

To: The Liberal Arts Program Committee
From: The Ethics Working Group

Subject: Final Report

As you requested, we have developed a proposal to implement ethics as an integrated curricular element in the liberal arts core curriculum. We have been mindful of the issues of academic freedom, diversity of disciplines, faculty development, implementation timetables, and outcomes assessment. We have paid special attention to the charge to introduce ethical theories and principles at Tier I and to synthesize and apply ethical learning at Tiers II and III. We have surveyed the faculty, met individually with faculty members in various disciplines, and listened to faculty reactions at the ICE meeting, incorporating feedback from these faculty members into our recommendation. We are pleased to present a proposal which has our unanimous support.

We propose that the LAPC identify four theories of ethics, from which faculty teaching Tier I courses will be required to choose one to teach in the course. The faculty members may choose to teach as many additional theories as they deem appropriate, and they may use those theories to illustrate shortcomings in the theory selected from the LAPC's set of four. The reason for limiting the set of theories is twofold: first, this will allow the creation of faculty development resources which address a manageable portion of the field of ethics and second, this facilitates articulation between Tier I and Tiers II and III so that faculty at the higher level Tiers can rely on their students' having been exposed to at least one of the four theories. The reason for providing variety in the set of theories is to allow for faculty to choose a theory which fits best with the material they are presenting.

Course proposals at Tier I should indicate which of the four theories may be taught in the course. Faculty members may wish to identify more than one theory which might be appropriate. Individual faculty members should have the freedom to choose among those theories. Syllabi of individual Tier I course sections should indicate that ethics is a component of the course but would not be required to list particular theories being covered. Course proposals for Tier II and Tier III courses should indicate how they will apply ethical learning to the course material.

We recommend the following four theories as the initial set to be identified: Virtue theory, Utilitarianism, Social Contract theory, and Kantian duty theory. We recommend that, at least initially, there be an option for any faculty member who finds it impossible or inadvisable to include any of these four to present an argument as to why none of the four can or should be included and to identify which alternate theory of ethics will be taught in the course. We recommend that you collect data on the theories being taught and revisit the set of theories after most or all of the initial Tier I proposals are in. If a significant minority of the faculty identifies a particular theory as a substitute, the set could be expanded to five theories. We did hear some sentiment for inclusion of non-Western and feminist theories, but we believe that these can be taught effectively by contrasting them to one of the four theories selected. In our opinion most college

students are not well-versed enough in ethical theory to understand differences between dominant theories in our culture and dominant theories in other cultures. To that end we believe the contrast would be beneficial to students. In addition, we recognize that our proposing that one of the four listed theories be covered could be considered as privileging masculinist, white or colonial thinking. However, we have to recognize that in our dominant culture those theories are predominant and that students need a starting point in order to consider alternatives.

We further recommend that there be faculty development opportunities to provide faculty with resources on the content of the theories and assistance in applying the material to their courses. These may take the form of symposia, workshops, bibliographies, and blogs. We also recommend that we seek and maintain institutional memberships in organizations such as the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum, ensuring the sharing of information with others engaging in similar projects.

Finally, we recommend that assessment mechanisms be implemented incrementally, allowing for very broad measures initially – simple counts of the numbers of syllabi which reflect inclusion of ethical theory and the numbers of students who recalled being required to apply ethical theory. Over time, we expect that these mechanisms will be refined.

LACC Course Syllabi. Every LACC course syllabus should include a statement which makes clear the ethical theory(ies) used in the course. Although these theories will vary with each course, they should include at least one of the following:

- Virtue theory
- Kantian ethical theory
- Utilitarian ethical theory
- Social contract ethical theory

At Tier I, the syllabus should focus on teaching the students what the theory is, using course material to facilitate discussion and understanding of the theory. At this level, the syllabus should also indicate consideration of the ethical dimensions of the production and acquisition of knowledge within the discipline. At Tier II and Tier III, the syllabus should focus on applying theory to practical problems of life and work. In all cases, discussion should focus on challenging students' thinking and developing their abilities to understand what is it to be a good human being.

LACC Program Course Evaluation Form.. A separate course evaluation form used in every LACC course should include the following questions:

- In this course I was required to apply ethical theory to a course component.
- In this course I was required to apply ethical theory to practical situations.