

## **Annual Report of the Taylor University Center for Ethics**

**2013-2014**

During its third year, the Center for Ethics has continued to work on the fulfillment of our mission of helping Taylor University develop ethical servant leaders. The steering committee included Steve Bird, Diane Dungan, Hadley Mitchell, Steve Phillips, David Poucher, Kelsie Rodman, and Jim Spiegel as members continuing from the previous year. Suzanne Neefus and Toby Magers served as student representatives, and Jeff Wallace was our new representative from Student Development. All have contributed their talents in coordinating the work of the Center.

During the fall semester, the steering committee developed a statement about why an emphasis on ethics is essential to the mission of Taylor University. This statement introduced the integration of faith and living and focused on the need for universities to be institutions that further both moral and intellectual preparation of students. The Center is committed to helping Taylor University be more intentional and more effective in the moral preparation of students. The full statement is included at the end of this report.

During the spring, the steering committee discussed a five-year vision for the Center for Ethics. We developed a picture of how the Center will be accomplishing its mission five years from now to help us take the steps needed to get there. This vision includes active engagement with all parts of the university, including students, faculty, student development, staff, and administration. It also includes engaging the Christian and academic communities outside the campus and will include an ongoing Advisory Committee of people outside the campus to help facilitate those connections. We recognize that external funding will be needed to make the

vision a reality, and that will be pursued. This vision statement is also included at the end of the report.

Guidelines for the Advisory Committee have been developed, and the process for the formation of that group has begun. The decision to implement an ongoing Advisory Committee grew out of the work of the Advisory Task Force, which met for the last of its three meetings in November. That group, which included Adolf Hansen, Bruce Wright, Christopher Hook, Dave Rodriguez, J. Daryl Charles, Josh Corwin, Luann Van Campen, Paige Cunningham, Pauline Beange, and Rachel Jonker, provided excellent input for the Center. They shared their experience from many areas, including academics, seminary leadership, pastoral ministry, banking and investments, medicine, pharmaceutical ethics and intercultural ministry, and connected those experiences with what our students will face as they go into the world. They helped us clarify our mission and encouraged the development of the statement of why ethics is essential to the university and the five-year vision mentioned above. They have helped us discuss ways we can engage those outside the campus community to assist in the moral development of students. Our recognition of the importance of their input is the primary reason for developing an ongoing Advisory Committee.

The direct engagement with students this year was led by a core group of students that included Suzanne Neefus, Toby Magers, Layla Campbell and Chelsea Carver. They chose the name Students for Ethics for the student group and sponsored several open discussions of ethical issues in current events and two showings of the film *Seven Pounds*, followed by a discussion of the ethical issues within the film. We hope this group will continue to grow and be effective in encouraging students to engage other students in discussion of moral values.

The Taylor Ethics Bowl team again won the regional competition with all three teams placing in the top five in the region. They represented Taylor University well in the national competition, although they did not meet their own very high expectations. They are looking ahead to next year's competition.

The Center led two faculty workshops for the Bedi Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence. Jim Spiegel led a workshop discussing the integration of faith and living and how incorporating ethics into the university is essential in meeting our mission. Steve Phillips led a workshop on how to integrate ethics into classes across the curriculum. Faculty shared many examples of methods they use to accomplish that goal. The Center will be involved in a presentation and discussion session at Colleagues College in August, 2014 that will focus on the development of moral reasoning in students.

Work continues on the development of a tool to help understand how our students think about ethics and the moral decisions that relate to how they live their lives. It now appears that this will be integrated into the continuing development of the survey tool that was created by the Center for Scripture Engagement here at Taylor University and has been used on multiple Christian university campuses.

At the beginning of this academic year the Center moved into our new office in the Euler Science Complex. Our office is just inside one of the main entrances to the complex and has an adjacent study area where students can get together to work on projects associated with the Center. Having an overt physical presence has helped in our engagement with others on campus. For example, the involvement of the Center in the Responsible Conduct of Research training resulted partly because the Office of Sponsored Programs, which coordinates the training, is located next to our new office.

Our society and the church are dealing with an ever-increasing array of moral and ethical issues. The discussions of the film *Seven Pounds* sponsored by Students for Ethics have demonstrated how much we as Christians can be affected by our society's tendency to find actions that would otherwise be considered wrong to be morally acceptable if they have good consequences. Discussions of sexual morality point out the need to base our moral beliefs in scripture and listen to the wisdom the church has learned over the centuries. It is clearer than ever that Taylor University needs to be effective in helping students develop a biblically based foundation for addressing those issues. The Center for Ethics is committed to helping that happen.

