End of Year Report on the MHU Center for Ethics

To: Phyllis Smith, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences

From: Elizabeth Whiting Pierce, Dir. of the Center for Ethics

May 10, 2018

**Narrative Reflection and Plans**

*Administrative*

The most important administrative accomplishment of this semester was holding a successful inaugural CFE Advisory Council meeting. The council members enthusiastically embraced the CFE’s mission: “*equipping students for redemptive and creative participation in the institutions of a democratic society.”*  They also supported plans for the Certificate in Ethical leadership, in particular its requirements for an on-campus project and a partnership with an off-campus entity. Wayne Higgins encouraged me to ask the Trustees for any additional money needed for a mini-grant program (students will use this program to fund their on-campus projects). Bud Christman stated that, for long term sustainability, the CFE would benefit from establishing an endowment of $200,000-$250,000, which he said he’d look into.

The Advisory Council made a couple of recommendations. First, certificate students should be encouraged to partner not only with non-profits and government agencies but with businesses. Second, I should seek out alums with business expertise as council members. Third, the CFE should work to acquire a dedicated space in which to conduct meetings with partners, host student programs, etc.

*Certificate in Ethical Leadership*

Progress on the Certificate in Ethical Leadership was mostly intangible, but nonetheless important. Hosting several student events allowed me to identify 1) several possible on-campus projects that are achievable, worthy, and of interest to the student body and 2) students who might lead those projects. Possible projects include: reinstating a parking appeals board; peer-to-peer sexual education programs; peer-to-peer personal finance education programs; and film festivals of various kinds. Hosting student events also helped me get to know various entities on campus and discern which ones would make suitable partners. For instance, the Student Government Association seems like a good place to recruit students, but it is not currently robust enough to serve as a reliable on-campus partner. The Women’s and Gender Studies Program seems like a better fit in that respect, and so forth.

*FYS 112*

FYS 112 instructors share a question with ethics educators everywhere: which ethical theories and theorists should we focus on? The cannon of ethics is broad, including everything from womanist activists to Confucian practitioners to continental philosophers. Grasping the breadth and depth of this field is a challenge for anyone but especially for instructors whose primary expertise is not in ethics. The instructors raised this question in our workshop in fall 2017, and, frankly, I had no answer for them. I suggested they keep doing what they were doing for a semester as I got oriented.

After a semester of teaching the course myself, I came to two conclusions. First, we should focus on ethical reasoning skills more than ethical theories per se. These skills include: the ability to articulate one’s own ethical views; the ability to listen to perspectives that are different and perhaps shocking; the ability to compare and contrast various ethical positions; the ability to detect gaps in reasoning or places where more information is needed; the ability to assess stakeholders’ varying responsibilities and vulnerabilities in a particular situation; and emotional intelligence to understand others’ intuitions as well as their stated reasons for holding particular positions. Second, it would be helpful to have a few model syllabi that demonstrate how to teach those skills. Toward that end, a group of instructors will develop 2-3 model syllabi over the summer.

Another challenge FYS 112 instructors have identified is that students often confuse FYS 112 with FYS 111 in form if not in content. They make two unhelpful assumptions: 1) it will be an easy course, requiring little academic effort, and 2) their instructor is their advisor. To remedy this problem, the instructors have agreed the course’s name should be changed to GE 112. I will submit the necessary paperwork to the Curriculum committee next semester. I am also exploring how GE 112 might utilize some of the theories and methods taught in ENG 112.

*Ethics Bowl*

This year’s NCICU Ethics Bowl was a valuable learning experience for student participants and for me. The students learned a great deal about professional comportment and networking, as well as ethical reasoning and the importance of seeking multiple perspectives on any challenging issue. I learned the basics of how the Ethics Bowl works, administratively and academically.

This first year, Ethics Bowl required a fairly low time investment for students. We met for an hour every couple of weeks, usually without any preparation expected. If Ethics Bowl were more rigorous, students would probably learn more, and I think they would *enjoy* the challenge. Furthermore, several students expressed interest in taking Ethics Bowl for course credit (much like Model UN, which is a 3 credit hour class). That administrative change could support a more rigorous practice and research schedule. I will explore this possibility with Marie Nicholson, the Registrar, and Matt Baldwin, my department chair. I will also work with Heather Hawn, who teaches Model UN, and Jonathan Rose, who teaches a debate course, to see how we might enable interested students to participate in two or more of these programs.

