Helping Hand?
Written by H. B. White

Jill, a sophomore biology major, wants to do undergraduate research over the summer and has found Prof. Manson willing to have her work in his lab. Because Jill is on financial aid and really needs to make money over the summer, it is particularly important that she get funding from the Undergraduate Research Program. The URP application stipulates that students write their own short research proposals with the help and approval of their research supervisors.

Prof. Manson had discussed an interesting project with Jill. He gave her a copy of an NIH research proposal he had written recently along with a couple of reprints of articles from the lab to read. He told her he was happy to have her join the lab and then apologized that he would extremely busy for the next week or so preparing a major symposium talk he would be giving at a national conference. Consequently, she would have to draft her application with the help of George, a graduate student, and submit it.

Jill had trouble understanding the proposal and papers. The application deadline was looming and she needed to study for two hourly examinations. When she talked to George, he told her to transcribe the relevant sections out of the NIH proposal. As he said, "It doesn't matter. You'll understand what you are doing after a week or two in the lab. Besides, the people who will look at your application won't understand it either." Jill felt uneasy about this, but figured this must be the way things are done. She submitted her application on time.

Discuss this situation with your neighbors. What action, if any, is appropriate?

Some useful questions to ask when thinking through an ethical dilemma.
[From on-line supplemental materials for *J. Chem. Educ.* 84, 952 (2007)]
- What is the action or inaction that is the cause for concern?
- Who or what may be affected?
- How will they be affected? (i.e., what are the possible consequences?)
- Are there any laws, regulations, or unwritten disciplinary standards that may apply?
- What actions might be taken and what would the consequences of those actions be?
- Can anything be done to prevent this from reoccurring or to minimize the severity of the consequences?