

MEMO

TO: John Omachonu, Provost of MHU

CC: Phyllis Smith, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Matthew Baldwin, Chair of the History, Religion, and Philosophy Department

FROM: Elizabeth Whiting Pierce, Assist. Prof. of Philosophy & Dir. of the Center for Ethics (CFE)

DATE: March 22, 2019

SUBJECT: Request for additional course release in order to dedicate more time to CFE work

SUMMARY: The goal of this memo is to express and justify my request for an additional course release to support CFE work. The proposal includes a brief history of the CFE, the proposal itself, a list of CFE current projects, and a list of CFE possible projects.

ATTACHMENT: "Theodore Michael Kelly, Sr. and Melinda S. Kelly Ethics Across the Curriculum Endowment," Mars Hill University, 2014.

Center for Ethics History

MHU's *2012-2017 Strategic Plan* provides the earliest—to my knowledge—public record of MHU's intention to establish a Center for Ethics (CFE). The plan tasked the CFE with "encourag[ing] the formation of ethical decision-making skills" by "including ethics in curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs and [by] providing resources to the wider community."¹

In 2014, Michael and Melinda Kelly established an Ethics Across the Curriculum Endowment. The then-new course, First Year Seminar in Ethical Reasoning (FYS 112), was to be the foundation of the Ethics Across the Curriculum Program. The program's goal was to develop "ethics intensive courses in all disciplines...[and] a certificate program in ethics or ethical leadership." The endowment aimed not only to support ethics across the curriculum, but ethics programming more generally, including faculty development, Ethics Bowl, and other extra-curricular ethics programming.²

In fall 2017, MHU hired me to found the CFE, which included the Ethics Across the Curriculum Program. Some ethics education initiatives were already up and running at that point. FYS 112 had been taught every spring for 5 years, and MHU had sent its first team to the NCICU Ethics Bowl the previous year. The Curriculum Committee, working with Barry Sharpe, a former professor in the Political Science Department, had designated a handful of courses as "Ethics Across the Curriculum" though the meaning of that designation was unclear. Other CFE programming remained to be developed.

The CFE's footprint has grown tremendously over the past 18 months, both in terms of its extra-curricular reach and its administrative structure. Extra-curricular activities include student reading groups, film screenings, dinner with the president, a student-leadership pilot program, a de-polarization

¹ *2012-2017 Strategic Plan*, Strategic Priority 5: "Mars Hill will encourage the formation of ethical decision-making skills and maintain an environment conducive to Christian faith development."

² "Theodore Michael Kelly, Sr., and Melinda S. Kelly Ethics Across the Curriculum Endowment," Mars Hill University, 2014.

workshop, civic engagement trips Washington, D.C. and Montgomery, AL, and student scholarship mentorship. Administrative efforts include authoring grant applications, recruitment of an advisory council, service on the IRB, numerous pedagogy workshops, and building strong relationships with many campus entities (see “Current Work” section below).

Proposal: reduce CFE Director’s course load from 3/3 to 2/2

However, all growth has limits. I have hit, and probably overstepped, the limits of the CFE’s growth given the time MHU has asked me to allocate to it (equivalent of one course per semester). The CFE seems adequately resourced financially.³ Yet, without more time, I cannot pursue the goals the Kelly Endowment envisions, goals like a Certificate in Ethical Leadership or an Ethics Across the Curriculum Program.

I see three options for CFE programming going forward.

Strategy 1. I could continue allocating time as I currently do, focusing on event-based extra-curricular programming. Most CFE’s at small colleges and universities orient their work this way. Luther College in Decorah, IA, King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, PA, and Augustana College in Rock Island, IL provide helpful models. Like MHU’s CFE, a faculty person directs these centers, perhaps with the help of an administrative assistant or a post-doc.

Strategy 2. I could drop all extra-curricular efforts and pick up one, possibly two, more curriculum-oriented projects like an Ethics Across the Curriculum Program. These programs usually involve ethics pedagogy workshops, small faculty fellowships, assessment of program effectiveness, etc. The key difference between strategy 1 and 2 is that I would function less as an event planner (resource for students) and more as a teaching and learning coach (resource for faculty and staff).

I have not found an example of a school MHU’s size adopting this strategy for its CFE. However, my work may be drifting in this direction anyway. Implementing the Diversity, Civility, and Liberal Arts plan for faculty workshops will require me to focus more attention on curriculum and pedagogy next AY in any case.

Strategy 3. Given another course release, I could maintain much of the CFE’s existing extra-curricular programming and add one or two curriculum-oriented projects. Strategies 2 and 3 both open up doors for research collaboration with other universities. For instance, Jess Miner at Harvard University’s CFE recently expressed interest in partnering with MHU to promote an Ethics Across the Curriculum assessment tool.

This third strategy seems to have been what the *2012-2017 Strategic Plan* and the Kelly family had in mind. However, I hold an *important reservation* about strategy 3. The CFEs that operate this way all belong to much larger universities. The CFEs are themselves larger, employing at least two faculty persons and often a full-time, non-faculty director with support staff and affiliate faculty. I know of no CFE that undertakes both extra-curricular programming and curricular programming with only one faculty person who also holds teaching responsibilities.

³ An important caveat is that the Business Office’s policy of treating the Kelly Endowment as “supplemental” makes it difficult to ascertain when the fund draw down will occur each AY year or how much funding it will provide or how much unspent funding will roll over from year to another, thereby impeding program planning.

Current Work

The tasks listed below include those undertaken strictly in my role as CFE Director. They do not include any service, teaching, or research that I would do like any other professor (i.e. serving as secretary of the Visiting Artists and Lecturers Committee, presenting a paper at the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics Conference, etc.).

