INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses undergraduate ethics education from the point of view of a learning-outcomes-centered approach to curriculum design. It aims to identify the kinds of learning-outcomes that Ethics Across the Curriculum programs ought to aim at and be judged successful by. The first section explains the learning-outcomes-centered approach to designing and evaluating curriculum proposals. The second section applies this approach specifically to ethics education for undergraduates. It concludes with a proposal for Ideal Learning Outcomes for ethics education in an undergraduate curriculum. The third section asks which of these learning outcomes can reasonably be achieved by an Ethics Across the Curriculum program and which of these learning outcomes could not dependably be achieved unless a formal course in ethics is a requirement for every student. The fourth section briefly examines teaching strategies for Ethics Across the Curriculum programs and discusses ways of helping faculty in Ethics Across the Curriculum programs become effective ethics teachers.

SECTION I: LEARNING-OUTCOMES-CENTERED CURRICULUM DESIGN: THE OUTCOMES QUESTION AND THE ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Thoughtful college and university faculty can ordinarily articulate the goals of their teaching. But they most commonly express their goals in terms of subject matter, not in terms of what the students will learn to do with or by means of that subject matter. But suppose, before we ask what topics or materials will be taught, we first tried to identify as concretely as possible: “What is it that the learners will be able to do (or do better) at the end of the learning experience that they could not do (or could not do as well) at the beginning?” This question is called, in this approach, the Outcomes Ques-
tion; and the answers to this question are obviously the program's learning outcomes.

The proposal here is that teachers begin to plan their teaching by identifying these outcomes as concretely as possible. One important test of the concreteness of a proposed set of learning outcomes is whether the proposed learning outcomes have been described in such a way that the teacher can concretely answer a second question: “How will you be able to tell if the learners have achieved these learning outcomes or not?” This question is called, in this approach, the Assessment Question. If a teacher cannot answer, of a proposed learning outcome, how he or she will tell whether the learner has achieved it or not, then obviously the description of the learning outcome is not yet practically useful and would best be revised until this question about it can be answered. So the Assessment Question needs to be asked early and often in the curriculum-design process. The teacher's ability to answer it concretely is the test of whether the Outcomes Question has been answered concretely enough to be really useful.

Consider, for example, the following as a possible learning outcome: “The students will understand Aristotle's theory of virtue.” This is an admirable goal; but it gives us no clue about how the teacher will know if the students have achieved the goal or not. More informative outcomes for this learning activity might be stated thus: (a) “The students will be able to state Aristotle’s description of virtue correctly word for word as the teacher has described it,” or (b) “The students will be able to state Aristotle’s description of virtue in their own words,” or (c) “The students will be able to correctly identify an instance of (Aristotelian) virtue using Aristotle’s description of it,” or (d) “The students will be able to identify the essential components of virtue in Aristotle’s account and explain their relationships,” or (e) “The students will be able to create narratives (from their own experience or from other sources) about which Aristotle’s description of virtue is helpful in answering ethical questions,” or (f) “The students will be able to give reasons for holding that Aristotle’s description of virtue is superior to the claim that a virtue is merely an habitual pattern of human behavior.”

All of these, even (a), which is the least demanding of the students, are examples of learning outcomes that include or imply an answer to the Assessment Question as well. Because of this, they are likely to be far more helpful in guiding the teacher to teach effectively than learning outcomes that do not do so. The six outcomes statements offered above are intended to correspond respectively to the six categories in Benjamin Bloom’s famous taxonomy of cognitive activities, mentioned here in order of increasing cognitive complex-
ity. Bloom’s taxonomy is a very useful set of concepts for teachers trying to articulate concrete learning outcomes.

Most experienced teachers are in fact able to identify assessable learning outcomes for their teaching if they are pressed to do so, although coaching often helps them respond to the Outcomes Question and the Assessment Question when they are not familiar with them. But few college and university teachers habitually formulate their teaching in terms that are this concrete. One side effect of this gap is that many teachers are unable to provide their students with concrete answers to the students’ question, “What am I supposed to be learning here?” Students learn more effectively when they understand what it is they are supposed to be learning. So even if answering the Outcomes Question and the Assessment Question added nothing of value to effective teaching, we would still ordinarily enhance our students’ learning by having clear, concrete answers to these two questions.

But in fact, having clear, concrete answers to the Outcomes Question and the Assessment Question ordinarily adds a great deal to effective teaching as well. All good teachers are constantly assessing what is going on in their classes to see if their efforts are succeeding. From the questions students ask during or at the conclusion of a lecture, from students’ contributions to class discussions, from more subtle communicators such as students’ facial expressions and body language, as well as from students’ performances on formal assignments and from their out-of-class comments, good teachers are constantly trying to determine if the intended learning is taking place. Yet if the teacher has available for this purpose only vague and general formulations of the intended learning, then the teacher’s efforts to adjust the teaching to achieve more learning by the students will be rendered that much less effective. If, on the other hand, a teacher has a clear grasp of the intended learning in concrete terms, then the teacher will be far more effective in evaluating his or her teaching and in adjusting or adapting it to what the students need to achieve the learning.

