From the Executive Director

As the Dartmouth community works together in repairing and rebuilding the economic structure of the college, we must not lose our ethical perspective in the name of expediency or efficiency. How we make the decisions to cut spending and who is affected by those decisions are ethical in nature, and will either enhance or detract from our reputation as an institution that values each and every member of the community. One thing we know, for sure, is that the Dartmouth experience will not suffer – we will work together to make sure that each incoming class feels the same joy, excitement and anticipation that classes in past years have felt. Our challenge, as faculty, administrators and staff, is to shoulder the burden of financial belt tightening without diminishing the uniqueness of a Dartmouth education. This can be done, and is being done throughout the campus. One example from the fall term was the effort of the Ethics Society to establish a mentoring program with students at Bellows Falls Middle School. The team of undergraduates worked tirelessly to provide ethics training to approximately 150 middle school students. They began their work early in the fall term, preparing in the evenings and driving the hour distance to work with individual classes. The dedication and responsibility that was exhibited by the students was amazing; they were determined to make sure that these students, who live in a rural area that is deeply affected by poverty and drug abuse, would have the same opportunities for intellectual exchange that they have. The final session at Bellows Falls Middle School was held in a large auditorium, with Dartmouth undergraduates leading a debate style competition. It was difficult for me to determine who was more deeply affected by the experience: the middle school students who, perhaps for the first time, began to think of college as a real choice, or the Dartmouth students who became teachers of ethics for the first time and witnessed students coming to life in their intellectual capabilities. The cost is nominal, and the rewards phenomenal.
Rebecca Skloot will be coming to Dartmouth College to speak about her forthcoming book, “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.” Skloot’s book reveals the story of Henrietta Lacks, known to scientists as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the effects of the atom bomb; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions. Yet Henrietta Lacks remains virtually unknown. Skloot’s book explores the dark history of experimentation on African Americans, the birth of bioethics, and the legal battles over whether we control the stuff we are made of.

Rebecca Skloot will be speaking at Dartmouth on Thursday February 11th at 4:30pm in the Haldeman Center, room 041. This event is co-sponsored by the Ethics Institute, the Biology Department, and the Office of Institutional Diversity & Equity.

Sustainable Design: from LEED to Living Buildings and Beyond

On April 16 & 17, 2010 Dartmouth College will host a Sustainable Design Symposium organized by the Dartmouth College Sustainability Initiative of the Provost’s Office and the New Hampshire Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (NH AIA). The Ethics Institute is a proud co-sponsor of this event.

For more information or to register contact Kathy Lambert at 603-646-3532 or kathy.lambert@dartmouth.edu or visit the Dartmouth Sustainability Initiative website http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sustain.

Ethics and Sportsmanship

A panel discussion, moderated by Aine Donovan, will be held on January 26th at 6:30pm in Dartmouth 105. President Kim and several student athletes will address what it means to be a “good” spectator, and when behavior crosses the line into the offensive or abusive. Recent events at athletic competitions have sparked interest in the need for clarification about what is, and isn’t, acceptable fan behavior. This event is free and open to the public.

Dartmouth Medical Students Ethics Discussion
February 4th at 6pm
Ethics Institute Conference Room

Worlds Apart
A Four-Part Series on Cross-Cultural Healthcare Film & Discussion

These unique films follow patients and families faced with critical medical decisions, as they navigate their way through the health care system. Filmed in patients' homes, neighborhoods and places of worship, as well as hospital wards and community clinics, Worlds Apart provides a balanced yet penetrating look at both the patients’ cultures and the culture of medicine.
In 2001 the first faculty seminar on integrating ethics into the curriculum was offered by the Ethics Institute. Since then, a wide range of departments have been represented in the program. The overall goal of the effort is to make explicit the moral nature of our effort to educate in the liberal arts. The year-long seminar explores ethical theory, moral development of the young adult and pedagogical tools for enhancing ethics education in specific disciplines. Faculty spend the year reading, discussing and researching; additionally they produce a final project that is specific to their discipline and teaching needs. These projects range from journal articles, to new courses, to conference presentations. One of the 2009 participants, Joshua Compton, will be presenting his EATC research at the annual conference of the Association of Practical and Professional Ethics in March.

