



**TEACHING
ETHICS**

BY FRANCI ROGERS

WITH ETHICS VIOLATIONS FROM PONZI SCHEMES TO INSIDER TRADING IN THE NEWS ALMOST DAILY, IT'S NO WONDER BUSINESS SCHOOLS, NATIONWIDE, ARE EVALUATING HOW AND WHEN TO TEACH ETHICS WITHIN THEIR PROGRAMS.

The *Wall Street Journal* recently called for MBA programs to strengthen their curriculums by giving students experience in making value judgments and using their alumni bases to give students access to real-life situations ("Promises Aren't Enough: Business Schools Need to Do a Better Job Teaching Students Values," August 23, 2010).

These suggestions are exactly the way ethics have been implemented at Baylor's Hankamer School of Business for many years.

"There are two approaches to teaching ethics," said Mitchell Neubert, associate professor and Chavanne Chair of Christian Ethics in Business. "The first is to teach ethics as a required class; the second is to integrate ethics into every class. Schools have

found it harder to integrate it, but at Baylor we have done pretty well with the integrated approach."

Neubert may be understating the success of the program. In 2010, Baylor's undergraduate program was ranked in the top five schools for ethics by *Bloomberg Businessweek*.

"We've always felt that it's important to develop people of integrity and character," Neubert said.

"We promote ethics among our faculty, and in turn, our faculty discusses ethics—within their fields—in their classes."

Neubert believes it is important that professors feel comfortable talking about ethics in each of their classes, so that those discussions become a natural part of making business decisions.

"It's important for students to hear about ethical situations that may come up in real estate, for example, from their real estate professors," Neubert said. "Using examples that are specific to the industry they are studying can help students understand not only the temptations of unethical behavior, but how their decisions have consequences outside of just their personal reputations."

Professor of Marketing Marjorie Cooper believes that Baylor's integrated method of teaching ethics is the best approach for the students and for the university.

"There are specific issues in every discipline that are ethical, pervasive problems that come up over and over," she said. "If we have a sense of what they are, we can discuss them intentionally and, perhaps help students avoid them."

In addition to spending one day in a formal discussion of ethics in her classes, Cooper also integrates ethics into daily lessons by discussing things like preserving client confidentiality in advertising, and focusing on a client's best interest when it may conflict with your agency's best financial interest.

"At a Christian university, we need to do more," Cooper said. "There is a reason to do things right for the sake of doing what's right. It's important to go beyond saying, 'Don't do this because you might get caught or because you will make more money.' Both are true, but society may change norms. We need to make sure ethics are grounded in something bigger than ourselves."

She believes that the school's success will be in how students view themselves, as well as how they are viewed by their employers and clients.

"We can't compartmentalize it, and make ethics just about religion," Cooper said. "Instead, we want our graduates to be asking themselves, 'How do I live my life as a business person with my personal Christian worldview informing the way I do business and think about doing business?' The fruit will be in the reputation of the students we send out of here. And so far the feedback is good."

Neubert agrees with her assessment.

"We all have certain values, and we try to help students to thoughtfully integrate them into business," he said. "Some people want to see personal ethics and business ethics as separate. But we would argue that business is personal."

Students need only look as far as their instructors to see examples of that integration. In addition to staying informed of industry-wide ethics issues and discussing them with their students, professors at Baylor

are given frequent opportunities to discuss ethics among their peers. Neubert, as the school's ethics chair, holds five or six faculty breakfasts each year, where instructors from different departments meet to discuss ethics and best practices, and may include a guest speaker from within the Baylor family or an outside source.

"We believe that it's important to have these kinds of ethics discussions among our faculty, where we can hear many expert voices on the subject," Neubert said. "We are able to draw on our faculty base because one of the criteria to work at Baylor is to believe in and value ethics. It makes for great, informed discussions that people look forward to, and can bring back into their classrooms."

For students who have a strong interest in ethics, two elective courses are also offered, Principled Leadership and Christian Ethics in Business. (There is also a required ethics course in Accounting, as part of the program's professional standards. However, ethics are discussed as they come up in other Accounting courses as well.)

The school also annually hosts the Dale P. Jones Business Ethics Forum. The forum attracts business leaders and educators who meet to discuss current topics and trends in business ethics. Recent themes have included marketing, finance, social responsibility and conflict of interest.

In addition to being able to attend portions of the conference, faculty sometimes invite speakers and participants into their classrooms for guest presentations.

Several student competitions: the Ethics SLAM for freshman students, an internal Business Ethics Case Competition, and a national MBA Case Competition in Ethical Leadership are also held in conjunction with the forum. These competitions give students an opportunity to use what they have learned about ethics to work as teams to develop the best solution to ethically challenging business situations.

"What it all comes down to is that we want students to leave here knowing that ethics and business are not separate," Neubert said. "We want them to understand that having values and integrity is a viable business approach, and that the positive consequences can be more than you can imagine."

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