BUSINESS

THE INTERNSHIP

FACILITATION GUIDE

Overview

These caselets are narrative accounts designed to stimulate dialogue about the virtues that shape professional life. They differ importantly from the ethical case studies most faculty and students encounter in professional training. Rather than presenting a moral dilemma to be resolved, each caselet illustrates the presence—or absence—of a particular virtue as it operates in everyday practice. The goal is not to reach a verdict on what a character should have done, but to explore what a virtue looks like in action—and what may be at stake when it is absent.

Caselets are organized by virtue and professional context, but many will resonate beyond their primary category. A caselet about curiosity in a business setting may illuminate curiosity in medicine or law. Instructors are encouraged to use caselets flexibly and across disciplines.

General Facilitation Tips

- **Focus on virtue, not verdict.** Keep discussion centered on how the virtue appears (or is absent) in the caselet, not on whether the character made the right call. If the conversation drifts toward "what should they have done?", redirect gently.
- **Start with observation.** Open by asking what students noticed before asking what they think. Grounding early discussion in specific moments from the caselet prevents premature judgment.
- **Use questions as starting points, not a script.** Follow student energy. If a student raises a more generative question than the ones provided, pursue it.
- **Push back on easy agreement.** If the room converges too quickly, the caselet's complexity may not have been fully engaged. Invite students to complicate their own claims and consider opposing readings.
- **Invite connection to professional life.** The richest moments often come when students link the caselet to patterns they've observed or anticipated: "I've seen something like this when . . ."
- **Let silence work.** Resist the urge to fill every pause. Students often need a moment to arrive at their most substantive responses.
- **Close with reflection.** Reserve a few minutes to ask students what will stay with them — a question, an image, an unresolved tension. A sentence or two naming what they now understand about the virtue that they didn't before is a strong closing move.

Copyright 2026, Practical Virtue
Practical Virtue is a production of Virtues & Vocations housed at the Institute for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame
virtuesvocations.org

Discussion Questions

1. What factors should Judy weigh as she decides how to respond to Eric's situation?
2. How can a manager balance compassion for an individual employee or intern with fairness to others in a competitive program?
3. When might accommodations support a struggling intern, and when might they unintentionally set the person up for future difficulties?
4. How do professional standards and expectations shape the limits of compassion in business settings?

Facilitation of this Caselet

Start with Judy, not Eric. The caselet is told from Judy's perspective, and that is where the virtue question lives. She is not a detached or indifferent manager. She actively seeks out the mentorship role her colleagues avoid, and she comes to the meeting expecting a routine performance conversation. Ask students what it costs Judy to receive the information Eric shares, and what it requires of her to hold it well. Compassion in professional life is not just a feeling; it is a capacity that has to be exercised under real constraints.

Take the fairness concern seriously. Students who are sympathetic to Eric may move quickly past Judy's worry about the other two interns. Resist this. The other interns are meeting demanding expectations without apparent accommodation, and they made their choices within that same competitive structure. The question of what Judy owes Eric cannot be fully separated from the question of what she owes to the others. Compassion that ignores that tension is not the virtue the caselet is trying to illuminate.

Explore what Eric's disclosure changes and what it doesn't. The facts of Eric's performance have not changed. The late arrivals, the missed deadlines, and the withdrawn demeanor are all still true. What has changed is Judy's understanding of why. Ask students how much weight the "why" should carry in a professional evaluation, and whether the answer differs depending on the professional setting or context.

Sit with the question of what actually helps Eric. Judy raises this herself, and it is the caselet's most uncomfortable question. She wonders whether leniency is genuinely in Eric's interest, or whether a different opportunity would serve him better. Students should be pushed to take this seriously rather than treating it as a rationalization for withholding compassion. There is a real difference between compassion that responds to what someone is experiencing and compassion that considers what someone needs—and those two things do not always point in the same direction.

Copyright 2026, Practical Virtue
Practical Virtue is a production of Virtues & Vocations housed at the Institute for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame
virtuesvocations.org