

Salisbury University's Re-envisioning Ethics Access and Community Humanities (REACH) Initiative: Integrating Community and Curricular Ethics is grant-funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Humanities Connections Program. REACH, led by Co-Directors Michèle Schlehofer, Timothy Stock and Jennifer Nyland, focuses on ethics, ethics literacy and ethics agency through new curricular and co-curricular resources, and connecting with the community.

REACH Team Presents at the American Philosophical Association

On January 15, REACH Co-Directors Dr. Timothy Stock, Dr. Jennifer Nyland and Dr. Michèle Schlehofer hosted a roundtable at the American Philosophical Association-Eastern Region Convention, titled "REACH at Salisbury University: Rationale, Methods and Major Initiative Roundtable." Based on their recent article in *Precollege Philosophy and Public Practice*, the roundtable made the case for involvement of community perspectives in ethical discourse, and for community-embedded ethics education. The article is currently open access, and you can read it online:

https://www.pdcnet.org/p4/content/p4_2023_0999_12_6_25

Join Us for Our Next Ethics Brown Bag Chat!

Our next Ethics Brown Bag Chat is scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, from noon to 1 p.m. Join other members of our community for an informal conversation on ethical priorities in our area. This will be a virtual meeting over Zoom. Anyone who is interested is welcome to participate! You must pre-register to receive the meeting link. Register online by Sunday, April 14:

https://salisbury.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7PToaSLHB0S3890

Improving Ethical Decision-Making

We all desire to make decisions that are ethical and fair. However, making fair and equitable decisions can be challenging. For instance, let's imagine an organization that has a small pot of funding available for staff professional development. How should this funding be invested?

Perhaps the organization should make decisions in terms of which staff would benefit most from further professional development. If so, how can staff needs be identified and prioritized? Should staff with the greatest future potential be prioritized for professional development, or should those struggling within their role be prioritized?

Another way of approaching the decision would be to look to the types of professional development that would have the greatest organizational impact. In that case, how will organizational impact be defined, and how will professional development opportunities that address these needs be identified? If limited funds are available, is it more ethical to provide partial training for all staff or strong professional development training to select staff?

There are many ways the funding can be invested – which investment would be the most ethical? What investments are fair and equitable? Which would have the greatest impact on the organization's ability to do its work?

When making decisions such as this, keep an eye out for these common pitfalls, which open the door for potential bias:

- **Making decisions under pressure.** Any time we make decisions under pressure, we run the risk of not fully considering all available options, alternatives, and benefits and consequences of each. Going from our example, if there is a looming deadline by which the funding must be spent, there is a risk the funding will be invested on whatever professional development opportunity is first to come to mind, regardless of whether it would be the most useful.
- **Making decisions on a "case-by-case" basis.** It is desirable to retain flexibility in decision-making. However, when decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, there is the risk of bias and the possibility of falling into the trap of giving 'grease to the squeaky wheel.' Organizations would want to avoid just giving professional development opportunities to people who ask for them, because some people might not think to ask or might feel uncomfortable doing so.
- **Leaving decisions in the hands of one or a small group of people.** While efficient, leaving the decision-making authority to one person or a small group of people may inadvertently close off diverse perspectives that can improve decision-making. One or a small group of people might think a certain type of professional development will be useful for staff, when staff themselves express other needs or priorities.

What can be done instead? We suggest that organizations have procedural guidelines in place to help with decision-making and proactively gather information from diverse stakeholders (staff and also clients and board members). For instance, having a guideline in place for when professional development funds are spent and what factors are considered when choosing what to invest in would be helpful in mitigating bias. When developing guidelines, make sure to get input from multiple people who would be impacted by decisions. Including the perspectives of people with dissimilar roles and responsibilities within the organization helps to identify and mitigate potential bias before the decision occurs. Having procedural guidelines on hand also helps people make quick decisions when under pressure or when the decisions are time sensitive.

ETHICS PROFILE: Dylan Laconich

Sustainability Specialist for the City of Salisbury

Tell us about your organization and what you do.

I serve as the sustainability specialist for the City of Salisbury. Sustainability typically refers to the reduction of emissions and planning to maintain complex global economic systems in the face of a changing climate. However, for the community I serve, my mission is simple: sustain Salisbury. The implementation of such a goal is much more complicated. The city is an organization, but principally a government and jurisdiction. Salisbury provides services and is also tasked with protecting the public safety, health and welfare. This is commonly seen through capital projects and regulations in which I am involved. In my service, though, I also aim to serve the public's collective voice. To sustain Salisbury, the people who call it home should be involved in doing so. In my work as a volunteer, board member with Wicomico Environmental Trust or as city staff, I consider our community's needs, how we should engage public participation and how to be a medium to carry their voice effectively.



What drew you to be a part of the Community Ethics Network?

When I was invited, I reviewed the resources and goals of the network. I was particularly drawn to the community servants who exchange their thoughts on ethical matters and needs. Having a network of ethically minded people who genuinely aim to serve the dignities of all individuals in the broad and complicated web that is our community is an invaluable resource. The exchange of

knowledge and ideas will inspire, and the potential for collaboration can take our goals from conception to implementation.

How does ethics improve your work?

In my mission and roles, I frequently balance the objectives, authorities and dignities of several communities, organizations, jurisdictions and stakeholders. This can be difficult when seeking to implement something that I truly believe serves the best collective benefit to the community and its welfare. When I practice ethics in this tricky puzzle, I'm often much more able to form the type of partnerships that serve that goal.



Join Our Community Advisory Board!

Do you have ideas on how to improve ethics training and ethical practice?

We are seeking motivated individuals from our region to serve on our Community Advisory Board! The Community Advisory Board meets regularly and provides the REACH team input on current community-facing initiatives, as well as helps steer what types of products the REACH team develops and implements in our local community. We seek a diverse array of representation across multiple sectors: government, nonprofit, business and advocacy groups. Please apply at the link below or email us at REACH@salisbury.edu if interested.

<https://salisbury.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV/#95;8qVV6aQETnKMAei>

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SU is an Equal Opportunity/AA/Title IX university and provides reasonable accommodation given sufficient notice to the University office or staff sponsoring the event or program. For more information regarding SU's policies and procedures, please visit salisbury.edu/equity.

salisbury.edu/philosophy-reach

Increase Your Organizational Capacity with a REACH Intern

Does your organization have a project or initiative that it is looking to launch? Consider a REACH intern! Students eligible for REACH internships are juniors or seniors with strong GPAs who are majoring in a variety of fields of study. Student interns work 10 hours a week in your organization and are supervised by a member of the REACH team. If you are interested in working with an intern, please contact us at REACH@salisbury.edu.