A central principle of learning-outcomes-centered curriculum design is that answering the Outcomes Question and the Assessment Question should precede judgments about the best means to assist learners in achieving them. That is, selecting one’s teaching strategies, as they are often called in this approach—which includes materials for reading assignments; the content, type, and frequency of written assignments; one’s classroom teaching style; the use of interactive techniques and media; etc.—is not the proper first step in curriculum design. It is the last step. What the students read and write, what is said and done in class, and so on, should be controlled by its value to the students in achieving the outcomes they are there to learn.
Most commonly, when thoughtful faculty articulate their goals in terms of subject matter, they often do have in mind what the students are to do with or by means of that subject matter. So the fact that college and university faculty do not routinely articulate their goals in the language of learning outcomes and assessments or in comparable terms is not a sign of their having no worthwhile goals. But it is often a sign of their being less thorough—and especially less concrete—in their understanding of what they are about than would be best. They will almost always find that becoming more concrete by focusing on what the students ought to be able to do and how they will be able to assess whether the students are doing it or not will improve their teaching and their students’ learning.

It is important to stress, because of the bad name that reductionist forms of behaviorism came to have in recent decades, that the learning-outcomes approach and the emphasis on what learners will do is not intended to focus attention narrowly on quantifiable learning outcomes. It is presumed throughout this essay, and by most educational theorists who use the learning-outcomes approach, that qualitative learning outcomes are frequently far more important than quantifiable learning outcomes. It is also assumed, as will be made explicit below, that affective learning outcomes (learning outcomes in the realm of feeling or emotion) are routinely as important in a learning experience as are cognitive learning outcomes. The fact that affective learning outcomes may be more difficult to assess than cognitive ones does not make them less significant as possible learning outcomes for our teaching. Evidence of effective teaching can, in other words, be concrete without having to be quantitative. Unfortunately, those who evaluate teaching, especially those outside the academy who undertake this role, need to be educated to this fact even more so. How will this education take place? Most likely by teachers themselves becoming more articulate about the qualitative, but concrete, evidence of learning that they themselves routinely use.

Teachers assess students’ learning much more often, in fact, than they grade their students. For example, in any discussion in class, the teacher is engaged in assessment almost non-stop. Moreover, teachers do not ordinarily assess students’ learning only in order to give feedback to students about how their learning is going. They also assess and give feedback to themselves about the effectiveness of their own teaching. Consider a teacher who judges from how a class discussion is going that the students didn’t achieve the intended learning from the lecture portion of the class and that something from the lecture needs to be restated differently, e.g. with a different example, before the discussion can achieve its intended outcome. Good teachers are constantly assessing the teaching/learning interaction to make it more effec-
The present point is that efforts to make this activity more explicit and self-conscious, more articulate and more concrete, by having clear answers to the Outcomes Question and the Assessment Question for each component of the teaching/learning process, will enhance the effectiveness of the teaching/learning interaction even more.

It is a central principal of the learning-outcomes approach that assessing students’ achievement of relevant learning outcomes is not the same as grading them. Grading unavoidably compares students with one another (even when its data are derived from assessing student progress towards concrete learning outcomes). But assessing compares a given student’s achievement with the outcome intended for the learning experience without comparing one student with another. Of course, our students typically want the credential, the credit, as well as the learning; so grading, which is properly a part of the credentialing process rather than part of the learning process, is not something easily avoided. Outcomes statements for a particular educational program do not necessarily identify things that should be graded, though they always identify something that should be assessed to see if the learning is happening. Therefore it is very important to keep the distinction between these two activities clearly in mind while teaching.

An additional point needing emphasis is that determining appropriate learning outcomes for a particular educational experience requires that teachers and other curriculum designers have an accurate picture of the students’ baseline. That is, they need to ask what learning outcomes a typical range of students in the course or the program can be expected to have already achieved when they arrive to begin the new learning experience. Without a clear picture of this baseline, it will be almost impossible to determine what learning outcomes can be realistically proposed for the learners in the time and with the other resources for learning that are available.

