

Promoting Ethical Practices within Institutions of Higher Education

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Introduction

The public is continually bombarded with cases of wrongful practices in the work environment. As a result, the public has lost confidence in the ability of corporations and institutions of higher education to train individuals to behave in an ethical manner (Frisque, Lin, & Kolb, 2004). Ethical practices in corporate America have resulted in institutions of higher education revisiting their ethical practices, which includes creating a learning environment where students develop the necessary skills to become ethical leaders and citizens (Couch & Dodd, 2005). Many colleges and universities have adopted codes of ethics that emphasize core ethical principles and standards for their employees.

Ethical standards are important to ensure that the university is operating within the law and is viewed by the public as an ethical institution of learning. In addition, Couch & Dodd (2005) believe that more attention should be directed towards evaluating whether the policies are achieving the intended results. Codes of ethics at universities are primarily for the purpose of promoting ethical teaching practices. The university has a responsibility to address and evaluate ongoing contradictions of ethical theory and practice within and outside the classroom (Fenwick, 2005).

Students and faculty should be encouraged to participate in academic integrity initiatives in the classroom and within the community where they live (Couch & Dodd, 2005). Universities should promote ongoing dialogue among student groups for the purpose of increasing understanding of professional codes of ethics in academia, which includes technology enhanced plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty that have increased significantly in the past thirty years. According to Couch and Dodd (2005), academic dishonesty can be reduced by establishing honor codes that send a message to students that ethical behavior is expected. The university is responsible for promoting ethical standards for their students that will guide them in their personal and professional lives. Ethical principles for college/university students should be included in student orientation programs. Universities should not assume that students come to universities understanding ethical principles and how they are applied in academia.

Ethics Defined

Ethics has been defined in many different ways in the literature. Ethics is viewed by some as the way people conduct themselves and make decisions. Macrina (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) defines ethics in the philosophical context, indicating that ethics governs how people live their

lives. Trevina and Nelson (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) refer to ethics as the norms, attitudes, and beliefs that are reflected in the way people treat each other and the manner in which people are able to adapt to the environment in which they find themselves (Thompson, 2007). The manner in which personal ethical values are formed and developed is of particular interest to academia and the public since the moral collapse of corporate executive officers of large corporations such as Enron, Tyco and Aldelphia (Nevins, Bearden, & Money, 2007). Rawls (as cited in Thompson, 2007) believes that the occurrence of unethical events is a result of the value differences in people, which cause them to act in ways that go against what society deems moral and just.

Ethical behavior in organizations gained a great amount of media attention after the collapse of companies such as American Group International Incorporate (AIG), Enron and Tyco. AIG lost \$70 billion in one month, Enron lost \$90 billion in two months, and Tyco lost \$40 million in two months of share holder value (Brewer, 2005). The press was quick to blame faculties in institutions of higher education, where executives earned their degrees, for not teaching their students to be virtuous (Beggs & Dean, 2007). There is an assumption by the media that ethics can be taught; whereas, faculties point out that teaching a code of ethics requires a “buy-in” from students. Faculties are still debating how this “buy-in” can be accomplished. Business education university faculties are quick to point to the need for “external forces for better ethics in organizations, represented by legislation” (Beggs & Dean, 2007, p. 15).

Based on the recent media focus on the violations of the ethical protocol in business organizations and educational institutions, the nation has demanded that governing bodies take corrective action. An example of recent legislation to reduce unethical practices in organizations is the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (Warren & Rosenthal, 2006; Beggs & Dean, 2007). The purpose of the legislation was to mandate adequate “internal controls” for corporations to make accounting practices transparent, and thereby, to ensure compliance. As a result of this legislation, the Security and Exchange Commission was given the power to police compliance issues. In addition, the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are required to certify that the financial results that are reported to shareholders are accurate.

Study of Ethics

The study of ethics has increased in academia and the corporate world in the United States. This increase is attributed to a new generation of professionals who represent the changing demographics in the work environment. In the past, ethics training in the United States was mainly for white middle-class male students who were entering the professions of business, medicine, religion and the law. Students who attend universities today represent a different demographic that includes a variety of races, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds (Beggs & Dean, 2007).

