

### CASE STUDY 1

Pat: Prof, I need to switch groups.

Prof: I'm surprised to hear that – your group seems to be working so well together.

Pat: Well – I don't know how to tell you this exactly. . . . Anyway, last night I received a lot of obscene and vulgar comments on Instant Messenger. Here, I printed them out.

Prof: (reading through the material) Wow, I see what you mean.

Pat: The messages looked like they were anonymous. But I found out that it was really one of my group members. Worse, I even think that Chris knew I'd find out!

Prof: Ouch!

Pat: I want out of Chris' group!

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#### Overnight

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Chris: I can't believe Pat came to you before even saying anything to me – that violated our ground rules about trying to settle things ourselves first! It turns out it was a practical joke by Pat's best friend who somehow got my password...I didn't even know about it. I feel betrayed by Pat – it's going to be hard to work with him.

### CASE STUDY 2

Sally: Professor Hernandez, did you read about the student who was killed in a car accident last weekend? That was my boyfriend's best friend. He and I won't be in class this week.

Prof: I'm sorry and can understand the need to take some time, but have you talked with your group about making up the work?

Sally: Yes, we've taken care of that.

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#### One week later

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Terry: Prof Hernandez, Sally and Jerry are in my group and haven't been coming to class or group meetings for over a week. In fact they don't come very often and don't work hard. It's a problem, since they try to keep to themselves and Joe and I have to do all the work. I understand they're upset about their friend – but it isn't fair! We don't have a group – we're just a pair.

Prof: Gosh – I wouldn't expect them to be in the same group since the groups are alphabetically chosen. But this is a dilemma now. Let's look at your ground rules.

Terry: We want you to put us in another group or something.

### CASE STUDY 3

On the day that a mid-semester group project was due in her large enrollment, non-majors course, Professor Sharon Washburn handed each group an evaluation sheet. She asked the groups to have a brief discussion about each member's contribution to the project, then fill out and sign the evaluation sheet on the basis of that conversation. Each group then attached the evaluation sheet to the project, and handed it in. The following day, Prof. Washburn received the following e-mail message from a member of one of the groups.

"Dear Professor Washburn:

I realize that you may not be able to do anything at this point, but I wanted to let you know what happened with our group project. Ashley, one of our group members, did nothing to help with the project. We invited her to group meetings but she kept giving us excuses for why she couldn't attend. In class when you handed out the evaluation forms, Ashley took charge of the sheet before we had a chance to talk, and gave everyone, including herself, full credit. I know we all signed it, but it's because she took us by surprise and we didn't know what else to do. I don't think it's fair that she's going to get the same grade as the rest of us – the rest of us worked hard to get it done.

Sincerely,  
Beth Snyder – Group 14"

#### CASE STUDY 4

At first the semester seemed to be going well with all of the groups in Professor Stanley Milkovics' biology course, at least as far as he could tell. In his course, students work in groups in the lecture class, and for a number of the laboratory exercises.

About two-thirds of the way through the semester, however, seemingly out of the blue, all three of the male members of one of the groups approached Prof. Milkovics to complain about the fourth member, a woman named Stacey. They told him that they had discussed Stacey's contribution to both the PBL sessions and the laboratory exercises amongst themselves, and had decided to leave Stacey a note informing her that they were taking all her group points away from her PBL grade (all group members had given themselves this prerogative in the "consequences" statement of their group ground rules). When asked by Professor Milkovics, they admitted that they had never said anything about their discontent to Stacey prior to sending her the note.

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#### Overnight

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Stacey was waiting outside Dr. Milkovics' office door bright and early the next day. She immediately began to complain about how unfairly she had been treated by her group members. She claimed that they had never warned her that they were unhappy with her, and that she had reasonable explanations that excused her tardiness to group meetings, having to leave lab in the middle of exercises, not participating in out-of-class group meetings, and so on. She felt that she should not lose these points, even though she had signed the ground rules statement. She threatened to go to the department chair or higher if this were to happen to her.

#### CASE STUDY 5

Mark, Christy, Lee and Tanya are students in the same group in a lower division course in the Honors Program. Mark and Christy live in the same dorm, as do Lee and Tanya (a different dorm from the others).

The peer facilitator of Mark's group, an upper level undergraduate named Cindy, has been at odds with him since the beginning of the semester. It didn't take Mark very long to establish a behavior pattern of non-participation and poor preparation. In addition, Mark sometimes sits sullenly reading his text in class, participating in group discussions only to make sarcastic remarks about other group members.

As the semester progresses, Cindy is becoming more and more frustrated in her efforts to get Mark to be a good group citizen. She is particularly distressed because the other peer facilitators who work with the class are reporting such stellar performance on the part of their groups in the weekly peer facilitator meetings convened by the course instructor. And to make things worse, she has begun to notice that the two sets of dorm mates (Mark and Christy; Lee and Tanya) are now almost functioning as independent subgroups when it comes to completing assignments requiring out-of-class work. Group products are suffering from the lack of cohesiveness in the group.

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Prof: I'm sorry and can understand the need to take some time, but have you talked with your group about making up the work?

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