This dependence of curriculum design on determining the baseline is not only important for a teacher designing a particular class or unit of a course. It is also important in the design of a whole course and for those who design whole programs, and it is important for those who design the whole college or university undergraduate experience. In particular, for the purpose of this essay, it is important for those who would design the ethics curriculum within a college’s or university’s undergraduate program.
SECTION II: IDEAL LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR UNDERGRADUATE ETHICS

The developmental psychologist, James Rest, has distinguished four aspects of the moral life and so four areas in which ethics educators can work for growth in moral learners. Distinguishing these four areas of the moral life in terms of developmental goals for learning also serves to differentiate four kinds of deficits that we find in persons who fail to do what they ought. With some interpretive additions of my own, Rest's four categories are:

1. Awareness or sensitivity to what is morally/ethically at stake in a situation;

2. Reasoning and Other Reflective Skills leading to judgments about what ought to be done in a situation, given data on what is morally/ethically at stake in the situation; [The term “reflection” will typically be used here to refer to this category along with the term “reasoning,” in order to emphasize the role of narrative judgments along with more deductive or syllogistic components of judgment in thorough moral/ethical reflection.]

3. Motivation/Conviction; that is, the person's conscious affirmation of and pattern of living habitually according to certain values/principles/ideals that lead to actions in accord with his or her moral/ethical judgments;

4. Implementation; that is, the practical and emotional ability to carry out the course of action that a person has judged ought to be done and is motivated to do.

Note the use of the expression “moral/ethical” above and from time to time in what follows. The terms “ethical” and “moral” have many subtly different meanings in ordinary speech. For clarity here, I shall stipulate that an “ethical” or “moral” issue or question (in contrast to a question that has nothing to do with ethics or morality) is a question in which we are concerned with what someone ought to do because someone's well-being or virtue or rights or duties are at issue or at stake. In addition, because the meanings of these two terms are not carefully distinguished in a manner that is widely and consistently employed, the terms “ethical” and “moral” will be treated as synonyms here and used interchangeably, indicating in each case the minimal, generic content already indicated or, in other words, whatever ought or ought not to be done. More complicated distinctions within this arena of discourse are best made explicitly rather than buried in unexpressed connotations of these or other terms. The expression “ethical/moral” will occasionally be used below to emphasize this point.
The goal of Section II is to propose a set of Ideal Learning Outcomes for the ethics curriculum component of the college or university undergraduate experience, using Rest’s four categories as a framework. The first step in this process will be to suggest a baseline for undergraduate ethics educational efforts. Obviously, what follows here may be mistaken either in general or in regard to a particular institution’s typical entering student. If so, the reader will need to correct the baseline and then adjust the answers to the questions addressed in the remainder of this essay accordingly.

Baseline

The typical student who benefits from undergraduate education is an adult who is envisioned here as having at least the following baseline “credentials” in the four areas Rest identifies:

**Awareness**

The students have a significant, i.e. conduct affecting, awareness of such personally relevant values/principles/ideals as: life; health; pleasure and the absence/limitation of pain; personal autonomy or self-determination; and integrity (i.e. striving to live by a fairly consistent set of values/principles/ideals); as well as of some of the social-relational values/principles/ideals like cooperation, equality, and non-interference in others’ choices.

**Reasoning/Reflective Skills**

They have the ability to reason logically on simple ethical/moral issues and an awareness of the general relation of premises to conclusions in such matters. But they have little functional grasp of the elements and patterned contents of the different modes of moral/ethical reflection; nor are they routinely able to articulate the details of their efforts at such reflection in terms communicable to others or functional as tests of the quality of their reflection.

**Motivation/Conviction**

The students have given little thought to the reasons for holding the values/principles/ideals that they hold, which means that the predominance of one kind of motivation/conviction over another in a given situation, even when well established as part of the student’s personality/character, is more a matter of unreflective habit than active self-knowledge or conscious decisions and choices about being a certain kind of person. Nor have they reflected much on the reasons for valuing and acting according to the partic-
icular conventions or accepted role-standards of any specific social roles, much less on the specific values/principles/ideals grounding such accepted role-standards. They therefore typically have only habitual, rather than decision-and-choice-based motivation/conviction regarding these standards, even in regard to roles to which they personally aspire. But they do ordinarily understand that there are such conventional standards for these roles; and they are often sincerely motivated, from a variety of both personal and social sources, to perform such roles successfully and therefore to learn to do so.

Implementation

Since implementation depends on concrete understanding of particular practice settings in some detail, our students often have little grasp of any of the situation-specific challenges to implementation, or of the situation-specific resources likely to be available to them, in areas beyond family, school, and certain limited social and work environments. But the students do typically have ordinary young-adult abilities to resolve both practical and emotional impediments to appropriate action in these familiar environments; and from doing so, they typically anticipate that comparable relevant assistance might be available in the situations they will subsequently encounter.

Ideal Learning Outcomes for Ethics Education for Undergraduates

With this as a suggested baseline for typical ranges of undergraduates, the following Ideal Learning Outcomes are proposed for each of the four areas distinguished by Rest. These learning outcomes are necessarily described here in fairly general terms. A brief general description of how these outcomes might be assessed is also offered as a guide to more concrete articulations of learning outcomes and assessments in each area.

