Ethical Competency and the Ethics Awareness Inventory

The Ethics Awareness Inventory (EAI), completed by over a half-million individuals since 1995, is more than an instructive personal ethics assessment instrument; it is a practical and comprehensive learning process for developing ethical competency. The EAI is composed of three sections essential for ethical competency: Awareness of four fundamental ethical perspectives used when making ethical decisions, as well as the awareness of one’s own ethical perspective as identified through the EAI; Articulation or the ability to communicate one’s ethical reasoning, as well as the values that inform one’s ethical decisions; and Application/Action or the ability to use Four-Steps in Ethical Decision Making that lead to better, ethical choices. A final section provides an inclusive Example, which demonstrates how to apply this process to more competently address any ethical issue.

The Awareness section includes three components: 1) the EAI personal ethics assessment instrument with score summary and score graphs; 2) a personalized Ethics Awareness Profile; and 3) the Values Underlying Your Ethical Perspective.

1. Responses to the 24 statements that define the EAI instrument determine which of four CORE (Character, Obligation, Results, Equity) ethical perspectives generally form the basis for the student’s personal ethical decisions. This instrument, based on sound ethical research and theory, is validated and statistically reliable, so the results can be trusted. Students will see comparative graphs for their scores that show which perspectives they use most and use least and which compare their scores to a large sample of others. The graphs are interpreted to help understand the implications of the scores.

2. The personalized CORE Ethics Awareness Profile has four parts to help students understand their own ethical perspective as well as the perspectives of others.
   a. Ethical Perspective. Provides additional insight into the general ethical theories of each perspective as they address ethical issues.
   b. Ethical Style. Explains approaches students use in their ethical decision making.
   c. Frustrations You Face in Addressing Ethical Dilemmas. Helps students understand some difficulties they may experience while communicating with people who use other perspectives.
   c. Articulation—Communicating Your Perspective. Helps students more effectively explain their ethical positions—expressing both a sound basis and a strong justification for their point of view.

3. The Values Underlying Your Ethical Perspective section provides several of the values shared by people within each CORE ethical perspective. Here, students will discover that each perspective has several values that are fairly unique to that perspective, but also that some values that are shared among the four perspectives. This section can help uncover those personal values that are important to each student and their decision making and how they may prioritize them. The information provided in this section can also help better understand the values and the ethical reasoning of those who reason from different ethical perspectives when making ethical decisions.

These three Awareness components provide a greater understanding of the ethical choices students make, as well as those others make, and will help students communicate more competently.
The Articulation of Perspective section provides important information about how we communicate our perspective to others. Examples of phrases that help identify each of the CORE perspectives in conversation are presented. An easily accessible summary presents a brief restatement of each perspective that also includes important insight into the people with whom students are communicating, including:

- **Key Concepts**, or personal values, that characterize those individuals associated with each of the ethical perspectives. These values, and how they are prioritized, will influence how individuals make their personal ethical choices, given the context and information acquired.
- **Key Phrases** that are often used as individuals explain their ethical reasoning. Recognizing these types of phrases will help students identify what CORE ethical perspective others are using and assist them in communicating more effectively with others to reach collective ethical decisions.
- **Individual Style** characteristics that provide some of the particular priorities and commitments associated with individuals from each of the four CORE perspectives.

Improving the ability to articulate one’s perspective is important for giving successful voice to one’s ethical decisions and opinions. The ability to identify the perspective being voiced by others, through recognizing the language they use, will help students speak to their needs and values. Also, being able to use the language of another’s perspective to better communicate one’s own decision making process will help others better understand that position, leading to greater success.

The Application/Action section provides students with Four Steps for Ethical Decision Making that apply the knowledge students gained through Awareness and Articulation of the CORE ethical perspectives. These four primary questions and their deeper implications are presented in further detail in the EAI itself:

- **Step One**: Who will be affected by my decision?
- **Step Two**: What will be the impact of my decision?
- **Step Three**: What ethical perspective is reflected by my decision?
- **Step Four**: Can I justify my decision on ethical grounds?

Using these four steps when making an ethical decision walks students through a process that leads them to examine individual/personal intentions, address the need for accurate information, and explore possible alternatives that might lead to better choices, while working to communicate their decision more effectively on ethical grounds. These four steps are used successfully in personal, professional and work situations.

The Example section provides students with the opportunity to see how Awareness, Articulation and Application work together as an effective decision making process that will assist in making the best personal ethical decisions, and the best collective decisions individuals and others can make together in work-related contexts. The example provided demonstrates the conversational language of each CORE perspective and how the perspective influences the way one might approach the example’s issue. It then applies the decision making process to collectively working through the ethical issue.

The Ethics Awareness Inventory is a powerful ethical competency learning tool because of its comprehensive approach to ethical learning. Academically credible and practical in application for personal and professional ethical decision making, the EAI has been used by hundreds of universities, government agencies, and businesses to provide sound ethical learning to their students and employees.