**Activities Planned**

**Summer-Fall 2018**

Summer 2018

*Administrative*

* Recruit 1 AGS student to CFE Advisory Council
* Stretch goal: identify 1-2 alumna to invite to CFE Advisory Board
* Stretch goal: work with Mike Underhill to build CFE MyMHU page (for internal use)

*FYS 112*

* Lead instructors’ team in crafting 2-3 model FYS 112 Syllabi
* Assess effectiveness of Ethical Use of Information (EUI) Pilot Program with Jennifer Brown and Dan Koster
* Plan next steps for EUI Pilot Program
* Finalize arrangements with Steven Benko to conduct Critical Thinking Pedagogy workshops in fall

*Certificate in Ethical Leadership*

* Plan Student Leadership Retreat in early fall: reserve space, reserve transportation, draft application, plan schedule, etc.
* Recruit students and chaperones to participate in leadership retreat
* Design Mini-Grant Program

*Ethics Bowl*

* Explore possibility of making Ethics Bowl a 3 credit course, equivalent to Model UN in rigor and time commitment
* Coordinate schedule of Ethics Bowl practices and course offering with Model UN (Heather Hawn) and Debate Class (Jonathan Rose)

*Professional Development*

* Deliver paper at 15th Annual Communication Ethics Conference, hosted by Duquesne University, on the impact of bi-partisan grassroots dialogue projects on the democratic legitimacy of the federal government.

Fall 2018

*Administrative*

* Meet once with Advisory Council

*Student Events*

* Wednesday Workshop

*FYS 112*

* Host *Honor Code* faculty and student reading group
* Drum up participation for Steven Benko’s Critical Thinking Pedagogy workshops
* Recruit instructors/schedule courses/order books
* Hold FYS 112 Instructor Workshop
* Consult with instructors regarding course design

*Certificate in Ethical Leadership*

* Hold Student Leadership Retreat
* Mentor student projects
* Oversee Mini-Grant Program

*Ethics Bowl*

* Apply for NCICU funding
* Recruit students
* Hold regular practices

**Activities List**

**Fall-Spring 2017-2018**

Fall 2017

*Administrative*

* Lots of meetings across campus

*Student Facing Events*

* Assisted Virginia Bower in planning and hosting a Civil Discourse Training for students, November 4

*FYS 112*

* Assisted Jennifer Brown in planning “Ethical Use of Information” Workshops, October 26, November 1
* Recruited and scheduled teachers for 16 sections
* Hosted FYS 112 teacher workshop, December 6, 2016

*Ethics Bowl*

* Applied for and received $500 of program funds from NCICU
* Invited approx. 35 nominees for the team
* Hosted 2 informational meet-and-greets and 4 team practices
* Recruited a team of 6, with 3 alternates

*Certificate in Ethical Leadership*

* Preparation: reviewed existing EAC designated courses, met with Deb Myers regarding design of Certificate in Community Engagement, reviewed Curriculum Committee’s certificate application process

*Academic Integrity*

* Planned and facilitated a Faculty Forum on Academic Integrity, September 28
* Assisted in planning and presentation of Academic Integrity FYS 111 Common Session, September 11

*Professional Development*

* Training: Better Angels, November 9-10
* Attended annual meeting of the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum, October 5-7
* Attended annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, November 18-21

*Other*

* Lead author on Diversity and Civility in the Liberal Arts Institute application

Spring 2018

*Administrative*

* Recruited advisory council: Wayne Higgins (Trustee), Bud Christman (VP of Development), Alaysia Black Hackett (Dir. of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs), Felice Lopez Bell (Instructor of English), Deb Morris (Professor of Education), Demarron Johnson (traditional student), Kendyl Robertson (traditional student).
* Authored yearly report
* Inaugural meeting on April 16
* Submitted budget request for AY 2018-2019

*Student Events*

* January 28: Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), On-Campus Event
* March 18-20: Student Trip to D.C. for FCNL Spring Lobby Weekend
* March 27: Red/Blue Depolarization Workshop
* March 28: Wednesday Workshop on Center for Ethics activities

*FYS 112*

* Held monthly instructor reading group
* Co-Organized Pilot Program in “Ethical Use of Information” scaffolded assignment
* Organized FYS 111/112 Annual Workshop, May 16
* Organized FYS 112 Assessment

*Certificate in Ethical Leadership*

* Began recruiting students
* Discerned likely/unlikely partners on campus

*Ethics Bowl*

* January-February: bi-weekly Ethics Bowl practice
* February 16-17: NCICU Ethics Bowl in Raleigh, NC
* April 10: SLAM demonstration