There has been a continuing debate regarding the extent to which ethics is able to be taught and the degree to which the teaching of ethics influences people’s future behavior. This debate goes back to the time when Plato and Socrates debated whether or not virtue could be taught (Louden, 2000). Socrates believed that “ethics was the search for a good life in which one’s actions are in accord with the truth” (Bass, 1990, p. 905). Immanuel Kant, the last major philosopher in the

Age of Enlightenment, believed that the teaching of ethics required structure and discipline to produce ethical human behavior (Louden, 2000; Kant, 2004).

Organizational leadership (study of organizational management) is founded on the principles of ethical behavior and social responsibility. Millions of dollars have been spent by organizations to train their employees on the principles of organizational development and a major part of this is the practice of ethical behavior. Corporations, K-12 public education institutions, institutions of higher education and religious organizations (i.e., church) establish ethical policies or codes of ethics that their employees are expected to follow.

Ethical Perceptions of Educators

The media has recently brought to the public's attention many examples of unethical behavior by educators (i.e., public school administrators, teachers, and certificated staff) who also received their degrees at institutions of higher education. Faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Teacher Education Departments have debated their responsibility in teaching ethics and whether ethics is able to be taught. Although there has been an effort to include ethical responsibilities in course syllabi, this does not guarantee that everyone who earns a degree at a university will behave ethically in their chosen profession. Accreditation agencies such as the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) require colleges/universities to assess pre-service teachers' adherence to ethical behavior standards before recommending them for state licensure (NCATE, 2006). Despite efforts nationwide to establish standards of professional conduct for teachers, little has been done to professionalize public-school teaching.

Barrett, Headley, Stovall, and White (2006) developed a research study to investigate "teachers' perceptions of the frequency and seriousness of different categories of teacher misconduct" (p. 421). The researchers created a 34-item questionnaire to measure how serious the teachers perceived the various categories of misconduct. These questionnaires were distributed to 235 education professionals in South Carolina. The respondents rated the degree of misconduct that they perceived had occurred for each item listed on the questionnaire. The researchers used a factor analysis to measure the degree of seriousness that professional educators had attached to each of the misconduct categories. The results of the study yielded three areas of major misconduct: "(a) student-teacher boundary violations, (b) carelessness in behavior, and (c) subjectivity in grading and instruction" (Barrett et al., 2006, p. 421). The behaviors that were judged the most serious ethical violations were engaging in romantic relationships with students (94.1 %), allowing students to engage in romantic behaviors in the classroom (94.1 %), making derogatory remarks to students about a colleague (92.6 %), awarding students higher grades for favors (90.8 %), and making sexual comments to students (Barrett et al., 2006).

The results of this research study by Barrett et al. (2006) suggest that teachers have an understanding of the underlying ethical principles of their profession. The researchers recommend that a set of principles should be compiled that mirrors those found in the code of ethics for the American Psychological Association (APA), and the American Medical Association (AMA). These principles include showing respect for others, delivering professional services, and helping others. The aforementioned set of principles could provide the guidance for

a national code of ethics. Barrett et al. (2006) suggest that a national code of ethics would establish a standard for defining the expected ethical behavior of education professionals. The code of ethics would protect the public against incompetent educators and would also protect the educators who followed their professional code of ethics.

The question that should be considered for further investigation is whether establishing a code of ethics is the key for guaranteeing ethical conduct for professionals. In other words, is ethical behavior learned and practiced after a code of ethics has been implemented for their profession? Or does a person's ethical behavior reflect his/her religious commitment to making ethical decisions? In a research study by Knotts, Lopez, and Mesak (2000) on ethical judgments of college students, the researchers found that a dimension of religiosity-religious commitment (i.e., deals more with how religious a person is, and less with how a person is religious in terms of practicing certain rituals) significantly influenced the ethical judgments of college students in a sample of 242 (only 226 usable questionnaires) undergraduates and graduate students enrolled in business courses in the fall 1998 quarter at a medium-sized southern university.

