1-31-2008

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Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1949
University of Dayton, Ohio (url: http://www.udayton.edu/index.php)

Stronger Ethics

01.31.2008 | Business, Students

The School of Business Administration at University of Dayton is beefing up ethics course requirements for MBA students at the suggestion of students and alumni and as part of a newly emerging trend in business education.

According to Janice Glynn, director of the master's in business administration program, an ethics course will be required for graduation starting in fall 2008. UD becomes only one of a handful of MBA programs in the country to require an ethics course.

Glynn said that business ethics courses have traditionally been electives, but in recent years, with a number of high profile business and corporate scandals, many top business schools are now requiring their students to take ethics courses.

"This is also in response to surveys and requests from students and alumni who have asked us to increase our ethics education," she said.

Glynn said that as a Catholic, Marianist institution, the University of Dayton seeks to offer students opportunities to explore issues of ethics and values as a "broader, more humanitarian approach to business."

One of the most popular business ethics courses is "Business as a Calling," according to accounting professor Joseph Castellano, who co-created and team-teaches the course with Victor Forlani, S.M., the business school's official Marianist-in-residence.

"Brother Victor and I came to the conclusion that you can't create a culture of ethics by only teaching about codes of conduct, ethics training and compliance," Castellano said.

"We felt that if individuals could see their work and their profession as a 'calling,' they would see it as part of being a complete a person, instead of something separate," Castellano said. "It becomes not only who they are as an individual but how they make a contribution to their communities and to society."

Castellano said the course invites business people from a wide range of professions and faiths to speak to the class about integrating their personal lives with their professional and spiritual lives – whether they follow a particular faith or not.

"When they share their stories with the students, so many of these business people say 'I didn't realize I was this divided person,'" he said. "They can relate how viewing their careers as a calling not only improves their lives but improves their organizations."

The business school recently named Forlani, a Marianist brother, its first Marianist-in-residence to help integrate principles of Catholic social thought and UD's Marianist heritage into the curriculum.

Castellano explained that the course uses Catholic social thought and Marianist principles as a "lens" to examine business and management theory and to help students develop personal values that will lead to more satisfying lives and improved organizations.

"Organizations are hungry for the kinds of leaders who can truly create learning organizations and organizations with ethical cultures," he said. "You just can't assume that people know how to do that."

"Business schools have a responsibility to help with the moral and character development of these people who will ultimately be the next generation of leaders," he said.

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