Center for Ethics

Annual Report to Advisory Council

Spring 2020

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Letter from the Director

May 20, 2020

Dear Advisory Council,

I hope you and yours are well!

The pages below provide a summary of the Center for Ethics’ work this year. It has been a fruitful year, despite the pandemic! In partnership with the Cothran Career Center, a team of instructors overhauled GE112 (a required ethics course for all first year students). Formerly called “Ethical Reasoning,” GE112 has been renamed “Profession and Purpose.” The course now focuses on a set of ethical and practical questions students feel anxious to answer: 1) what kind of career will allow me to live a good, purposeful life, and 2) how do I build that kind of career? Also, for the first time, four students enrolled in and received academic credit for the course “Ethics Bowl.” Last, but not least, the Center for Ethics organized the Diversity, Civility, and Liberal Arts Initiative at MHU.

It has been a tremendous pleasure working with you over the past three years. So, it is bittersweet to inform you that this will be my last letter to the Mars Hill Center for Ethics Advisory Council. I have accepted a position in Winston-Salem, NC, which will enable me to live full time with my spouse who works in Iredell County, NC. While MHU may or may not appoint another CFE director, two leaders have stepped up to oversee two of the CFE’s main programs. Jonathan Rose, Assistant Professor of Political Science, will coordinate the GE112 Program. Ryan Bell, Director of First Year Academic Success and Advising, will coach the Ethics Bowl Team.

Many thanks for your service to and love for MHU.



Elizabeth Whiting Pierce, Ph.D.

CFE Mission and Vision

**Mission**

Equipping students for redemptive and creative participation in a democratic society

**Vision**

The MHU Center for Ethics aims to deepen students’ understanding of, critical engagement with, and commitment to democratic values: personal responsibility, collaboration, freedom, equality, and dignity. Furthermore, we seek to empower students to embody their convictions in and through the basic institutions of a democratic society: local, state, and national governments; religious, ethnic, and cultural communities; not-for-profit organizations; businesses; and a free press. Toward this end, the Center for Ethics pursues the following learning goals:

1. Students will be able to articulate, evaluate, revise, and enact their personal moral convictions.
2. Students will be able to respectfully engage others’ moral convictions.
3. Students will be able to develop shared expectations for conduct with people who differ from them religiously, racially, socioeconomically, ethnically, and/or ideologically.
4. Students will be able to collaboratively pursue shared values and goals within the institutions named above.

Activities and Accomplishments

**GE112 Revision**

In January 2020, Dean Joanna Pierce—at the request of President Floyd—initiated a General Studies revision process. The GE112 revision is the first step of the larger process. A team of instructors partnered with Jimmy Knight, Director of the Cothran Career Center, to make the following changes to the GE112 course:

* New Course Title: Profession and Purpose
* New Course Description: Which careers can help me live a purposeful and happy life? How do I build that kind of career? This course helps first year students answer those two questions. For students who have already identified career goals, this course will help them pursue those goals more effectively, and it will help them recognize, ethically evaluate, and take advantage of career opportunities they might not have anticipated.
* New SLOs
	+ Students will explain 3-4 ethical perspectives on the role of paid employment in a meaningful life (Critical Thinking, Written Communication).
	+ Students will express their own value judgments on the role of paid employment in a meaningful life (Written Communication, Oral Communication).
	+ Students will identify 3-4 careers that align with their value judgments on the role of paid employment in a meaningful life.
	+ Students will craft an 18-month career exploration and/or preparation plan (Creative Thinking).
* Model assignments created
	+ 18-Month Career Exploration and Development Plan assignment
	+ Meaning of Work Written Reflection assignment
	+ Meaning of Work Narrated PowerPoint
* New Leadership: Jonathan Rose, Assistant Professor of Political Science

**Ethics Bowl as Academic Course**

For the first time, four MHU students not only volunteered to participate in MHU’s Ethics Bowl team, they also enrolled in the one-hour course “Ethics Bowl.” (Ethics Bowl has been offered for credit before as an experimental course. What is new this year is its implementation after approval from the Curriculum Committee as a permanent course, with SLOs, course description, etc.) The team met weekly in the fall to prepare for the tournament in Raleigh in February 2020. The event was a good opportunity for family outreach, as it was attended by students’ parents and younger siblings. The theme of Ethics Bowl this year was Agricultural Ethics. Michelle Osborne and Laketa Smith, employees of the **Rural Advancement Foundation International came and spoke with the Ethics Bowl team and other MHU students about racial justice in agriculture. One student investigated an internship with RAFI as a result of this visit.**