Although there appears to be an agreement between universities and corporations that organizations need to address the topic of ethics, there is concern regarding the best way to proceed to integrate ethics into their organization. "Ethics and compliance officers, professional codes, ethics conferences, formal and informal ethics courses, and ethics hotlines are only some of the ways in which organizations have responded to the need for ethics preparedness" (Frisque, Lin, & Kolb, 2004, p. 28).

Ethical Training

Universities and corporations have used training in ethics as the common ground for educating individuals on making ethical decisions in the workplace. Frisque et al. (2004) suggest that Performance Improvement (PI) professionals provide people with the "strategies to assist with complex ethical decision-making frameworks" (p. 30). Galvin (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) stated that the results of a recent survey of 1652 companies published in the annual 2001 Industry Report found that 24 percent provided training on a regular basis, 17 percent provided training on an as needed basis, and 38 percent provided no ethics training. The percentage of companies that provided training in ethics suggest that the amount of training that employees receive is directly related to the value that management places on professional training, and they are influenced by how strongly they believe that ethical training will increase corporate sales.

Hemingway and Maclagan (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) indicated that ethical business behavior, or lack thereof, is believed to be an outgrowth of managers' personal values. In 1994, Dov L. Seidman, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of LRN, identified a need in corporate America to provide organizations with services that create ethical corporate cultures that promote self-regulation based on core values, as opposed to establishing a set of rules for employees to follow. Based on his assessment of the ethical practices of organizations, Seidman established LRN, which has been touted as being highly successful in assisting corporations to provide continuing education on how to identify and become more effective at resolving sensitive conflicts, how to apply the appropriate remedy to resolve dilemmas, and how to write carefully crafted emails. The ultimate goal of LRN is to help corporations to integrate lawful and ethical conduct into

daily business practices (Thompson, 2007). The effectiveness of ethical training is ultimately measured by an increase in institution's ability to be more productive in increasing their competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Although institutions of higher education have not implemented ethics training to the extent that corporations have in recent years, higher education is not free from experiencing unethical practices and wrongdoings. One of the more recent scandals in an institution of higher education was discovering that faculty members falsified research data (Frisque et al., 2004). Guelcher and Cahalane (as cited in Frisque et al., 2004) reported that fifty percent of business school deans said that they would accept a bribe of one million dollars to hire an unqualified applicant for a position in their department. These researchers suggest that high level administrators have a responsibility to protect the reputation of their institution and that one way that they are able to do this is through ethics training programs.

Universities that are in the process of implementing compliance-based ethics programs find new challenges in an ever-changing workplace. Universities have become increasingly diverse with students from different cultures, races, and ethnic backgrounds. Based on the changing demographics in institutions of higher education, universities are beginning to implement ethics programs that are infused into the shared beliefs and value systems of their students. Although students from a variety of cultures may have different interpretations of ethical behavior, there is an ongoing "debate and little consensus regarding whether faculty should focus their teaching objectives on relativistic values or universalistic values" (Frisque et al., 2004, p. 37). Corporate America and institutions of higher education should not lose sight of the multicultural setting that not only permeates ethics teaching and training approaches, but also contributes to the complexity of defining desired outcomes and adopting appropriate content, methodology and measurement. Whatever approach is adopted to establish ethical practices in an organization (i.e., ethics courses, ethics training, compliance or values-based programs), the desired outcomes should be made clear to the participants with the understanding that the establishment of desired outcomes is only the first step in creating an ethical workplace environment. Perhaps most importantly, leaders of organizations need to realize that acting ethically will not decrease their competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Teaching of Ethics

Many would agree that students should have learned values and ethics before they entered college. For the most part, students have learned their values in the home, school, church, and through their interaction with members of the society in which they live. Colson (as cited in Chen & Tang, 2006) argues that institutions of higher education cannot make morally corrupt students virtuous or unintelligent students smart. Chen and Tang (2006) believe that "more research is needed to identify possible ways to unlearn the unethical orientation and instill proper ethics and values among college students in the future" (p. 90).