Awareness

The students’ awareness of the values/principles/ideals already indicated as the baseline should grow to be an articulate awareness of these values/principles/ideals. For these are indeed regularly found at stake in a wide range of typical situations requiring moral/ethical reflection in both private life and a variety of social/public situations. In addition, the students should become aware of a number of additional values/principles/ideals typically needed to engage in moral/ethical reflection in ordinary private and social/public situations. Trying to list these additional values/principles/ideals with any finality would make this essay much more contentious. But it seems likely that an acceptable list would need to include such themes as: truth;
beauty; justice; friendship; and, depending on the particular institution’s own 
mission, also relationship to the transcendent and/or sympathy to others’ 
needs.

Students and people generally typically demonstrate their awareness of 
values/principles/ideals in their discourse as well as their conduct. Teachers 
rarely have much opportunity to observe students’ behavior outside class, 
much less to learn their reasons for conducting themselves as they do. So 
teachers’ assessments of their students’ awareness will come chiefly from 
providing opportunities for students to engage in relevant discourse, i.e. to 
consider situations in which moral/ethical matters are at stake. This will 
ordinarily be in the form of students discussing hypothetical cases or situa-
tions from current events or from the students’ own lives, with the faculty 
then assessing the students’ discourse in terms of the kinds of awareness they 
reveal.

The students should also become articulately aware that these values/ 
principles/ideals are often in conflict in concrete situations requiring action 
(i.e. awareness that choices of some values/principles/ideals are often at the 
expense of others), and so become aware of the need for moral/ethical 
reflection in addressing the conflicting values/principles/ideals in such situa-
tions. Their awareness should include the perspectives of the multiple parties 
to a situation. It should also be expanded to include such more narrowly 
focused values/principles/ideals as are relevant to the more specialized roles 
that a typical student would be likely to encounter in life or for which a par-
ticular student is specifically preparing. Situations provided to students to 
assess their awareness should therefore include features that can elicit discus-
sion involving these additional aspects of awareness.

Reasoning/Reflective Skills

The students should become capable of offering articulate judgments 
about situations involving ethical/moral questions, based on ethical/moral 
reflection that is: logical (i.e. the conclusion follows from the reasons/reflec-
tions given and no important steps among the reasons/reflections are omit-
ted), clear (i.e. key terms and concepts are explained if necessary and used 
consistently), and careful (i.e. key presuppositions of the reflection/reasoning 
are articulated; familiar and important objections are acknowledged and 
answered if possible). Their examples of moral/ethical reflection should take 
explicit account of the values/principles/ideals already mentioned, as well as 
any other moral/ethical considerations potentially competing with those 
already mentioned.
The most direct means of assessing students’ reasoning/reflective skills is by means of case-based discussions and written assignments, whether the cases are hypothetical or drawn from current events or the students’ own lives. The cases used should include a range of typical cases and issues in a variety of situations, especially those relevant to social roles with which the students are likely to interact in life. Various modes of addressing cases should be provided to students, i.e. in class discussion, written assignments, small group projects, and so on, to facilitate assessment of students with differing learning styles in the exercise of their reflective skills.

The reasoning/reflective skills component of ethics education also includes students learning various conceptual tools developed by philosophers, theologians, and other scholars of moral/ethical reflection that can assist the students’ moral/ethical reflection. Careful judgments will be needed regarding the usefulness to students of particular sets of concepts in the light of the students’ baseline skills and of the other learning outcomes of the undergraduate ethics curriculum. But many of the conceptual systems typically examined in introductory texts in moral philosophy and moral theology, for example, are likely to be useful if they are taught not for their own sake as subject matter but with a view to achieving learning outcomes like those already identified. (See Appendix for “A Model of Decision-Making” as one example of such a conceptual tool.)

Assessment of the students’ ability to use such conceptual tools in their moral/ethical reflection can occur by means of the same discussions and written analyses of cases already mentioned.

In addition, the students should be able to identify the more specialized standards of conduct relevant to typical social roles (e.g. examples from the professions or from the role of a citizen) and to explain how general values/principles/ideals serve to ground specific standards for these roles, as well as the implications of these standards in typical cases drawn from practice in these roles. In discussing relevant cases or writing ethical analyses of them, the students should be able to explain (at least in their own words, not necessarily from familiarity with formal documents) relevant elements of the standards of conduct relevant to typical cases that could arise in the practice of typical social roles.

Finally, although perhaps too ideally, the student should be able to identify situations, from cases and issues discussed, in which his or her ability to reasonably resolve the ethical issues involved is at its limits and should be able to articulate a reasonable plan (of appropriate consultation, appropriate referral to higher authority, etc.) about how a person ought to proceed under such circumstances.
Assessment of students’ achievement of these areas of reasoning/reflective skills will again typically occur from evaluating students’ discourse on relevant topics and case studies in terms of the skills mentioned.

