

Transformational Bioethics Learning in Brain Science

Presentation to the Presidential Commission
for the Study of Bioethical Issues

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Why does our society need scientists with bioethics expertise?

- We should want scientists who consider the purposes and implications of their work.
- Given the power of science and technology in our society, cultivating humility and self-reflection important
- Scientists are best positioned to constrain hyperbole by others.
- Bioethicists and scientists need one another
- Our diverse society needs a shared secular way to examine normative issues.

What kind of bioethics education
should we aim for?

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Transformational learning

For Whom?

A Two-tiered Approach:

Basic bioethics literacy for PhDs and post-graduate education

Deeper engagement

A. Basic Bioethics Literacy in Graduate and Post-Graduate Programs

- With bioethicists, brain scientists, and leaders from relevant specialty societies, identify learning objectives
- With university faculty and relevant specialty societies, determine format, length, and placement of learning experiences that could fit within PhD and post-doc programs

Deeper Engagement: Beyond Basic Ethics Literacy

- ELSI Program for Brain Science
- Learning Community
- Annual Symposium
- Bioethics Intensive for Brain Scientists
- Survey
- Encourage (require?) BRAIN awardee institutions to build ethics capacities to address normative questions raised by brain science.

Summary

- Brain science is an important context for bioethics education;
- Education in this area will be particularly challenging and exciting because so many disciplines are involved and because there are so many profound questions;
- Three areas: RCR, research ethics and societal impact
- Let's not “train,” or even “educate”
- But rather “design for transformational learning”
- To prepare not just scientists but scientist-citizens and scientist-ethicists
- Capable of secular moral reasoning in our pluralistic society.