Mintzberg and Gosling (as cited in Chen & Tang, 2006) believe that ethical managers cannot be created in a university classroom. They believe that professors are not able to teach management to individuals who are not managers and that people need to learn from their own experiences. This has caused many universities, who offer a Masters of Business Administration (MBA)

degree, to provide first-hand experiences for their students to enhance their knowledge and wisdom acquired from textbooks. Some full-time business students are required to interview white-collar federal prisoners who are paying their debt to society for unethical practices such as “cooking the books” for the organization where they were employed.

There is an abundance of literature on the teaching of ethics in business schools that spans over a century. The literature in the past fifteen years has included suggestions for how to teach ethics, what to teach, and even questioning whether ethics should be taught at all. Ritter (2006) conducted an empirical study to determine how effective ethics materials were and how ethics could be integrated and implemented in an ethics curriculum. The study tested the notion that the implementation of an ethical program could have positive outcomes even for a small sampling of students. Interestingly, the results of the study showed that positive effects of an ethics training program only occurred with women. According to Ritter (2006), women enter college with a “higher ethical schema available for activation and use in decision making than men” (p. 161). This may be a result of women having to make changes to the “traditional business paradigm to include their gender role” and as a result, they are willing to make other concessions (p. 162). Ritter also suggests that even though men may be knowledgeable of ethical principles, they tend to follow the traditional business paradigm that values increasing their profit margin over ethical considerations.

Curricula and Pedagogical Approaches for Teaching Ethics

Warren and Rosenthal (2006) conducted interviews at institutions of higher education that offer degrees in business to determine what has been done, if anything, regarding the curricula in the ethics area and how faculties see the curricula impacting their future students. The study was prompted by the recent corporate scandals that were headed by noteworthy executives who had received a MBA from reputable colleges and universities. After interviewing faculties and administrators in the School of Business in institutions of higher education, the researchers found that many of the schools have taken different pedagogical approaches to the teaching of ethics and related courses. Based on the results of the interviews, the researchers concluded that: (a) companies are being controlled to a greater degree by government, (b) corporate productivity is decreasing since the Sarbanes-Oxley Act was passed, (c) there is a need for more codes of ethics and ethical conduct in business, and (d) colleges and universities continue to debate whether ethics should be taught as a separate course or should be integrated into the curriculum.

The writer has learned that the amount of literature available on ethics and social responsibility is overwhelming. Researchers have conducted numerous studies. A few of the most recent studies have been cited in this paper. There does not appear to be a solution to the debate over whether ethics can be taught or whether a person can be taught to be virtuous. Everyone seems to have an opinion on this subject. Ancient philosophers developed their own thought systems about virtue and present day religious leaders follow their dictates as they interpret them from the Bible, Koran, Torah and other religious doctrines. The erosion of the American society’s value system is often attributed to the breakdown of “family values”. There is an attitude that permeates our society that making money is what’s important. Hence, parents work outside the home and the raising of children is often times left to caregivers and to the schools. The responsibility to teach

values has shifted to the neighborhood culture where children interact with other children. The increase in gang activity is a symptom of eroding values within our society.

Causes of Unethical Behavior

There are many examples of why individuals choose to participate in unethical practices. Some of the situations that may result in unethical or illegal behavior are discussed by the writer through the following examples. Although an employee may know that he is participating in an unethical practice at work, he may be afraid of losing his job if he does not follow the manager's guidance. When parents do not have enough money to purchase gifts for their family over the holidays (e.g., Christmas), they may feel compelled to steal rather than having their children "go without" presents. When people feel that their company has not paid them sufficient wages for the work that they do, they may steal items for use in their home or to sell. A fatal illness that requires considerable investment of money may cause a person to steal drugs or money to save the life of another human being. People who are addicted to drugs may steal to maintain their habit rather than suffer the pain they would otherwise endure.

In summation, the reason why individuals, who know the difference between "right" and "wrong", participate in unethical practices is because they experience a departure from their value system, which impairs their judgment to such a degree that they are willing to go beyond society's ethical code. This could be caused by any of the emotions (i.e., love, fear, jealousy, lust, and hate), destructive habits of excess (i.e., drugs, gambling, shopping, eating, and drinking), and perceived needs (i.e., power, greed, and self-esteem).