Motivation/Conviction

This is the hardest outcome to describe because it is the hardest area of learning outcomes to assess. This is not simply because motivation/conviction is an affective trait. For awareness is also primarily an affective trait (although people’s awareness of a particular aspect of a situation is often dependent upon their having a system of concepts in hand that enables them to name it). And one can fairly dependably assess a person’s awareness by examining their discourse and by posing relevant questions if the dialogue still leaves matters in doubt (taking account, of course, not only of the words spoken, but of the nonverbal elements of the interchange as well). Thus, as has been indicated, many of the activities used in assessing reflective skills (which are principally cognitive) will simultaneously provide teachers with the opportunity to assess awareness as well.

But with regard to a person’s motivation/conviction, the principal “test” is how the person acts, especially in the person’s habitual patterns of action (character). A person's discourse, especially discourse about action, contributes to the evidence about a person’s motivation/conviction, but ordinarily does so secondarily to action itself. However, as was already mentioned, faculty in undergraduate institutions only occasionally observe a large amount of their students’ conduct, much less the broad range of action-situations that would be needed for dependable judgments about students’ motivation/conviction. Teachers are, therefore, frequently unable to judge individual students’ growth in motivation/conviction (or lack of it), especially growth (or lack of it) across a broad range of the kinds of motivation/conviction that make up a well developed adult personality. Moreover, the commitment to open inquiry that is characteristic of higher education places severe limits on the ways in which faculty may promote or foster particular sets of motivations/convictions in their students.

At the same time, however, it is the case that humans who observe other humans living according to particular sets of values/principles/ideals are typically either attracted by these as they are embodied in actual lives and actions, or are repelled by the lack of values/principles/ideals that they admire. So it is to be expected, and would rightly be included among Ideal Learning Outcomes of an undergraduate college or university program, that over and above growth in awareness and reasoning/reflective skills, growth in some kinds of motivations/convictions should be actively fostered in the students.
It ought to be the case, in other words, that students leave an undergraduate program having grown in certain aspects of motivation/conviction and having become more habitually appreciative of the presence of certain motivations/convictions in others. Further details of this aspect of the Graduation Learning Outcomes for an institution’s ethics curriculum will depend greatly, however, on the institution’s specific mission and core values/principles/ideals.

In any case, formation of undergraduate students in these motivations and convictions, whatever they are, does not occur chiefly by means of the institution’s ethics curriculum. It occurs chiefly by reason of the faculty and staff and officers of the institution embodying them concretely in their lives and work. Therefore, achieving this is properly the task of all the members of the college or university community rather than specifically the task of those who teach ethics, whether as their principal academic focus or in an Ethics Across the Curriculum mode. So this component of what the college or university aims at does not belong specifically in the planning process for the ethics curriculum, even though the formal elements of the ethics curriculum should have a relationship to and be constructed to be consistent with it (and vice-versa).

Admittedly, there are also many relationships between students and faculty members—e.g. as mentors or advisers or program directors—and relationships between students and other members of the college or university community, in which the faculty member or other person may well model the virtues referred to above and other virtues to particular students in ways that significantly affect the students’ growth in motivation/conviction. But important though this component of undergraduate life is, the fostering of such relationships is not the work of the ethics curriculum as such.

One conclusion being offered here, then, is that there certainly are important Ideal Learning Outcomes for undergraduates in the realm of motivation/conviction. But their achievement is not something specific to or distinctively the task either of the ethics curriculum or of those engaged specifically in ethics education. All faculty, staff, and administrators, and the institution as a formal embodiment of various values/principles/ideals as well, should be considered and evaluated as part of this effort.

**Implementation**

In some undergraduate programs, the students are specifically preparing for a particular social role. In those instances, students should be able to describe typical practical and emotional hindrances to implementation of their moral/ethical judgments in typical problematic situations in the practice
of that role and they should be able to describe typical resources available to people in these roles for resolving such hindrances.

But many undergraduate students are not yet preparing for a specific social role, and many faculty who teach students who are doing so do not engage these students in ways directly focused on the activities of those roles. So it can only be a selective focus of an undergraduate ethics curriculum to address the practical implementation needs of particular social roles. Moreover, insofar as such preparation is appropriate, it is often not properly the work of the ethics curriculum as such, but rather of more specialized programs within the institution. So it is worth stressing that typical challenges to implementation in the kinds of situations that students would typically encounter regardless of their career plans should receive attention in the cases that students discuss and write about in relation to the learning outcomes identified above. That is, while our students do typically have ordinary young-adult abilities to resolve both practical and emotional impediments to appropriate action in familiar environments, it is appropriate to call their attention to their possession of these abilities and assist in their becoming more self-conscious and articulate. But unless special implementation skills relevant to particular social roles do need to be the focus, growth in implementation skills will not ordinarily be a special priority for an undergraduate ethics curriculum.