- **FYS 112 Coordination:** recruit instructors, organize professional development workshops (one major workshop in the fall, several smaller workshops in late fall and spring), oversee assessment, develop model syllabi, manage pedagogical research, etc.
- **Ethics Bowl Team:** recruit, train, chaperone Ethics Bowl team for NCICU yearly competition in Raleigh, advise team's SLAM presentation
- **Yearly Citizenship Education trip:** organize and fund yearly student trip that promotes citizenship—lobbying in Washington, D.C., visiting Civil Rights sites in Alabama, etc.
- **Events for students (often partnering with other departments):** Civil Discourse workshop, Better Angels workshop, Election Night Party, Politics and Friendship Dinner, Just Mercy Reading Group, etc.
- **Student Research:** Worked with a student (not taking a course from me) to submit a paper to the Ellie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Contest
- **Consult with campus entities regarding curricular and extra-curricular ethics education:** Career Services, Sustainability Committee, Academic Integrity Program, etc.
- **Grant Writing:** apply for one grant or training program per year, such as the Diversity, Civility, and Liberal Arts Institute
- **Administrative:** meet yearly with advisory board, submit bi-annual reports to supervisor, submit budget proposal, manage budgets, document program outcomes, etc.
- **IRB member:** Read and offer feedback on IRB research proposals, meet monthly with committee
- **Professional development conference:** Attend a conference hosted by either the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics or the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum

Possible Projects

The projects outlined below are examples only.

- **Ethics Across the Curriculum Program:** identify what ethics education is already happening within the curriculum and where the gaps are, provide small stipends for faculty to incorporate ethics lessons or units into syllabi, host workshops on ethics pedagogy, assess effectiveness of ethics education
- **Ethics Across the Campus Program:** identify what ethics education is already happening in extra-curricular settings, especially within Student Develop, Career Services, Athletics; convene conversations about ethics/values/character education goals; provide workshops or retreats for students leaders and/or staff who work closely with students, etc.
- **Ethical Leadership Certificate or Institute:** develop an interdisciplinary academic program to promote ethical discernment and action, perhaps in professional roles, perhaps as citizens
- **Ethics Pedagogy Research:** interdisciplinary faculty teams could develop, implement, and assess ethics teaching tools for MHU's Ethics Across the Curriculum Program and publish their findings

- **Center for Ethics Work Student Fellows Program:** students could undertake ethics research projects or oversee ethics event planning on campus
- **Fundraising:** partner with Development Office to raise funds for CFE, write additional grants, etc.



**Theodore Michael Kelly, Sr. and Melinda S. Kelly
Ethics Across the Curriculum Endowment**

Purpose:

Mars Hill University has chosen to anchor Ethics Across the Curriculum in the general education program. Every Mars Hill student is now required to take, as part of the first-year experience, a course in ethical reasoning. First Year Seminar II (known as FYS112) is the curricular foundation for and the most visible element of Ethics Across the Curriculum. Building on the success of FYS 112, the vision for the initiative is to develop ethics-intensive courses in all disciplines. The long-term plan is to develop a certificate program in ethics or ethical leadership. An endowment will provide an annual, reliable income source that will enable the Ethics program to grow and to be sustainable. The endowment will be used for activities in support of the Ethics program, inclusive of, but not limited to, faculty training and travel, curricular materials, the Ethics Center and co-curricular efforts such as the Ethics Bowl.

Funding Procedure:

The endowment is created by Mike and Melinda Kelly as part of their gift to the *Building Our University* Campaign. It is anticipated the endowment will reach \$100,000 by 2018 through a combination of personal contributions by the Kelly's which will be matched by the Macy's Foundation Employee Matching Gift Program. Additional gifts can be added to the fund at any time by interested parties.

Annual Distribution:

The corpus will not be used to make a distribution. Distributions from the Fund will be made annually as a percentage of investment income, based on the corpus amount, as set by the Board of Trustees. No distributions will be made until one year after the principle reaches a minimum of \$20,000. Distribution requests will be made by the Director of the Ethics Across the Curriculum Program in consort with the Executive Vice President.

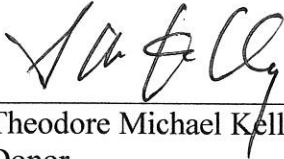
Accounting and Investment of Endowment Assets:

The Fund will be held in perpetuity, invested, controlled and accounted for by the Board of Trustees in collaboration with professional management as part of its overall endowment. The University shall invest

Endowment assets as an institutional fund under UPMIFA with the goal of optimizing yield and maintaining the spending power of the endowment assets. The endowment assets shall be subject to the investment policies of the University relating to endowments, and shall be managed in a manner that is consistent with these requirements. The University shall exercise exclusive authority over management of the endowment, including the pooling of the Endowment for investment and payout purposes.

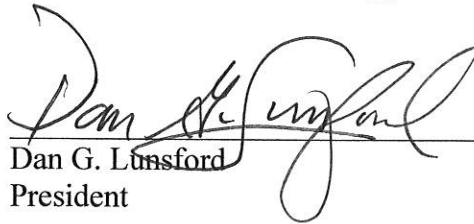
Unforeseeable Circumstances:

In the unlikely event it becomes impossible for any of the categories specified above to serve the specific purpose for which this Fund was created, the University President shall direct the proceeds of this gift be devoted to purposes that are deemed to be the most consistent with the approval of the Donors, following consultation with the Donors.



Theodore Michael Kelly, Sr.
Donor

Date: 2-25-14



Dan G. Lunsford
President

Date: 2/28/14



Melinda S. Kelly
Donor

Date: 2/25/14