



2022 FBLA BUSINESS ETHICS

TOPIC/CASE STUDY

High school student Esmerelda is on her way home from a beach trip with her friends. She creates an Instagram post using a photo one of her friends took, where Esmerelda is posing in a swimsuit with her hand on her hip in front of the waves. She's excited to share the photo from her trip, especially since the friends had a laugh about how their swimsuits all looked almost identical! A few hours later, however, Esmerelda is notified that her post has been removed because it violated the platform's community guidelines for "inappropriate content."

Frustrated, Esmerelda clicks over to her friends' posts and notices their images from the trip are still posted. In all the photos, each person is wearing a bikini and posing by the water. Esmerelda isn't sure why her post was the only one removed. To try to find an answer, she starts to look into how social media companies create their policies for identifying and removing inappropriate content on their platforms. After hours of online research, Esmerelda realizes why her post might have been the only one removed: because she has a bigger body than her friends do, her image technically shows more skin than the other photos, which the platform recognized as "nudity."

Esmerelda is hurt. On one hand, she understands that the social media platforms are trying to protect their users, especially young ones, from truly inappropriate content. On the other hand, though, Esmerelda feels that she didn't really violate the community guidelines and is being punished for her body size. She begins to question the impact of social media community guidelines, especially when it comes to posts from people outside of society's definition of "normal." How are these policies developed and who are they really protecting? How can platforms protect their users while avoiding censorship of diverse bodies, identities, and experiences?

Suggested Questions to Consider:

- Do current content guidelines demonstrate **respect** for social media platforms' diverse users?
- Are social media platforms acting with **integrity** when they apply different content standards to different users?
- How **transparent** should social media platforms be about their decisions regarding acceptable content? How does this affect user **trust** in the platforms?
- Is it **fair** to expect social media platforms to regulate content? How does this responsibility impact censorship concerns?
- To what extent should social media platforms be held **accountable** for the potentially graphic content that their users may see?

- Should social media platforms be expected to atone for previous flagging mistakes, if it is found that prejudiced flagging and removal occurred? What is an appropriate response?
- What role does automation play in flagging inappropriate content on social media platforms? Should this role change? If so, how should it change?
- If social media platforms decide to change their content guidelines and/or flagging procedures, how will this affect their **viability**?

Make Sure the One-Page Report Summary and Presentation Address the Following:

- Why the ethical issue happened?
- How the ethical issue should be resolved.
- What could have prevented the ethical issue.

NOTE: The Daniels Fund, in conjunction with a grant provided to MBA Research, is the sponsor of this event. The Daniels Fund Ethics Initiative provides principles-based ethics education to high school students and focuses on practical, real-world application of ethical principles as a basis for decision-making. [Click here to learn about the Daniels Fund ethical principles.](#)