Assessment in this area is also carried out most efficiently through class discussions and written assignments about typical cases.

**Ideal Learning Outcomes for the Undergraduate Ethics Curriculum**

For the reasons stated, then, the emphasis in designing an undergraduate ethics curriculum should fall principally on learning outcomes in the areas of awareness and reasoning/reflective skills. To summarize what is being proposed, the following are the Ideal Learning Outcomes proposed as the most important for an undergraduate ethics curriculum:

A. Articulate Awareness of:
   1. Baseline values/principles/ideals;
   2. Additional values/principles/ideals (e.g. truth, beauty, justice, friendship, sympathy);
   3. Conflicts of values/principles/ideals;
   4. The perspectives of each participant;
   5. Values/principles/ideals relevant to student’s specialized role (if already chosen).

B. Reasoning/Reflective Skills:
1. Logical, conceptually clear, careful (recognizing presuppositions & objections);
2. Employing useful conceptual tools;
3. Employing accepted standards of typical social roles;
4. Employing accepted standards of student’s specialized role (if already chosen);
5. Recognizing the limits of one’s own skills.

SECTION III: WHAT IS ACHIEVABLE IN AN ETHICS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM PROGRAM

A central thesis of this essay is that it is not reasonable to expect an Ethics Across the Curriculum program, even a very ambitious one that is well supported both by large numbers of faculty and by the administration with ample and appropriate resources, to achieve all of the Ideal Learning Outcomes just described. That is, dependable achievement of all of these learning outcomes by the typical undergraduate is extremely unlikely unless a formal ethics course is an institutional requirement for every student. It is admittedly unlikely that all of these learning outcomes would be achievable to a high level in only one formal ethics course; but each of them can be addressed in some significant degree in one effectively taught course.

If this first thesis is correct, then the next question will be which of the learning outcomes just described are achievable, and in what measure, in an Ethics Across the Curriculum program?

The reasons why all of the Ideal Learning Outcomes cannot ordinarily be achieved in an Ethics Across the Curriculum (EAC) program are of two sorts. The first reason is that in most colleges and universities with EAC programs, the courses incorporating ethics units are not comprehensive enough collectively or numerous enough altogether to assure the learning outcomes they do achieve for all or even most of their undergraduates. Ordinarily there are not even enough such courses available absolutely that an institution could be sure that every student could take a certain number. Even in institutions where a high level of both faculty participation and administrative support exists and where many EAC courses are taught in many areas of the undergraduate program, the students’ opportunities to take such classes are still typically limited by other program requirements and occur chiefly as a matter of chance. In addition, in order to systematically direct students to a certain number of such courses in an educationally useful distribution of subject areas during their undergraduate years, it would be necessary to exercise a great deal more control over students’ course selection, and probably over
faculty course selection, than is politically viable in most institutions; and doing so might well be educationally harmful to the undergraduate program in other ways. But only an EAC program that was universal in relation to students and involved a well designed distribution of both faculty and courses across departments could genuinely claim to aim at the Ideal Learning Outcomes as proposed.

Secondly, and even more importantly, even if an EAC program of the sort just idealized were somehow put into place at an institution, many of the Ideal Learning Outcomes would still not be achievable. For a number of these are learning outcomes whose dependable achievement requires two factors not available in the typical EAC classroom. The first of these is enough time to practice the students in awareness and reflective skills across an adequate range of values/principles/ideals and an adequate range of conceptual tools using an adequate range of cases and issues for discussion and written assignments. The second is that teachers in EAC programs rarely have achieved a sufficient measure of advanced learning in the systematic development of moral/ethical positions, including the ability to compare and evaluate these positions' presuppositions and the ability to formulate opposing positions and respond to them.

**Enough Time**

To focus only on awareness for a moment, even in an EAC class led by a faculty member trained in some of the skills of ethics education, there will be only limited time available, precisely because it is part of a course with learning outcomes and subject matter in another field, to examine the range of values/principles/ideals and the positions of all the participants involved in any case or topic. Suppose a committed faculty member were to carefully develop five or six significant ethics units in a course, and include in each of these exposition by the faculty member, class discussion and a written assignment for the students (for example, an analysis of a case). Even in that ideal situation it is still not reasonable to think that there would be enough time for the students to effectively examine the whole range of baseline and additional values/principles/ideals included in the Ideal Learning Outcomes. If EAC units existed in a number of classes and courses, then a number of such values/principles/ideals certainly could be taught. But the kind of coordination of courses offering EAC units that would be necessary for the program to dependably cover the whole range would ordinarily be prohibitive. Similarly students' awareness of conflicting values/principles/ideals and of the perspectives of each participant in the cases discussed or written about could ordinarily be incorporated into EAC units to some extent, and there might
also be opportunity, depending on the program, to touch on some—but rarely on all—of the values/principles/ideals relevant to a particular specialized social role. But in the area of awareness, few if any EAC programs, even if ideally staffed and funded, could dependably cover the whole range of baseline and additional values/principles/ideals identified in the Ideal Learning Outcomes.

