THE LINCOLN TEACHING FELLOWS PROGRAM AT THE ASU POLYTECHNIC CAMPUS

Joseph R. Herkert  
Arizona State University

The Polytechnic Campus of Arizona State University (formerly known as ASU East) opened in 1996 on a portion of the site of the former Williams Air Force Base. Polytechnic has more than thirty degree programs administered by five colleges:

- College of Technology and Innovation
- School of Letters and Sciences
- Morrison School of Management and Agribusiness, W.P. Carey School of Business
- College of Teacher Education and Leadership
- College of Nursing and Health Innovation

As part of ASU’s comprehensive development plan, the Polytechnic campus is undergoing substantial growth, from 6,500 students in 2006 to 9,700 in 2010. The physical plant is growing as well—three major academic buildings complexes that opened in 2008 doubled the classroom and office space.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Lincoln Teaching Fellows Program at the Polytechnic Campus is funded by the Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics and the School of Letters and Sciences. The purpose of the project is to contribute to improved ethical understanding and behavior by facilitating the development of new and revised courses or ethics modules throughout the Polytechnic campus. Students who are exposed to these courses and curriculum materials obtain a better understanding and knowledge of ethical issues in their field of study, and learn strategies for analyzing and resolving such issues. Moreover, the campus community as a whole is exposed to a continuing dialogue on contemporary ethical issues, led by
two cohorts of Lincoln Polytechnic Teaching Fellows and invited speakers.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Specific outcomes of the project include:

• Training of twelve Lincoln Polytechnic Teaching Fellows (six each in the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years) from departments across the Polytechnic campus; each Fellow developed a new ethics course, ethics module(s) for existing courses, or revised a course to incorporate significant ethics emphasis;

• Contributing to campus wide discussion/awareness of contemporary ethical issues;

• Establishing a certificate in applied ethics at the Polytechnic campus (in progress);

• Creating a website to disseminate the new course and curriculum materials to a worldwide audience (under development at http://lincolncenter.asu.edu/centerprg_fellowsPolytechnic).

LINCOLN POLYTECHNIC TEACHING FELLOWS

Twelve Lincoln Polytechnic Teaching Fellows were recruited during spring 2008 and spring 2009 (six for each project year). Written applications for the positions were evaluated by the Program Director (the author) and the Director of the Lincoln Center, Dr. Peter French. While only seven applications were received in 2008 the number of applicants increased to twelve in the second year largely due to the efforts of the first year cohort in publicizing the program.

Each Lincoln Polytechnic Teaching Fellow was required to commit to the following:

1. developing a new course with significant ethics content, revising an existing course in order to incorporate significant ethics content, or developing an ethics unit or module for a new or existing course;

2. offering the course or module on a regular basis;

3. participating in a series of ten faculty ethics curriculum seminar meetings;

4. meeting with the Program Director as needed for additional consultation on ethics curriculum development;
5. making course or module materials available for posting on the website.

The Fellows represented a variety of disciplines including, in the 2008-2009 academic year: Communication, Engineering, History, International Politics, Nutrition, and Fire and Emergency Medical Services. The second year cohort included faculty from the fields of Applied Biology, Communication, Mass Communication, English, History, and Nutrition. During the second year of the program the Program Director appointed one Fellow from Cohort 1 to serve as a Senior Fellow who assisted in leading the faculty ethics curriculum seminar during the second year of the project and who works with the Program Director in planning future ethics initiatives that will build upon and expand the foundation created by the project.

ETHICS CURRICULUM SEMINARS

The faculty ethics curriculum seminar for the Lincoln Polytechnic Teaching Fellows was organized by the Program Director. Each of seven bi-weekly seminar meetings in the fall semester focused on a specific aspect of ethics curriculum development. One seminar meeting each fall was led by an invited, nationally recognized speaker in the area of ethics curriculum development. Each invited speaker also gave a major lecture open to the entire Polytechnic community. (The invited speakers were Michael Pritchard of Western Michigan University in 2008 and Elaine Englehardt of Utah Valley University in 2009.) During the three spring seminar meetings the Fellows presented the courses and curriculum materials they had developed for discussion and critique by the Program Director and the other seminar participants.

PROJECT FUNDING

The Project was made possible by the generous support of the Lincoln Center ($52,000) and the School of Letters and Sciences ($16,000). Most of the project funding was used to provide stipends for the Teaching Fellows. Upon completion of their project commitment the Fellows each received $4,000 to be used, at their discretion, for salary supplement, purchase of relevant course materials, or travel to conferences and workshops in support of their course or module development. Other project funds were used for books, refreshments, and honoraria and travel expenses of the invited speakers as well as travel
support for the Project Director, Senior Fellow, and one other Fellow to attend national ethics conferences.

**PROJECT RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES**

As of March 2010 more than 500 students had been exposed to ethics materials developed by the program participants and this number is expected to grow as the new or revised courses and modules are introduced in the classroom (or in online delivery formats).

The Program Director, Senior Fellow, and another Fellow from Cohort One presented a panel on the program at the 2008 Annual Conference of the Society for Ethics Across the Curriculum (SEAC) and the Senior Fellow returned to present a paper at the 2009 SEAC Conference. The Program Director also participated in a roundtable on Ethics and Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum at the 2009 Annual Conference of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics.

Members from Cohorts one and two presented panels on teaching ethics for other faculty on the Polytechnic Campus in the spring 2009 and spring 2010 semesters.

The Program Director, Senior Fellow, and two fellows from Cohort two put together a Lincoln Center “Real Life Ethics” program which was held on the Polytechnic campus in April 2010. The event focused on the ethics of food access and drew an audience of roughly fifty students and faculty.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Three main lessons can be drawn from the experience of the Lincoln Polytechnic Teaching Fellows Program.

- Faculty development is an important component in building an ethics-across-the-curriculum program. While a few of the Lincoln Teaching Fellows had some prior experience teaching ethics in their courses most had none. The Fellows unanimously reported in their final reports that the faculty seminar was particularly instrumental in helping them develop and teach ethics materials to their students.
- Campus “buy-in” is an important aspect in building a successful program. The program was successful because it had the support of both the Lincoln Center (housed on the Tempe Campus) and the School of Letters and Sciences (housed on the Tempe, Downtown and Polytechnic campuses).
A well-conceived and well-funded program can withstand significant upheaval in university budgets and organizational structures. Due to budget constraints, the University underwent significant organizational changes during the past three years. The Program Director’s department, for example, changed colleges twice and has reported to three different Deans. Despite these changes, the local funding for the program remained in place and the support from the Lincoln Center was unwavering.

NOTE ON SPECIAL SECTION CONTENT

The papers in this special section of Teaching Ethics have been contributed by eight of the Lincoln Polytechnic Teaching Fellows, four from each cohort. Most of the papers discuss new courses developed by the Fellows (Jeff Thomas-Fire and Emergency Medical Services and Chris Wharton-Nutrition) or specific revisions to existing courses (Heather Canary-Communication, Mary Jane Parmentier-Technology and International Politics, Jean Stutz-Applied Biology, and Carol-Lynn Bower-Intercultural Communication). Two of the papers focus more on general reflections on the role of ethical considerations in some aspect of their teaching fields (Jaime Aguila-History of Immigration and Alden Weight-Entertainment Ethics). In total the eight contributions reflect the breadth and depth of interest of the program participants and their successful engagement with ethics and ethics pedagogy.