

# **8<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CONFERENCE SUMMARY: COLLEGE OF DUPAGE**

## **KEYNOTE: BOUNDLESS SPIRIT OF ETHICS**

Dr. Ralph Ferguson, Director, Ethics Center and Fulbright Specialist, Texas Tech University

### **Presentation Description**

Dr. Ferguson explores the impact of ethics agencies as a real-world value for self-management in personal, private, and public life. He discusses the importance of these activities on campuses to enrich the student preparedness when they exit the shelter of the institution.

### **Presentation Summary**

Ethics promotes problem-solving within groups, and shows that organizations must do the least amount of harm in identifying solutions. Students graduate from universities with a limited peripheral view of hazards that they will face in humanitarian service or as STEM professionals. This indicates that a broader dialog about ethics on college campuses must interface with the pragmatism of workplace practices sooner rather than later in the education process within the learning community. Equipping students with advanced critical thinking and decision-making skills gives them the capacity to work across disciplines in the market targeted towards what is best for human wellbeing. Through external seminars in the learning community, students have available to them additional training to enrich their professional awareness. Their comprehension of social and human capital contributes to a foundation in ethics that promotes and encourages an examination of complex issues with long-term impacts on society.

There is no market incentive that relieves private and public organizations of their ethical responsibility to protect society. L.J. Hanifan (1916) in his seminal paper, *Social Cap Gateway*, used the term Social Capital that engages five elements in an effectively functioning society: 1) Trust; 2) Economics; 3) Reciprocity; 4) Cooperation; and 5) Market. As students transition into their professions, the greater clarity they have about these five functions, the less likely disruption may occur in decision-making. The vitality of exploring the boundless challenges of ethics with real-time events while in higher education enhances the development of thoughtful pragmatic leaders. An ethics center serves as a hub in the learning

community to reinforce values among students who will enter the competitive marketplace.

Growth in ethical awareness may establish heightened sensitivity about the importance of Human Capital which will benefit organizations and national interests. Gary Becker, an economist at the University of Chicago, popularized the term, Human Capital, which emphasizes the importance of the enhancement of value for individuals, employers, and the community. It is essential through education and training programs that ethics be pivotal in the instructional process. Divergence from ethical conduct can cause irreversible harm in the market economy. The variety of topics students discuss concerning complex issues prepares them to strengthen their resolve to draw conclusions that best serve the community. A key role of an ethics center is to provide seminars and programs that reiterate the four basic ethical principles:

- Utilitarianism: places the locus of right and wrong solely on outcomes; moves beyond one's own interest and considers the interests of others.
- Deontology: focuses on the rightness or wrongness of actions themselves vs. rightness or wrongness of the consequences of those actions.
- Casuistry: applied ethics and jurisprudence; characterized as a critique of principle or rule-based reasoning.
- Virtue: emphasizes the role of character and moral philosophy, rather than either doing one's duty or acting on orders.

With numerous disciplines intersecting in the decision-making process, it is important to stress that students graduate with critical thinking skills and a solid ethical foundation in order to become good stewards. Achievements within democratization are inseparable from affirmative ethical values.