the two parties in conflict.

## B. Solution

### 1. Information clarify

Despite how frustrating the situation might be, the first thing Dr. Naseer should do is to remain calm and focus more on the investigation into Dr. Alston's project background. Such information is required in order to rearrange a proper set-up of the panorama and can also be used as evidence for Dr. Naseer authorship. Aspects should be made clear of include:

- Dr. Alston's publication time
- Clarification about the information between Dr. Naseer's and Dr. Alston's theorem
- Identifying whether if the information were shown in his presentation or not

### **1.1. Dr. Alston's publication time**

Elucidation about the publication time not only of the date Dr. Alston published the work but also the time he started learning about it as well as whether he had presented this project before need to be put into consideration as well as comparison with Dr. Naseer's procedure. This can contribute a lot in determining whether plagiarism has been made or not. If Dr. Naseer started the research before or approximately the same time with Dr. Alston, we can move on to examination of other factors. However, if the situation occurred in the opposite way, the fact that Alston came up with the same idea as Naseer can be considered as testimony against Alston.

### **1.2. Clarification about the information between Dr. Naseer's and Dr. Alston's theorem**

Now, it is time to take a deeper theoretical look at both the researches. Dr. Naseer has to bring up every identical or similar component that he can find among the comparisons if he wants to make his argument more valid. After the first refinement, more evaluation should be put into investigating the source or information. It has to be cleared that all the study/ experiment/ data/ design in Dr. Naseer's project was all his self-determined learning or not. If the answer is no,

then another question is asked to clarify the acceptance of references that have been used.

### **1.3. Identifying whether if the information were shown in his presentation or not**

The last thing is to determine Dr. Alston's presence in Dr. Naseer's meetings, mainly those relative to the similarities between their projects. We should take in notice that during his 3-months stay at the University of Eastland, he attended several courses held by Dr. Naseer and some in which can contain knowledge about his recent work, the reactor design.

## **2. Inform the situation to higher authority**

With the help of Dr. Naseer's alone, his conclusion would be considered not strong enough as well as a one-sided point of view. This is why the support from others should also be approved to strengthen his outcome. Naseer should ask those who attended his previous meetings for their admission about Alston's presence in those meetings and the fact that the project's main idea and information has been shown by Dr. Naseer himself before. Along with his collected evidence that we have presented, Dr. Naseer should be ready to announce the issue to higher authority, in this case, it would be the principle of the University of Eastland.

## **3. Discuss the issue with Dr. Alston**

Despite having all the evidence and witnesses confirmed for himself, Dr. Naseer should always aim for the most ethical and tranquil solution instead of

straining the conflict between them which can lead to worse scenarios. The necessary action is to find a way to contact Dr. Alston, expressing the desire to hold a meeting between the two professors to give out a compromise settling down the struggles. This meeting should also include the participation of others doing their job as a third party. For Dr. Naseer, they would be his colleagues, those who are capable of attesting Dr. Alston's presence during the lectures and the authority of University of Eastland. Appearance of the government that commits the allowance of authorship for Dr. Alston's work. The vital goal of Dr. Naseer is to ask for being regarded as the co-worker of this project alongside Dr. Alston. In our way of thinking, this is the most optimal solution where Dr. Naseer can seek for his justice as well as where the problem can be defined most ethically. In the worst case that can happen in which plagiarisms are shown clearly at Dr. Alston's actions and he denies to recognize Dr. Naseer's role, this problem should be brought up to higher jurisdictions for them to handle.

#### **4. Create the way to prevent similar case from happen in future**

We believe that after this event, both Dr. Naseer and the principles department of University of Eastland are aware of their duty to strengthen the security of other projects as well as to protect the rights of other colleagues in this academic environment. They have to be extremely rigorous on this issue so that such cases like this will never happen again. To be more specific, the visitors to the school's meetings must sign an agreement on not to utilize theorems and material offered by professors at institutions without mentioning that professor distribution. Those who fail to meet the requirements will not be allowed to visit. However, even if another infringement happened, some strong and lawful actions should be done to put on a warning in order to prevent further consequences.



## **C. Case evaluation**

In our solution, we put the deontological ethics as our priority as we believe that academicians have a responsibility to be honest and uphold their integrity, and if they fail to do so, it is better to persuade them that their actions are not unrighteous and can be considered as intellectual theft. And also, others should take this case as an example of how serious the impacts can be made by similar problems in the ethical academic environment.

## **D. References**

1. [Inhibited Reaction - Markkula Center for Applied Ethics \(scu.edu\)](#)