Speech ghostwriting is a rich topic of discussion in my speech classes. But keeping the discussion focused can be a challenge. Trying to agree on a good definition of ghostwriting is a difficult task on its own, and when we add the complexities of ethics, our discussions can get particularly muddled.

Recently, I’ve turned to metaphors to help guide classroom discussions about speech ghostwriting and speech ghostwriting ethics. In the project I completed through The Ethics Institute’s Ethics Across the Curriculum program, I collected speech ghostwriting metaphors and placed them into three categories: action metaphors, value metaphors, and role metaphors. I argue that ghostwriting metaphors serve as useful discussion frameworks.

What if we approach speech ghostwriting like hiring other specialists—similar to consulting an attorney or an accountant? Is the comparison valid? Would such an approach to ghostwriting affect perspectives on ghostwriting ethics?

Ghostwriter-as-advisor and ghostwriter-as-puppeteer seem to suggest different approaches to speechwriting. What are the implications of viewing speechwriting practices through different metaphorical lenses?

I’ve found that metaphors prompt more meaningful discussions of ghostwriting practices. Metaphors help us to define what we mean by speech ghostwriting, and then we can move to more productive discussions of speech ghostwriting ethics.
National Ethics Bowl

The Dartmouth Ethics Society will be heading to Cincinnati, OH for the sixteenth annual National Ethics Bowl, held in conjunction with the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics annual meeting.

The Ethics Institute sponsored two teams in the Regional Ethics Bowl competition, held at Marist College in November. Through an interesting twist of fate, the two teams faced each other during an intense semi-final match. Both teams performed admirably. The winning team went on to face Union College in the finals. Watched avidly by their fellow students, the Dartmouth team displayed a commendable amount of eloquence, passion, and logic in presenting and defending their cases. Unfortunately, it was not quite enough. Dartmouth lost by one point. It was, however, more than enough for Dartmouth to qualify for the National competition.

The top four schools at Regionals: Union College, Dartmouth College, Marist College, and University at Albany, received an invitation to attend the national competition. Chris Kendig ’10, Jon Choi ’11, Matt Jorgensen ’12, Shengzhi Li ’12, Erich Hartfelder ’12, Katie Gonzalez ’12, Mimi Rich ’12, and Tae Ho Kim ’13, accompanied by Aine Donovan, Director of the Ethics Institute, will be representing Dartmouth. There they will compete against 31 other colleges and universities from across the country.
Book Review

The Ethical Challenges of Academic Administration

Englehardt, E.E.; Pritchard, M.S.; Romesburg, K.D.; Schrag, B. (Eds.)
2009, XXVI, 196 p., Hardcover
Online version available

This book is an invitation to academic administrators, at every level, to engage in reflection on the ethical dimensions of their working lives. Academics are very good at reflecting on the ethical issues in other professions but not so interested in reflecting on those in their own, including those faced by faculty and administrators. Yet it is a topic of great importance. Academic institutions are value-driven; hence virtually every decision made by an academic administrator has an ethical component with implications for students, faculty, the institution, and the broader community. Despite this, they receive little systematic preparation for this aspect of their professional lives when they take up administrative posts, especially when compared to, say, medical or legal training.

The authors intend this work to be a first, rather than a final word, on the subject. This is because the practicalities of academic administration have not been the subject of much sustained ethical reflection. Surprisingly little has been written about the ethical challenges that academic administrators are likely to face. Most of the literature relating to academic administration focuses on "leadership" and draws heavily on management and social science theory. The importance of focusing on ethical deliberation and decision-making often goes unrecognized. What is needed is in-depth analysis informed by the general principles of professional ethics, as well as the more than 2000-year-old body of philosophical work on ethics.

It is clear that academia should examine its own domain. In focusing on ethics in academic administration, this book explores the issues that are faced every day by those managing seats of learning. What challenges does a new chair face when suddenly she is no longer simply a friend and colleague, but now the person adjudicating disputes, evaluating performance, and recommending career-impacting action? How does a dean respond to the struggles of balancing a budget and promoting his college’s interests? When a donor calls the president and requests a favor, what are the implications for the campus, internally and externally? It is these conflicts, and others, that are analyzed in this much-needed volume.

Includes article “Mission and Academic Administration” by Aine Donovan