

In July 2011, the Dean of the Notre Dame Graduate School solicited advice from the Directors of Graduate Studies from the Graduate School, the Law School, the Business School, and the Architecture School on the subject of the ethical formation of Notre Dame graduate students. As the School of Architecture DGS at that time, my editorial suggestions are in red. PB

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The Ethical Formation of Notre Dame's Graduate and Professional Students

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” Matthew 10:16

The following report concerns the ethical formation of Notre Dame graduate and professional students. It falls into three parts: general principles, the current sites of formation, and possibilities for future collaboration across academic and professional disciplines.

Principles

Ethical formation is character formation, and all units offering graduate degrees at the University of Notre Dame are committed to the ethical formation of our students. Whether we speak of asking more of business, a different kind of lawyer, beautiful and sustainable architecture and urbanism for the common good, or holistic graduate education, we are also necessarily committed to the good character formation of those who experience the professional and personal transformation that graduate education entails.

Our character formation goals are twofold. All academic and professional disciplines pursue ends that are also understood as goods, and all graduate education therefore entails directing students to the proper ends of their respective disciplines. This introduction includes identifying the discipline's historic standards of excellence, as well as both the rules that must be followed and the character virtues that must be acquired if the student is to participate in the goods specific to the discipline and extend them into the future. Our first character formation goal therefore is to ensure that our graduates understand the rules and virtues necessary to act well within their respective discipline or profession. Our second character formation goal is more ambitious. At Notre Dame we also aspire to form individuals who understand the relationship of their own academic or professional discipline to other disciplines and to the larger common good, and who in the context of their own discipline habitually act with a concern both for the goods of their own discipline and for the larger common good.

We pursue these goals within the context of a Catholic university---by definition and necessity, and however imperfectly, both a worshipping community and a community dedicated to the service, exploration and discovery of truth---and it is the Catholic character of Notre Dame that guides our best character formation efforts. Notre Dame does not equate good character with any particular religious tradition, including Catholic Christianity; but it is Notre Dame's Catholic understanding of the good and the true that allows us to recognize the good and the true when and where we see them, both in other religious traditions and in the mundane realities of everyday life. We therefore want our students to understand and appreciate how communities in sacred order both shape good character and facilitate the search for truth; to avoid both a relativism that denies all moral truth and an exclusivism that claims to possess all moral truth; and to understand that while acting ethically requires good will, it requires also both a true understanding of the good itself and the possession and exercise of those good character habits that will enable our students to serve and achieve both the common good and their own.

Current State

The Graduate School

The Graduate School offers ethical training to all students in four venues. First, all students who are funded by federal grants are required to receive Responsible Conduct in Research certification. This is officially administered through the Office of Research. The Graduate School works with the Office of Research both to promote and facilitate this training.

Second, the Graduate School requires that all entering graduate students take a three-hour workshop on ethics. The workshop is held on the Monday before classes begin the second semester of each year. This next January (2012) will be the first workshop. While the workshop will cover some areas of responsible conduct in research, it will extend into ethical principles.

Third, the Graduate School offers lectures and workshops on ethical issues throughout the year. At present, we sponsor two Schmitt lectures on ethics each year through the Center for Ethics and Culture. We will offer workshops in ethics as part of our professional development program beginning next year. This last year we had more than 1800 students attend 56 different workshops. New workshops on ethics will become part of these offerings.

Fourth, the Society of Schmitt Fellows (presidential fellows in the STEM disciplines) have organized a number of service projects, most notably the Science Café in downtown South Bend. The Graduate School works with the Society of Schmitt Fellows to promote service projects. We plan to expand this to other groups.

We have considered the possibility of requiring all dissertations to contain a statement about the ethical implications of the research if any.

The Law School

The Law School considers moral formation, not merely an understanding of the profession's rules of professional responsibility, to be an essential part of legal-education. It encourages students to consider themselves to be a "different kind of lawyer."

Ethics permeate the program. Students are encouraged to take a course in ethics in their first year and must take one in their second or third years. These courses do not exhaust the ethical education that is built into the structure of many courses.

Mendoza College of Business

Mendoza College of Business builds ethical training into all aspects of its graduate programs. It challenges students to ask more of themselves than what is asked in the business community. It focuses on three tenets: individual responsibility, effective organizations, and the greater good.

The emphasis begins with orientation during which students not only hear messages about the importance of service, but also work with the MBA staff on a community service project for one day.

The MBA program requires students to take two courses in ethics. The first, Foundations of Ethical Business Conduct, explores basic principles and their applications. The second is an elective in an area of the student's interest, e.g., sustainability, ethics in finance, ethics in marketing, spirituality and work, or value-based multinational management. The two courses are not stand-alone efforts in ethical education. All twenty required courses and 143 electives incorporate ethics into their frameworks.

The MBA program also builds ethics into the internships, case competitions, and extracurricular programs. The MBA program has been ranked #5 out of the top 100 MBA programs in the world by the Aspen Institute in its Beyond Grey Pinstripes rankings, for its integration of social, environmental, and ethical issues into the classroom.

The School of Architecture

Notre Dame's graduate architecture programs make a concerted effort to understand and teach architecture and urbanism, and to relate these to the life of the mind, the pursuit of truth, and the common good.

All graduate architecture professional degree programs include a course in professional practice, including a specific component in professional ethics. Far beyond this however, Notre Dame graduate architectural study in its essence is a

course in character formation oriented to the good, the true and---especially---the beautiful.

Architecture students focus primarily upon the formal order of architecture, and from the outset are introduced to discourse about the highest historic standards of excellence, with a special concern for architectural durability, comfort, beauty and decorum. Architecture students must also learn and exercise the virtues---courage, temperance, steadfastness, justice, prudence and friendship---needed to survive the rigors of architectural education and to flourish in the practice of architecture.

All Notre Dame graduate architecture students study architecture in the context of towns and cities, understood and presented as both the physical form of human communities oriented to human flourishing, and as dynamic entities entailing a constant and reciprocal interaction of sacred, environmental, economic, moral and formal orders. Throughout their education therefore, graduate architecture students are required to think comprehensively and holistically: about environmental stewardship, about the common good, and about cities and architecture themselves as the loci of human flourishing over generations.

This graduate curriculum---grounded in natural law and consistent with Catholic Social Teaching---prepares Notre Dame graduates well for both entry into and leadership in the architectural profession, and distinguishes the Notre Dame graduate architecture program from virtually every other graduate program of architecture in the country.

Future Collaborations

There are a number of ways in which the professional schools and the Graduate School could collaborate. These could be unilateral and bilateral.

Unilaterally, each school could open up some of its training to other students. The Graduate School is considering inviting a significant speaker for the early afternoon session of the ethics workshop each January. The Graduate School would be happy to invite students from the professional schools to attend this lecture or any workshop sponsored by the Graduate School.

Bilaterally we will consider some ways in which we could sponsor events that would cross the schools. These would need to be broad in nature, but could include bringing in a significant speaker who would address a major issue in society from an ethical perspective. The schools could jointly sponsor such an event. We could also work through the Graduate Student Union to develop service projects for graduate students. In particular, we might draw on the expertise of graduate students to tackle some of the major issues facing our local community. Graduate students offer a level of expertise that undergraduates do not. They might be able to draw on their expertise to make distinctive contributions.