Chen and Tang (2006) acknowledge that managers and employees in the real world of work have increased pressure to reach organizational goals, deadlines, and quotas. As a result of these business pressures, some managers may resort to engaging in unethical practices to meet the demands of all stakeholders. Future research is needed to investigate manager's behavior when they are facing "potential gains and perverse incentives in the real world of work" (p. 90). Most people would agree that our society is depreciating in the areas of ethics and values. Therefore, there needs to be greater amount of attention given to the problem of ethics and not just from an academic perspective.

Chen and Tang (2006) research study examined "business and psychology students' attitude toward unethical behavior and their propensity to engage in unethical behavior" (p. 77). The researchers collected data for their study using the 32-item Unethical Behavior Scale developed by Luna-Arocas and Tang (as cited in Chen and Tang, 2006), which has "good reliability, face validity, content validity, and measurement invariance data in the literature" (p. 84). The researchers also "collected data regarding demographic variables such as sex, age, years of education, current job and total work experience in years, major (business vs. psychology), and annual income" (p. 84). The results of the researchers' study found good reliability for all measures that they used. Theft, corruption, deception, and not choosing to participate in "whistle blowing" were considered more ethical behaviors among males than their female counterparts. Therefore, females were found to be more ethical in this student sample. The researchers also found that if a situation was determined to be unethical that students are unlikely to engage in unethical behavior.

The issue of ethics and values appear to be characteristic of a depreciating society. The headlines in the media appear to support the premise that there are individuals in the military, academia, government, and religious institutions that have participated in unethical behavior. Establishing codes of ethics, integrating ethics into the curriculum, creating honor codes, and offering training in ethics by leadership corporations, have been suggested as ways to create an environment where all people will behave in an ethical and virtuous manner. These aforementioned approaches have been tried in a great number of organizations with minimal results since unethical behavior is still a factor that organizations should be prepared to overcome on a day by day basis.

Numerous corporate scandals and corrupt business practices have been publicized in the media since the fall of Enron in 2001. Enron hired Arthur Andersen, one of the “big five” accounting firms to audit their firm. The combined greed of both of these companies for money and power resulted in the collapse of both firms. In 2002, the firm of Arthur Andersen voluntarily surrendered their certified public accounts license for their unethical handling of the Enron account. In 2002, Barbara Toffler, former employee of Arthur Andersen at Enron, was interviewed by Paul Solman, a business and economics correspondent for *The News Hour* to discuss how the driving force for financial gain and the power that more money brings to the company caused the Enron executives to participate in unethical practices.

Media spokespersons frequently make the erroneous assumption that the collapse of corporations is due to a lack of business ethics and standards. In actuality, former Enron Corporation Chief Financial Officer, Andrew Fastow, and former Chief Executive Officer, Jeffrey Skilling, attended the best schools of business in United States (As cited in Chen & Tang, 2006). It appears that their unethical actions were the result of wanting to increase their financial assets. People who desire more money may give into temptations and participate in unethical activities that often times leads to their own destruction. Chen and Tang (2006) suggested that unethical behavior is an under-represented area of research in management and should be further investigated. Researchers have conducted studies on unethical behavior that focused on workplace theft, cyber loafing, deviance, counterproductive behavior, corruption, and misbehaviors of organizations. Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matterson (As cited in Chen & Tang, 2006), provided a list of twenty-three misbehaviors at work. Included in the aforementioned list of unethical behaviors in the workplace is abuse of resources, not whistle blowing, theft, corruption and deception, blackmail, bribery, bullying, dishonesty, sexual harassment, discrimination, misinformation, and intimidation.

Although people may know the difference between “right” and “wrong”, they still may engage in unethical practices depending on the situation in which they find themselves. The moral values of society are reflected in the culture in which they live. Individuals may make “wrong” choices based on their intrinsic or extrinsic needs. The educational and social service environments have ethical breeches. These ethical breeches take many forms. For example, a review of the budget may show that money is being used to pay for work done by a company who makes large contributions to finance a board member’s political campaign or to remodel the private home of person employed by the educational organization.