The same logistical difficulties affect the range of reasoning and reflective skills and the range of conceptual tools in which students might receive significant training in EAC units in various courses. Faculty can certainly practice students in some of the skills of moral/ethical reflection, applying them to the cases discussed and written about. General standards of typical social roles and the experience of dealing articulately with the limits of one's skills could be covered with some attention. But again the impracticality of close coordination across multiple courses and the vagaries of students’ schedules mean that only the rarest of EAC programs could hope to achieve anything like comprehensive coverage of these aspects of the reasoning/reflective skills identified above. To be sure, every little bit helps. But the Ideal Learning Outcomes described in Section II call for something much more robust and coordinated than the random collection of ethics learning outcomes ordinarily possible in most EAC programs.

It is important to stress that these conclusions are not intended as criticisms of existing EAC programs or of the numerous committed faculty who invest time and energy developing EAC units for their courses at many institutions. Their commitment is generous and admirable. But the logistical limitations of ethics units incorporated into courses across the curriculum, especially in the absence of close coordination of such courses within a given student's undergraduate program, are undeniable hindrances to a high measure of achievement of many of the Ideal Learning Outcomes proposed above.

Faculty Background

Secondly, there is the issue of relevant background on the part of EAC faculty. Even the most committed faculty who participate in EAC programs are typically very limited in the time they can invest in the two aspects of ethics education that make faculty who specialize in ethics effective as teachers of ethics. First, there is the development of moral/ethical reasoning/reflective skills to a high level of sophistication. In every area of teaching, it is a truism that the teacher who can perform a function at a higher level of expertise is typically more effective at teaching it at a lower level than one who has mastered it only at the lower level. This is partly a matter of careful study of the
methodologies of the above modes of reflection themselves and partly a matter of the time and attention spent in practicing the skills, as well as the degree of difficulty of the issues on which they have been practiced. Obviously, specialists in ethics have far more time and motivation to do this than faculty whose specialties lie in other disciplines. Admittedly, in ethics as in all disciplines, some practitioners become so expert in advanced modes of the discipline’s practice that they lose the ability to communicate effectively at the lower skill levels, and hence are less effective as teachers at those levels than some who are not so advanced in their expertise. But this is no reason to think that ethics education or any other aspect of undergraduate education is done most effectively by persons less skilled in it.

In addition, faculty who have specialized in ethics have more training in and typically also broader training in the range of conceptual tools available to assist moral/ethical reflection. This is one of the fruits of the wide reading in ethical theory that is a part of graduate level training in ethics. They have had extensive opportunity to practice the use of these conceptual tools across a wide range of cases and topics. They are also ordinarily more experienced both quantitatively and qualitatively in the range of strengths and weaknesses of logic, clarity, and what has here been called “carefulness” (that is, attention to presuppositions and objections) in an example of moral/ethical reasoning/reflection. So they are more experienced in identifying strengths and weaknesses in these areas in students’ oral and written discourse.

One conclusion to draw from this is that faculty who have been specifically trained in ethics and ethics education in order to offer courses in an EAC program will ordinarily have more of the skills needed to enhance students’ awareness in the subcategories in A1-5 above and be more able to assist students in the exercise of the reasoning/reflective skills in B1-5 above. But even with background of this sort, they will typically only be expert enough to be effective teachers in some of these subcategories, not across the whole range of values/principles/ideals in A1-5 and the whole range of reasoning/reflective skills in B1-5. Similarly, though they may be able to assist students in matters of logic and clarity, at least at a basic level, they will typically not be trained or expert in teaching students to improve their moral/ethical reflection with much sophistication and even less so in terms of the characteristics referred to above as “carefulness.” In addition, they will not typically be skilled in assessing the students’ efforts at moral/ethical reflection in these respects, and certainly not across the whole range of different approaches to moral/ethical thinking.

Finally, most faculty trained for EAC teaching will have become familiar with some of the conceptual tools relevant to ethical issues in their subject
areas and will be able to teach students in the use of these conceptual tools. But many will have had only modest opportunity for this kind of learning themselves; and very few will be expert enough in the whole range of conceptual tools for moral/ethical reflection that they can assist undergraduate learners in mastering them more than selectively, much less be able to compare their impact and usefulness across a range of topics (in order, for example, to select which conceptual tools will be most valuable to students studying a particular case or topic).

