Research Misconduct

Role Play:

This is a 2-person role play involving an associate professor and a former PhD student.

This role play involves a young Associate Professor of biochemistry at a major research university.  He devotes all his time to establishing his scientific career. He has developed his lab into a highly successful scientific enterprise that is turning out world class publications. He has remained in close touch with his former PhD advisor, and thinks of their relationship as a warm mutual friendship.

His former advisor tells the professor that one of his former PhD students, has fallen on hard times. He’d lost his first academic appointment and is now driving a cab in the city where the professor lives. The former advisor suggests that the professor hire the down-and-out guy who is 15 years his senior and practically homeless.

Roles:

Professor

Former PhD student

Character Description:

Professor

You are well known in your research field and provide excellent research. You decide to take your former mentor’s advice and hire your PhD student. Your student’s performance is poor and after stating his expectations, the student produces data that fits “a little too well with the hypothesis.

Character Description:

Former PhD Student

Allen is hired by is former mentor. He has been in the lab for approximately 6 months. His work is poor and he resents any input or supervision. The former student insists that his work is superior to the work of others and makes remarks about the work of the other students.

*Scenario One*

*Professor:* “I was just looking at the recent data you produced. I asked another student to gather more data. The other student’s data does not resemble your data at all”

*Former PhD student:* How do you respond?

*Scenario Two*

*Former PhD Student:* *”*You thought you could cross me, didn’t you? I just sent this.” He hands a letter to the professor. The letter is addressed to the Dean of Academic Affairs accusing the professor of having falsified data for the last two years.

*Professor:* How do you respond?

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Discussion Questions for the Facilitator

* What factors might influence the way the Dean perceives this situation?
* Is it important for the Dean to take such allegations seriously, however illogical they may seem?
* What kind of documentation would be useful when dealing with a person such as Allan?
* When should such documentation begin?
* At what point might Richard seek the support of a lawyer
* Should Richard inform others in the lab of Allan’s accusation?