Codes of Ethics

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) provide codes of ethics to guide the behavior of higher education employees in their professional work at colleges and universities. Hence, the ACPA Code of Ethics expects all individuals to be treated fairly and equitably. Arguably, individuals who are employed at a college or university have a greater responsibility to model high ethical standards (Danley, 2006).

Organizations have a responsibility to develop an ethics policy. The purpose of an ethics policy should be to support a culture of openness, trust, and integrity among employees. Since employees are more apt to copy management's actions rather than choosing to adhere to the official guidelines in a manual. It is imperative that management set the standard of behavior. Brown (2000) suggests that instead of providing a written Code of Ethics, employees should be provided with information that teaches them how to access the right resources so that they can make better ethical decisions. Schmidt and Posner (As cited by Weber, 2006) believe that a strong ethical culture or set of values assists managers in providing a clear organizational direction. Kranacher (2006) suggests that the policies and procedures should be communicated throughout the organization via management training meetings, email messages, employee orientations, and the organization's policy manual.

A Code of Ethics should be a list of positive ethical traits that the organization values and expects their employees to emulate, because the institution's culture is reflected in the Code of Ethics. One of the roadblocks to creating a code of ethical values for employees is the erroneous perception of many managers. Kranacher (2006) states that some managers do not believe that employees are able to be taught ethical values, even though employees have ethical values that they continue to develop throughout their lifetime. Danley (2006) recommends that employees in today's workplace should be consistent in their responses to daily events, conflicts, and challenges, and they should base their actions on the standards of ethical behavior that have been agreed upon by the organization. According to Covey (As cited in Danley, 2006), the traits necessary for ethical behavior are courage, honesty, fairness, and empathy. Danley (2003) believes that developing habits based on courage, honesty and integrity, fairness, and generosity are the ethical traits that should be fostered in the home and in the workplace.

There are many ways that courage can be expressed by employees. One expression of courage is speaking the truth when there is no one who is willing to support you for fear of retribution by someone in the organization. When people are valued in the workplace for their courage and integrity, these behaviors become part of the corporate culture. Hence, honesty and integrity are determined through daily interactions with others, especially management. Fairness and concern are two characteristics that employees expect of ethical leaders. In other words, employees believe that ethical leaders take the time to help employees solve problems because ethical leaders value their employees. In the final analysis, employees bring to the organization their own personal, cultural, and religious beliefs and are influenced by the ethical values of their leaders. Consequently, high ethical standards established by management beget high ethical standards by their employees.

Promotion Strategies

According to Couch and Dodd (2007) colleges and universities should:

(a) become better informed about formal ethics related policies of institutions and initiate discussions about the effect of these policies on the creation of a ethical climate on campus; (b) support the development of an institution coed of ethics that articulates core ethical principles; (c) document inconsistencies that may exist between the explicit values communicated in written pronouncements and the implicit values that drive institutional decisions and actions; (d) collaborate with colleagues to foster a campus climate that values diversity and ensures a welcoming, supportive environment for all; (e) provide leadership to nurture an ethical learning environment that is inclusive, fair, and free from harassment and coercion; (f) become informed about the social, political, and economic issues that have ethical implications for the profession; (g) ensure that graduate and undergraduate students learn the principles and traditions required for ethical professional practice, as well as the knowledge and skills that will prepare them to become responsible citizens and ethical leaders in their communities; (h) find ways to enhance opportunities for student engagement in experiential learning activities that provide exposure to real-life ethical issues; and engage in national ethics initiatives, such as the Association of College Honor Societies project and in activities sponsored by the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics and the Center for Academic integrity. (p. 23)

Another Viewpoint to Consider

The responsibility for promoting ethics in higher education lies with the leadership of colleges and universities. Like most efforts at organizational change, the energy, financing, and inspiration must start at the top and must anticipate and verbalize a long term commitment to ethical goals. “Bottom-up” schemes for change are seldom successful since they lack the organizational influence to create a sustained, well supported plan of action.

Ethics issues permeate every aspect of university life from admissions to the classroom, from hiring to curriculum development and from research to the athletic field. To alter the ethics culture in an institution of higher education (or any organization) requires the highest level of commitment and realistic consequences for deviations.

