Strategies Used to Tie Ethical Questions / Thinking to Applied Learning

1. Situate the applied learning experience (and therefore the ethical considerations) in the context of the profession. For example, I provide students with a comprehensive handout on ethics, reminding them of other basic information about the profession that works into the discussion. It includes the following:
   • Definitions and relevant terms
     o Ethics, code of ethics, NASW Code of Ethics, value, principle, ethical principle, ethical standard, ethical dilemma
   • Purposes of the Code of Ethics
   • Mission of Social Work
   • Social Work Values, Ethical Principles, Ethical Standards
   • Ethical Decision-Making Models (see two examples below)

2. Scaffold the process of making ethical decisions. (ex: provide decision-making models – see attachment)

3. Integration into assignments
   • Service learning journal
   • Exploring Ethics Presentation and Discussion Facilitation: Students teach a part of the code of ethics, work through 3 steps of a decision-making model using a provided case, and facilitate a discussion
   • Ethical dilemma paper

4. Integration into discussion / in-class activities

5. Model attention to ethics by providing ethical rationale for aspects of the process that are ethically driven.
   • e.g.: confidentiality forms

Ethics of Applied Learning

• Transparency about the process is key.
• Work discussion into orientation to the major, advising, etc.
• Offer choices whenever possible to accommodate students varied needs
• Ask: Do you have enough choices for varied circumstances?
• Ask: If it’s a required class, do choices available limit accessibility?
• Consider common issues: transportation, work schedule, family responsibilities, etc.
• Consider the unintended consequences for community partners and others (e.g., clients) and tailor experience to support positive community engagement and needs of all parties

Liability Concerns

• Confidentiality of individuals with whom students are involved
• Student needs to be very clear about role / appropriate boundaries
• Planning is KEY. Being mindful of agencies’ experiences of all involved parties.
• Preparedness / planning – giving students information about the experience (principle of experiential learning)
• Safety concerns of students
  o All undergraduates have health insurance, but this does not cover hurting others
  o Some programs have required outside liability insurance, but this doesn’t cover students
Ethical Decision-Making Process (Reamer, 2002)

1. **Identify the ethical issues**, including the social work values and ethics that conflict.
2. **Identify the individuals, groups, and organizations** that are likely to be affected by the ethical decision.
3. **Tentatively identify all possible courses of action** and the participants involved in each, along with possible benefits and risks for each.
4. **Thoroughly examine** the reasons in favor of and opposed to each possible course of action, considering relevant (a) ethical theories, principles, and guidelines; (b) codes of ethics and legal principles; (c) social work practice theory and principles; and (d) personal values (including religious, cultural, and ethnic values and political ideology).
5. **Consult with colleagues and appropriate experts** (such as agency staff, supervisors, agency administrators, attorneys, ethics scholars, and ethics committees).
6. **Make the decision and document** the decision-making process.
7. **Monitor, evaluate, and document** the decision.

For reference:
Eyes on Ethics: Making Difficult Decisions

Essential Steps for Ethical Problem-Solving (Reamer & Conrad, 1995)

1. **DETERMINE whether there is an ethical issue or dilemma**. Is there a conflict of values, or rights, or professional responsibilities? (For example, there may be an issue of self-determination of an adolescent versus the well-being of the family.)
2. **IDENTIFY the key values and principles involved**. What meanings and limitations are typically attached to these competing values? (For example, rarely is confidential information held in absolute secrecy; however, typically decisions about access by third parties to sensitive content should be contracted with clients.)
3. **RANK the values or ethical principles that - in your professional judgment - are most relevant to the issue or dilemma**. What reasons can you provide for prioritizing one competing value/principle over another? (For example, your client’s right to choose a beneficial course of action could bring hardship or harm to others who would be affected.)
4. **DEVELOP an action plan that is consistent with the ethical priorities that have been determined as central to the dilemma**. Have you conferred with clients and colleagues, as appropriate, about the potential risks and consequences of alternative courses of action? Can you support or justify your action plan with the values/principles on which the plan is based? (For example, have you conferred with all the necessary persons regarding the ethical dimensions of planning for a battered wife’s quest to secure secret shelter and the implications for her teen-aged children?)
5. **IMPLEMENT your plan, utilizing the most appropriate practice skills and competencies**. How will you make use of core social work skills such as sensitive communication, skillful negotiation, and cultural competence? (For example, skillful colleague or supervisory communication and negotiation may enable an impaired colleague to see her/his impact on clients and to take appropriate action.)
6. **REFLECT on the outcome of this ethical decision making process**. How would you evaluate the consequences of this process for those involved: Client(s), professional(s), and agency (ies)? (Increasingly, professionals have begun to seek support, further professional training, and consultation through the development of Ethics Review Committees or Ethics Consultation processes.)

For reference:
Essential Steps for Ethical Problem-Solving
http://www.naswma.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=100