

New center aims to grow ethical leaders Exemplars and education can influence next generation

In 2000, the chief financial officer of Pier 1 paid \$75,000 to settle allegations that he hid \$20 million in losses from shareholders and management.

A year later a former Sunbeam Corporation CEO, aided by Andersen auditors, was indicted for falsely depicting a successful restructuring of Sunbeam, costing shareholders billions of dollars.

In 2004, America's most prominent hospitality expert, Martha Stewart, was sentenced to five months in prison, five months of home confinement, and two years probation for lying about a stock sale, conspiracy, and obstruction of justice.

The following year Adelphia Communications Corporation, the nation's fifth-largest cable television company, agreed to pay \$715 million to settle federal investigations stemming from rampant earnings manipulation and self-dealing by its corporate founders.

Then in 2007, *The Washington Post* reported that the Walter Reed Army Medical Center was under investigation for cases of outpatient neglect including cockroach- and rodent-infested buildings

overrun with black mold, lacking necessities such as heat and water.

Besides the aforementioned, Worldcom, Tyco, Health South, plus a number of premier accounting firms once thought to be bastions of incorruptibility, have all been implicated in ethical scandals from allegedly cooking the books to devising tax dodging schemes or using investment information for personal gain. These and other examples of immoral if not illegal behavior by those in leadership positions suggest that a generation of executives may have lost its moral compass. At some point in their careers these leaders have been distracted from their priorities—to provide goods and services that consumers value, as opposed to realizing profits at any cost. Or worse, lining their own pockets at the expense of the health of the corporation or their responsibilities to employees.

Since the first insider trading crisis in the 1980s, the media have widely publicized ethics scandals, seemingly on a weekly basis. Twenty years and hundreds of scandals later, people still feel outrage

with each break from ethical practices headlining the morning paper or the evening news.

Ironically, such outrage, to use the pet expression of Martha Stewart, "is a good thing." It shows that most Americans still know right from wrong and are ready for a sea change, for a new wave of leaders who behave like leaders should, measured by anyone's yardarm.

Where are these future leaders? Many of them are students on college campuses today. But how many of them study ethics alongside the course requirements needed for their major? Not enough, according to Alvernia's President Tom Flynn. Too often neglected in contemporary society, issues surrounding ethical

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President Flynn, far right, assembled an exemplary panel of executives representing a range of industries, including Thomas Beeman of Lancaster General Hospital, Anne Stevens of Carpenter Technology, and Father James Connor of the National Jesuit Conference for a program called "Executive Ethics: Character, Commitment, Community" sponsored by the Centers for Excellence at Alvernia College.



KEY GOAL OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

- To establish Alvernia as a leader in community-based learning and civic engagement through the Center for Community Engagement and the Center for Ethics and Leadership.



...To explore the intersection of ethics

After the panel presentation, a line of audience members waits to speak with Anne Stevens, President, Chair, and CEO of Carpenter Technology.

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leadership haven't been given as much attention as they should in academic circles.

"The importance of the ethical dimension in leadership in our society has never been greater," Flynn said.

At his inaugural address last spring, Flynn announced the College's intention to establish a Center for Ethics and Leadership to heighten the importance of ethical reflection and decision-making skills for our graduates.

"Alvernia is already recognized for its emphasis on character development and for a culture that fosters the personal and professional growth of students of all ages," Flynn explained. "Alvernia has always valued ethics and leadership education. All of our undergraduate and graduate programs require work in ethics."

During the summer of 2006, a group of six faculty undertook the project of researching similar kinds of centers. After evaluating

several approaches, they proposed some organizing principles—that the Center should be interdisciplinary, linking liberal arts and professional disciplines. Its programs should be organized by themes for broad appeal, to expand the visibility of the Center. They also assumed that expertise would come from leaders in diverse fields and colleagues at other colleges and universities as well as from Alvernia faculty.

Eight months later, fueled by the President's vision for a signature program in ethics and guided by the recommendations developed by the Faculty Advisory Committee, the College hosted a spring lecture, co-sponsored by the Notre Dame Club of Reading, by Rev. Oliver Williams. Within weeks, Provost Shirley Williams announced the appointment of Dr. Gerald Vigna, long-time dean of the division of arts and sciences, as the director of Alvernia's newest center.

"Dr. Vigna's reputation as a professional in the field of theology and his scholarly work are critical to the integration of this center," Williams said, adding that Vigna's appointment received the full support of

The Goals of the Center for Ethics and Leadership

- Promote dialogue on the inter-relationship between ethics and leadership, incorporating the perspectives of Catholic Social Teaching and other Christian and non-Christian traditions
- Strengthen ethics and leadership education in undergraduate, graduate, and non-credit programs, especially collaborative opportunities for students and faculty
- Provide leadership development programs for business, civic, and other area leaders
- Establish Alvernia as a leader in ethics and leadership education

David J. Batdorf: Helping Alvernia Shape the Next Generation of Leaders

David J. Batdorf has practiced law for 50 years. In addition to advising private clients, he served as the solicitor for several municipalities and school districts, where he guided municipalities and citizens to improve schools, roads, and other services for the public good. He has been a member and officer of prestigious law associations. In the 1970s, he served as Chief Counsel of Revenue to Pennsylvania Governor Milton J. Shapp.

