

Association for Social Economics
Statement of Ethical Principles
Adopted by the Executive Council on December 12, 2019

Introduction

This document lays out a set of aspirational ethical principles, affirming the ASE's commitment to economic and ethical pluralism and other values that are central to responsible professional practice. Recognizing that human affairs are complex, we do not presume to create a legalistic code of conduct.

Statement

1. We affirm a commitment to ethical principles in the conduct of professional life, whether employed in academia, government, the private sector, the non-profit sector, or engaged in volunteer activities that draw upon one's professional skills. This commitment arises from recognition of the profession's influence in public affairs, which entails an indelible duty to others and to society. This responsibility goes beyond a consequentialist accounting of costs and benefits. It requires recognition of the rights of others and the importance of virtue in our affairs.
2. We affirm a commitment to intellectual and professional integrity. This commitment demands of us honesty, care, and transparency in all professional activities. Integrity requires inter alia a clear voluntary disclosure of real and perceived conflicts of interest that may arise in research, teaching, administration, and the running of professional societies.
3. We affirm a commitment to the integrity and autonomy of those we seek to serve. This commitment demands of us open acknowledgement of the limits to economic expertise. Economics can promote social betterment, but economics is an imperfect science that is shrouded in uncertainty and imprecision. Economists face a duty to instruct others in the limits to economic expertise so that they understand the risks inherent in all economic arrangements and innovations.
4. We affirm the pluralistic nature of economic understanding, such that no one approach or school of thought can provide a complete or uniquely correct view of the world. Moreover, economic arrangements are interminably contested—in part because of the diverse values that people bring to bear in assessing economic affairs. Free discussion and debate require an environment where all can participate and where each idea is considered on its own merits. Recognition of these facts demands of us recognition of the virtue of humility in the conduct of all professional activities.

5. We affirm a duty to treat all others with genuine respect, never solely as a means to an end. The communities economists serve must be recognized as the rightful architects of their future. Economists must cultivate a fiduciary relationship with non-economists, working as a partner in pursuit of social betterment and not as the sole arbiter of economic affairs.

6. We affirm a duty to create a professional environment with equal opportunity and fair treatment, regardless of age, sex, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, health condition, marital status, parental status, genetic information, political affiliation, professional status, or personal connections. Economists have an obligation to conduct civil and respectful discourse in all forums, including those that allow for confidential or anonymous participation.

7. We affirm that in advocating for public policies and other interventions we will act prudently, seeking to minimize harm to those who are most vulnerable, and to ameliorate those harms that occur nonetheless. Economists should apply their expertise, in concert with others, to enhance the capabilities of vulnerable communities to prepare for and manage economic uncertainties and instabilities. Moreover, economists should guard against the self-serving argument of the privileged, and give voice to the needs and aspirations of the dispossessed.

8. We affirm that economists have both an individual responsibility for their own conduct, and a collective responsibility to promote professional conduct. The ASE accepts its responsibilities for creating a professional environment that promotes free expression, and that supports participation and advancement by individuals from all backgrounds, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented. The ASE strives to promote these principles through its statements and the conduct of its officers, journal editors and editorial board members, and others who act on behalf of the ASE.