To highlight the level of difficulty involved in implementing such a program, the writer has developed several actions for a sample program that, if implement, would have a high change of success. This program would require:

(a) verbal and written commitment of the university president/chancellor, board of trustees, alumni association, faculty and staff to the implementation of an ethics plan of action;
(b) verbal and written commitment of departments heads overseeing student recruiting and admissions policy to an ethics plan of action for their areas of concern. Some possible action items might include advertising that the student body is governed by a “honor code”, the violation of which could lead to disenrollment. The hallmark of the admissions policy would focus on the ethical selection of students to include cultural difference, gender and racial equalities, socio-economic factors, as well as, academic excellence.

- (c) faculty hiring guidelines that would include a thorough “vetting” of the applicant’s qualifications and background as well as a written commitment by the applicant to fully support the ethics initiative;
- (d) faculty members to commit to and undertake curriculum revisions that would include the ethical aspects of their particular discipline;
- (e) students to commit to a dormitory, fraternity/sorority, off-campus life-style code ethics;
- (f) faculty members to commit to ethical guidelines for the research into the publication of scholarly materials;
- (g) faculty members to commit to a faculty-faculty, faculty-student ethical relationships guideline; and
- (h) athletic departments to commit to ethical guidelines for recruitment and maintenance (academic and personal) of school athletes to include strict adherence to NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) regulations.

Conclusion

The writer has reviewed just a fraction of the literature available on the subject of ethics in the workplace. The literature for the most part, supports the notion that the ethical behavior is good, that ethical behavior is needed in the workplace, and that progress is possible in raising men and women above their more prurient interests.

Based on the writer’s experience and discussions with university leaders, however, the notion of total commitment by all stakeholders as outlined in the sample plan is probably unlikely. Cries of academic freedom, unreasonable restraints and loss of flexibility would be echoed from the “bell towers” of academia in spite of the intrinsic “good” intentions of the plan.

All this does not augur well for the “fast track” implementation of ethics at the university level or in the workplace. Instead, progress in changing individuals towards a more ethical vision of their personal and professional life will be a plodding effort, characterized by small successes and small failures for a long time into the future.

In conjunction with the foregoing “sample plan, the writer would ask the readers to complete the following brief survey to ascertain their opinions, about the likelihood that university leadership would “buy-in” to this plan.

		Very Likely	Likely	Not Likely
1	Verbal and written commitment of the university president/chancellor, board of trustees, alumni association, faculty and staff to the implementation of an ethics plan of action;			
2	Verbal and written commitment of departments heads overseeing student recruiting and			

	admissions policy to an ethics plan of action for their areas of concern. Some possible action items might include advertising that the student body is governed by a “honor code”, the violation of which could lead to disenrollment. The hallmark of the admissions policy would focus on the ethical selection of students to include cultural difference, gender and racial equalities, socio-economic factors, as well as, academic excellence.			
3	Verbal and written commitment of departments heads overseeing student recruiting and admissions policy to an ethics plan of action for their areas of concern. Some possible action items might include advertising that the student body is governed by a “honor code”, the violation of which could lead to disenrollment. The hallmark of the admissions policy would focus on the ethical selection of students to include cultural difference, gender and racial equalities, socio-economic factors, as well as, academic excellence.			
4	Students to commit to a dormitory, fraternity/sorority, off-campus life-style code ethics;			
5	Faculty members to commit to ethical guidelines for the research into the publication of scholarly materials			
6	Faculty members to commit to a faculty-faculty, faculty-student ethical relationships guideline			

7	Athletic departments to commit to ethical guidelines for recruitment and maintenance (academic and personal) of school athletes to include strict adherence to NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) regulations.			
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After completing the survey, reflect on the following questions:

- (a) Is it possible to have the same areas of university life closely adhering to such a plan and other areas not?
- (b) What would you say is the greatest strength of this plan? What is the greatest weakness?
- (c) How many of you would be willing to “buy-in” to a program similar to the one out-lined?
- (d) Based on our discussion and your own convictions, how would you describe the future progress in the implementation of ethics programs at the university/college level?

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Biography

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