Stephen A. Phillips

Chair of the Taylor University Center for Ethics

## **Integration of Faith and Living at Taylor University: Why an Emphasis on Ethics is Essential to Taylor University's Mission**

### **Taylor University Center for Ethics**

One of the keys to accomplishing Taylor University's mission to develop servant leaders who will minister Christ's redemptive love and truth to the world is to help students develop the moral character that they will need to fulfill that goal. This has been a distinctive of Taylor for many years. As former Taylor University President Milo Rediger said, "We make no bones about it. At Taylor we are committed to helping young people develop a sense of morality and a set of values." Taylor University Provost Jeff Moshier recently reaffirmed that when he stated that one of the goals of the university is "the cultivation of Christ-like character in each student." Just as the integration of faith and learning is a key to a Christian liberal arts education, so is the development of Christian moral character, as this is essentially the integration of faith and *living*. Both are crucial to fulfilling the university's mission.

A university exists as a place of preparation. When universities first began they were understood to be places of both academic and moral preparation. However, over the years many universities have lost sight of their commitment to moral preparation and now focus solely on academics. Rampant public moral failures clearly demonstrate the need for moral preparation, but contemporary cultures and societies struggle to provide this. As a Christian university, Taylor University has the foundation on which to help students build moral character.

Developing a Christian value system and a Christ-like character involves changes in how we think and how we live. Taylor University has the resources to provide both aspects of moral development. As an academic community solidly rooted in biblical truth we have the ability to help students understand how moral values are grounded in the nature of God and the revealed truth of scripture. As a dynamic Christian community we provide an environment in which we can apply those moral values as we live together. We enter into a covenant that guides us in working out our biblical responsibilities of loving God and neighbor as we respect each other, care for one another, mend broken relationships, and seek to promote a more just society.

The Taylor University Center for Ethics is committed to helping Taylor University be more intentional and more effective at helping students develop biblical values and a Christ-like character.

## **Five Year Vision for the Center for Ethics**

Adopted 4/24/14

By the year 2019 the Center for Ethics will be fully engaged throughout Taylor University to help the university be effective in helping students develop Christian moral character during their time as students here.

We envision a campus-wide collective experience that engages students in thinking about their moral values, how those values should impact how they live, and how those values should impact social structures and institutions. This would involve multiple parts of the university including residence life, all aspects of student development, the foundations course for freshmen, and students, faculty and staff across the university in discussions of a common theme related to our moral values. This would be facilitated by reflection on a common experience such as a book or film that would be expected for every incoming student and would be picked up by continuing students, faculty and staff throughout the university as a stimulus for discussion of moral values.

We will have an effective student organization that will work with the Center to help us understand how to engage students. We will actively sponsor the Taylor University Ethics Bowl team.

We will measure how students think about ethical issues and how that integrates with how they live. This will assist the university in finding effective ways to communicate with students and lead them into deeper moral thought and practice.

We will engage faculty to help them continue to learn how to effectively incorporate into teaching an understanding of ethical issues and how we live out our moral values as a theme of faculty development. This will be integrated into new faculty training and the faculty development promoted by BCTLE and Colleagues College. We will have effective group learning opportunities for faculty to help each other integrate moral values in their teaching led by trained faculty facilitators. Building Christian moral character will be a part of the agenda of every faculty, administration and staff committee.

We will engage all aspects of student development as it occurs in and out of the classroom so that moral character development is a focus in all we do. This will include being integrated into residence life, discipleship, leadership training, chapel, student practicums, service learning experiences, vocational preparation, initial new student experiences, and final senior reflections.

We will effectively engage the Christian and academic communities outside of the university to enhance the experience of our students. We will bring in leaders in Christian ethical thinking on a regular basis to interact with students and faculty and stimulate continued interest in thinking through our moral values and how they apply to the issues of our day. This will include visiting scholars who will spend an extended time of a year or a semester on campus and may be combined with others coming in for more limited periods of interaction. We will facilitate student interaction with alumni and others outside of the campus community to help them understand the personal, corporate, and societal moral issues they will face in the world around us.

We will have an active Advisory Committee which will be composed of people outside the Taylor University campus community who will help us be accountable to the fulfillment of our mission and help us stay connected with the realities of the world and those outside the campus who can support our mission.

We will engage with university administration to help every aspect of the university reflect Christian moral character and make the development of moral character a distinctive of Taylor University.

We will engage with the non-teaching staff of the university, who are essential in setting the moral climate of the university, to help them understand how they contribute in making Taylor University an organization of high moral character and contribute to the moral development of our students.

We will have funding from outside sources that recognize the importance of a focus on preparing students to live lives of Christian moral character which will add to the internal resources supporting this essential part of the university's mission. Those resources will help to fund visiting scholars and external speakers, an external Advisory Committee, continued excellence of the Ethics Bowl team, enhanced ethics resources for the library, mini-grants for faculty to develop new ways of engaging students in regard to their moral values, and an ongoing measurement tool to assess how students think about and live out their moral values.