**Ryan Bell has agreed to coach the Ethics Bowl team next year. Mr. Bell coached the team from 2016-2017 to great success. All team members whom he had coached and who remained at MHU the next fall returned to compete in Ethics bowl in 2017-2018. He has already begun recruiting students for the 2020-2021 academic year.**

**Diversity, Civility, and Liberal Arts Initiative**

During the summer of 2019, MHU sent a four-person team to attend the Council for Independent College’s Diversity, Civility, and Liberal Arts Institute. That team consisted of the Provost, John Omachonu, the Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Alaysia Black Hackett, Associate Professor of English, Kim Reigle, and Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Elizabeth Whiting Pierce. The DCLA Institute aimed to equip colleges to respond to diversity—and the conflicts that tend to accompany diversity—as opportunities for students to learn skills for citizenship in an increasingly diverse society.

In fall 2019-spring 2020, the Center for Ethics organized MHU’s implementation of a DCLA Initiative (which shared the same goals at the DCLA Institute). The initiative included the following activities: organizing a faculty and staff reading group for the book *Moving Up Without Losing Your Way: The Ethical Costs of Upward Mobility,* co-organizing with Darryl Hylton, Senior Director of Campus Engagement & Leadership, a leadership development retreat at Guilford College for a dozen first year African American male students; surveying the BSA, NASA, and Latinx Student groups regarding the needs of their clubs; and acquiring a designated space—the rooms beneath the library—to house the DEI Office and the clubs under its purview.

Fund 1 Budget Proposal 2019-20

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 |   |
| Description | Budget | Budget | Budget | Request | Amount increased |
| Consultant | $1,500 | $1,000 | $0 | $1,355 | $1,355 |
| Travel | $3,500 | $0 | $200 | $3,400 | $3,200 |
| Meals | $500 | $500 | $0 | $320 | $320 |
| Program Supplies | $3,500 | $2,500 | $100 | $490 | $390 |
| Office Supplies | $500 | $300 | $100 | $100 | $0 |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|  | $9,500 | $4,300 | $400 | $5,665 | $5,265 |

**\*\*\*Important Notes\*\*\***

It seems highly unlikely MHU will fulfill this budget request, or come anywhere near doing so. Most of CFE’s funding this year came from its endowment ($1946.80 to date plus about $500 imminent expenses). Most of the CFE’s funding will likely come from the Kelly Endowment next year. However, VP of Finance Neil Tilley instructed me to treat those funds as supplementary. Hence, endowment funding does not appear in this budget proposal.

**Consultant: $1,355**

This amount covers a consultant’s honorarium (usually around $1000) plus travel expenses, meals, and lodging. The consultant’s role is usually pedagogical; he or she introduces new teaching methods or theories related to the institutional SLO that university is focusing on at that time and ethics education.

**Travel: $3,400**

Travel funds support 1) citizen engagement trips and 2) my professional development. Citizen engagement trips usually take one of two forms. Either they involve sending students to national historical sites to learn about the ethical challenges our country has faced and still faces, or students take trips to centers of legislative power (Washington, D.C., Raleigh, NC), so they can learn how to participate civilly and effectively in the democratic process.

I use travel funds to participate in one of two yearly professional development conferences pertinent to the Center for Ethics’ work: The Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum (SEAC) and The Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE).

**Meals: $320**

This sum covers a meal for fourteen FYS 112 instructors during a 4-hour long end of year workshop and taking students to coffee to discuss CFE programming.

**Program Supplies: $490**

Program supplies include books for new FYS 112 instructors, books for reading groups or other student led activities, and snacks for meetings.

**Office Supplies: $100**

$100 pays for a couple of flipcharts (surprisingly expensive) and markers for workshops.

Questions

What does the phrase “Ethics Across the Curriculum Program” make you think of? What does the phrase “Ethics Across the Campus Program” make you think of?

What should be the goals/content/themes of an ethics across the curriculum program?

Which programs/departments need to play a role in building the ethics across the curriculum program?

What else might we call the program? What name might be more interesting to students, faculty, staff?

What ideas do you have for involving non-faculty campus employees or community members in an ethics across the curriculum program?

In coming years, how public/community facing ought the CFE aspire to be? At present, the CFE focuses its efforts almost entirely in-house. Is that problematic or appropriate? Why?