Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative Principles Case: 
Research Paper Submission Deadline

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Terry—a dedicated business major for whom school is a major struggle—has a 3.3 GPA after five semesters. To succeed academically, Terry has forgone much of the socializing and partying enjoyed by his friends. Instead, Terry attends classes religiously, spends long hours studying in the library, frequently visits instructors during their office hours, and works extensively with university-sponsored tutors.

Despite dedicating much time to schoolwork, Terry also is actively involved in several community service programs. In particular, Terry spends two nights each week serving meals at the local homeless shelter and mentors troubled inner-city youths through a city-sponsored program.

To fulfill a degree requirement about which he had been unaware, Terry followed his advisor’s suggestion and enrolled in a non-business elective during the second week of classes. As a result, Terry missed the class in which the instructor discussed the 20-page research paper in detail. During today’s class, the instructor reminded students that the paper, which is worth 30% of the course grade, is due in two days. Terry realizes he has a major problem, as he cannot possibly write this paper by the submission deadline. He has a ‘B+’ for coursework completed to date and knows that receiving an ‘A’ for the paper will lead to a course grade of ‘A’. That course grade would qualify Terry for the Dean’s List. ‘Making’ this list guarantees Terry a one-year
scholarship because he is the only currently enrolled student who fulfills the donor’s criteria for potential recipients. Thus, Terry would not be depriving another deserving student by accepting the scholarship.

Terry’s father has had a bad back for many years. He was forced to retire when his factory job became physically overwhelming. Unfortunately, his pension and Social Security benefits are so modest that they barely cover his basic living expenses, let alone escalating major medical expenses for treatment of several chronic illnesses he’s developed recently. Terry’s mother had to quit her job as a bookkeeper for a small retailer after several lengthy bouts with cancer. Terry’s parents agreed to pay for his college education in return for post-graduation help with paying their mounting medical bills. Although Terry’s parents scrimped and saved diligently by investing in a few modest rental properties, they lost most of their nest egg when the housing market collapsed. Thus, they will be substantially dependent on Terry’s future income.

More immediately, Terry’s parents no longer can afford to pay Terry’s tuition and living expenses, which the scholarship would cover in full. Terry already has accepted a lucrative post-graduation job that will allow him to support his parents. Although Terry could enroll part-time next semester and find a full-time job as a maintenance worker to cover tuition and living expenses, it would delay his graduation by several semesters. In the interim, the financial survival of Terry’s parents would depend on his mother—whose cancer is in remission—returning to work.

Grades in this non-business-elective course are not curved, so Terry’s grade would not influence any other student’s grade. Although mildly interesting, the course is not relevant to Terry’s career or personal interests.

Terry considers contacting the instructor and requesting an extension on the deadline for submitting the paper. However, Terry learns from a classmate that the instructor tends not to grant extensions for non-university-sanctioned reasons. Based on this comment, Terry decides not to approach the instructor and request an extension.

Knowing he cannot complete the paper in only two days, Terry begins to panic. Suddenly, he recalls his roommate took this course two semesters ago and did well in it. Perhaps the instructor included the same course requirement that semester and Terry's roommate saved a copy of the paper he submitted. With his roommate not scheduled to return for several hours, Terry decides he won't be discovered rifling through his roommate’s old course files. After a few minutes, Terry finds his roommate's paper. The grade that appeared in bold red ink on the cover page: 'A'. Roughly 75 other students are enrolled in the course and Terry believes the instructor won’t recognize this paper as a previously submitted one if he modifies the wording and formatting a tad. Although Terry is conflicted about using the paper because he believes submitting a barely different version constitutes cheating and his roommate is a stickler for academic honesty, Terry believes there’s no good alternative.

Terry decided to submit a slightly edited version of his roommate's paper. As he expected, Terry received an 'A' for the paper and the course. Two months later, Terry learned he was awarded the scholarship.