A long-standing public figure, he supported candidates for elected offices who placed first responsibility on their constituents and not on the parties they represented. He was a member of the church council at Trinity Lutheran Church, where he taught Sunday School and chaired fundraising drives for Lutheran charities. In 2005, he was honored by Alvernia College with the Rabbi Alan Weitzman Award for Community Service.

Though he has been a highly visible and esteemed member of Reading's legal community for half a century, he never had a single course in ethics. His personal and business ethics were shaped by his values grounded in his Lutheran faith and by the examples set by his father and grandfather.

To draw more attention to ethics in the workplace, Batdorf provided a leadership gift to Alvernia to help launch the David J. Batdorf Lectureship in Ethics.

"It's needed. I think about all the people in business today who never had a course in ethics," he said. "If today's business people have ethics, then they picked them up from a good businessman."

With Batdorf's support, the College hosted two events in ethics this spring under the auspices of Alvernia's Centers for Excellence—the Center for Community Engagement and the new Center for Ethics and Leadership. Both

lectures were well attended and well received.

He thoroughly enjoyed the panel discussion on April 30 called "Executive Ethics," featuring Anne Stevens, Thomas Beeman, and Father Connor. He thought these leaders from both businesses and non-government organizations were good models for the community and said he felt optimistic about the leadership styles and ethical tenets they advocated as they answered questions from both the moderator and from guests.

"If twenty percent more businessmen and women would be more ethical in their dealings, the world would be a different place," Batdorf said.



and leadership

the Faculty Advisory Committee, which has worked significantly since last summer in developing the mission and purpose of the center.

In partnership with Alvernia's other signature Center, the Center for Community Engagement, Alvernia sponsored a panel discussion entitled "Executive Ethics: Character, Commitment, and Community," featuring three prominent executives—the premier event for the Center for Ethics and Leadership.

"Alvernia has strong faculty in the foundational disciplines of ethics and leadership such as philosophy and theology," Vigna said.

"The entire Alvernia faculty has demonstrated serious interest in issues of ethics and leadership," Vigna added. "This is deeply rooted, going back to 1958, when Sister Jacinta used to require a course about spirituality and ethics called 'Quest for Authenticity,' which was taught through the early 90s.

"As Alvernia seeks to enhance its role in Berks County and the Greater Reading region, this Center can be a significant resource for ethical leadership," Vigna said.

As for his plans for the Center, he's just getting started. But he's eager to present various opportunities to explore the intersection of ethics and leadership. He plans to talk with faculty about curriculum development along those lines. He sees Alvernia as a resource for the community, offering programs for employees of local businesses and organizations so that Alvernia will be top-of-mind in the development of ethical corporate and community leaders.

"Too many institutions are about the production of knowledge," Vigna added. "As a religious institution, Alvernia can step into a pluralistic dialogue and reorient the situation. We have a unique opportunity to engage students in moral conversation."



Rev. Oliver F. Williams, director of the Center for Ethics and Religious Values in Business at Notre Dame, presented the 2007 Hesburgh Lecture, on Monday, March 19, at the Bernardine Sisters Conference Center. Entitled "Can You Do Well While Doing Good?", it examined ethical practices in today's business world. Father Williams' talk, illuminated with the clever humor of *New Yorker* cartoons, offered examples of companies such as Johnson & Johnson, Hewlett Packard, and Merck, who exhibit superior performance in business yet model ethical values. The event was cosponsored by the Notre Dame Club of Reading.

Ethics and Leadership



A MOMENT WITH Gerald Vigna

Dr. Gerald Vigna has taught at Alvernia since 1993, serving the College significantly, most recently as the Dean of Arts and

Sciences. He has a Ph.D. in religion from Northwestern University and an undergraduate degree in religion from Temple University. In a recent interview for *Alvernia Magazine*, Vigna talked about his appointment as the new director of the Center for Ethics and Leadership.

Dr. Gerald Vigna

What did you find interesting about this position? The idea of a common conversation across the institution began to intrigue me. It meshed with my academic career choice. Religion departments across the United States are multidisciplinary. I am predisposed and trained to look at multidisciplinary conversations. There are advantages to looking at things from a philosopher's standpoint, from a chemist's perspective.

For seven years you supervised 45 full-time faculty across six departments, offering 160 classes a semester, as an academic dean. How was that experience at Alvernia? Being a dean was rewarding, especially when I think about the achievements that took place with faculty and students, and regarding developments in the curriculum— junior faculty members whose work is known and regarded nationally and internationally; the personal and professional relationships I've developed with students.

What issues at that cross-section of ethics and leadership would you like to discuss? Certainly the idea of values coming from top down should be examined. Another would be transparency, which is essential in the business community and absolutely essential in academics. Uncertainty in the workplace is also an ethical issue. I think today's leaders need to be more attentive to global warming and other environmental issues and well as growing salary gaps within the corporate settings.

Besides your academic fitness for the post, is there a personal fit as well? I believe in cutting across departmental silos; the Alvernia community realizes that I build strong and nurturing relationships. I'm looking forward to new challenges and more entrepreneurship.