

## **Ethics-Across-the-Curriculum Survey Results in Brief**

In an effort to create clear and appropriate guidelines for ethical content in the new Liberal Arts Core Curriculum, the committee on Ethics-Across-the-Curriculum decided to try to determine how ethics content was currently being disseminated. During late January and early February, faculty participated in a study of classroom ethics. Our response rate was strong; 116 faculty members responded to the survey. At least a few respondents were part-timers. The spread across disciplines was good with every academic department represented. Of the total, 71.6% (68) of respondents reported that they are likely to teach a general education course in the future.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the question, is ethical theory part of at least one course that I teach, 55.3% (64) of respondents said yes, 34.5% (40) said no and 10.3% (12) reported being unsure. We feel optimistic about this result. With slightly more than half of faculty reporting that they already introduce ethical content at least some of the time, we felt that the infusion throughout the curriculum would be fairly straightforward. We were more optimistic when we saw that 65.1% (71) of respondents reported that they addressed ethical behavior in every course.

In addition, 71.1% (69) of respondents reported feeling comfortable or very comfortable discussing ethics in the classroom, with only 2.1% (2) reported feeling uncomfortable. We also took this as a good sign that the requirements of the new Liberal Arts Core Curriculum would not be too onerous.

When it came to adding more ethical content to their courses, 68.1% (64) of faculty reported that they would at least consider doing so if they had more support from the university to do so. When it came to the listing the type of support, 31.3% (30) considered consistent university policy a strong motivator. 24% (23) of respondents requested funding for course materials. 16.7% (16) felt that they would benefit from faculty development programs. 15.6% (15) suggested that guest speakers on ethics would be useful and 12.5% (12) felt that re-assigned time for course development would be best.

While we are not specifically charged with improving ethical conduct among the students, we queried respondents as to whether they would like students to sign an ethical code of conduct. 19.8% reported that they thought ECSU students should be required to sign a code of ethical conduct. 57.3% (55) reported that it would depend on the code of conduct and 22.9% (22) were either opposed or not sure if ECSU students should be required to sign a code of conduct.

The most frequent type of ethical content dealt with academic honesty, plagiarism and ethical professional obligations. The next most common type of ethical content was civil behavior in the classroom. Table One shows the comparison of ethical content across respondents. When it

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: For specific questions, response rates differ because not all respondents answered each question.

came to ethical theories and ethical issues, there was a great variety of coverage reported (See table one).

In addition to the closed-ended questions, the survey included a series of open ended questions on the type of ethical content they would consider adding, the areas where students need the most ethical attention at ECSU, the theories of ethics respondents thought were most important to include as well as guidelines for the committee to consider in developing ways to infuse ethics through the curriculum.

The list of ethical theories, issues and other content provided was quite broad. Some respondents reported an array of specific ethical principles like justice, privacy rights, good/evil, ethics of care, etc. Others reported ethical concepts as applied to disciplines. Disciplinary ethical concepts included, what is fraud in science research, what are the ethics of writing a biography, what are the codes of ethics of professional organizations, etc. Still others spoke in great detail about wanting to do more on the subject of academic honesty.

Most of the faculty discussion surrounding student ethics centered on academic honesty issues. The discussion was broad, however and included student attitudes toward and appreciation for professional ethics. When it came to recommending specific ethical theories that faculty felt students needed to know, the recommendations were almost as broad as the possibilities.

The most consistent sets of advice that we received from our peers was regarding resources. We were asked to keep in mind that adding new material to a course can be both time consuming and costly. More than once, we were advised to “keep it simple” since courses and disciplines add adequate complexity. We will certainly make every effort to do so.

**Table One: Ethical Content Taught\***

TYPE OF CONTENT	YES	NO	NOT SURE
What is plagiarism?	87.7% (96)	10.4% (11)	1.9% (2)
What is academic integrity?	70.8% (75)	24.5% (26)	4.7% (5)
What is cheating?	78.3% (83)	17.9% (19)	3.8% (4)
What is acceptable collaboration?	74.0% (77)	19.2% (20)	6.7% (7)
What is artistic integrity?	13.5% (14)	4.8% (5)	81.7% (85)
How should human subjects be treated?	39.4% (41)	60.6% (63)	-----
What is Civil Behavior in Class?	62.5% (65)	34.6% (36)	2.9% (3)
Do ends justify means?	49.0% (51)	41.3% (43)	9.6% (10)
When is it acceptable to take the life of another?	19.2% (20)	79.8% (83)	1.0% (1)
What is good (evil)?	39.4% (41)	58.7% (61)	1.9% (2)
Why do human beings do evil?	28.2% (29)	1.9% (2)	96.9% (72)
Obligations to the natural world?	46.6% (48)	47.6% (49)	5.8% (6)
Do governments or organizations have different moral obligations?	40.8% (42)	52.4% (54)	6.8% (7)
Responsibilities of members of your profession?	78.6% (81)	20.4% (21)	1.0% (1)
What is fair in a particular situation?	64.7% (66)	28.4% (29)	6.9% (7)
What is justice?	44.1% (45)	53.9% (55)	2.0% (2)
How should scarce resources be distributed?	49.0% (50)	47.1% (48)	3.9% (4)
What responsibility do humans have to protect information?	45.1% (46)	49.0% (50)	5.9% (6)
What responsibility do humans have to protect property?	32.0% (32)	63.0% (63)	5.0% (5)
What responsibility do humans have to themselves?	44.0% (44)	47.0% (47)	9.0% (9)
Why should one behave ethically?	59.0% (59)	37.0% (37)	4.0% (4)
What is the proper role of religion in personal or public life?	33.0% (33)	65.0% (65)	2.0% (2)
What are the limits of tolerance?	30.0% (30)	64.0% (64)	6.0% (6)
What is liberty?	39.4% (39)	58.6% (58)	2.0% (2)
What is a free rider?	25.3% (25)	65.7% (65)	9.1% (9)
What is harassment (any type)?	40.4% (40)	56.6% (56)	3.0% (3)
What obligations do people have to respect the property of others?	36.7% (36)	60.2% (59)	3.1% (3)
What is violence?	33.7% (33)	63.3% (62)	3.1% (3)

\* Response rates differ because not all respondents answered each question.