This is the reason why formal ethics courses, that do have all of the Ideal Learning Outcomes as their intended goal (though, as indicated above, not to the highest imaginable degree), are usually taught by faculty specializing in ethics. This typically means at least a Master’s degree in either Moral Philosophy or Moral Theology/Religious Studies for teaching lower level courses with the Doctorate as the degree more typically required in most four-year undergraduate institutions. For these are the kinds of graduate educational programs that are ordinarily needed to prepare a teacher in all of the skills and conceptual resources they need to effectively assist students in achieving all of the Ideal Learning Outcomes proposed above.

To be sure, some faculty in fields other than Moral Philosophy or Moral Theology/Religious Studies achieve advanced expertise in ethics for reasons of personal interest or because of its connection to their own field of study. When this is so, these persons may well have skills in ethics education comparable to those of degreed faculty in Moral Philosophy or Moral Theology/Religious Studies. But the place where these skills are most dependably available are in these two fields and, in any case, it is typically by comparison with the skills of faculty trained in these fields that the skills of other such faculty can be confirmed.

From what has been said, it follows that an EAC program whose faculty are specifically trained for ethics education in some measure—either through their own self-training or in programs sponsored by the institution—will typically produce genuine improvements of students’ awareness of important values/principles/ideals, both baseline and some additional values/principles/ideals, as well as their awareness of conflicts of values/principles/ideals and of the importance of considering the perspective of every participant in a situation. A program staffed with such faculty will also typically assist in some measure in advancing students’ moral/ethical reasoning/reflective skills, including their ability to employ these skills clearly and logically in some respects. But such a program cannot be expected to educate across the whole range of values/principles/ideals included in the Ideal Learning Outcomes, and such a program cannot dependably educate either across the whole range
of reasoning/reflective skills or of conceptual tools included in the Ideal Learning Outcomes, nor educate in the employment of these skills to any degree of sophistication.

Two Conclusions

One conclusion to draw from what has been said is that a formal ethics course should be part of any undergraduate curriculum that seriously aims at the Ideal Learning Outcomes. In fact, it seems evident that the learning that can be achieved by an EAC program would be markedly enhanced by the presence of a formal ethics course in the students’ undergraduate program. In that case, at least for many students in many of the EAC courses, the efforts of EAC faculty would be building upon what was learned in the formal ethics course.

The second conclusion concerns what learning outcomes should be aimed at in an EAC program and what criteria should be used to evaluate such programs. Whether an EAC Program complements a formal ethics course required of every undergraduate or it is the institution’s chief curricular effort to achieve some measure of ethics education for its undergraduates, EAC programs certainly achieve valuable educational goals. Without the concerted efforts of committed faculty and administrators to create and sustain such programs, many of our undergraduates would receive no focused attention on ethical issues and would achieve no dependable growth in moral/ethical awareness or reasoning/reflective skills during their undergraduate years.

But at the same time it would be a mistake to think that such programs, even if they were ideally staffed and supported, could achieve more than is realistic; and therefore, it is a mistake to expect more of them than is possible and especially to criticize them when they accomplish only what is possible. That is, the proper question is whether an EAC program does accomplish what is possible and then, if there are good will and resources to do more than this, how to expand the program to do still more of this.

SECTION IV: TEACHING STRATEGIES AND FACULTY PREPARATION

As was indicated early on, the proper point to ask how to teach something is after having identified the appropriate and realistic learning outcomes for students who bring the relevant baseline of awareness, skills, etc., to the classroom. It is now appropriate, therefore, to briefly address teaching strategies for the undergraduate ethics curriculum.
Fortunately, the most appropriate and effective teaching strategies for achieving the learning outcomes appropriate to an EAC program should be obvious by now. There is a place for exposition, as the faculty member explains the issues and models moral/ethical analysis of them using relevant reasoning/reflective skills and relevant conceptual tools to assist such reflection. But the students’ awareness both of the range of values/principles/ideals involved in an issue or case and especially of the perspectives of the multiple parties involved is typically enhanced most effectively through guided discussion rather than through lecture. In addition, students will ordinarily not actively practice reasoning/reflective skills unless they are engaged to offer and support judgments about the issue or case. In all of this, as has been indicated, the use of cases to make the issues concrete is almost always helpful and frequently is essential.

Many ethics teachers’ experience also supports another important strategic principle: requiring students, especially in an interactive environment, to offer and support judgments about an issue or a case—that is, requiring them to engage publicly in reasoning/reflection about it—has the side-effect of enhancing awareness. But focusing on enhancing awareness has no dependable side-effect of enhancing growth in reasoning/reflective skills. Therefore, simply as a matter of efficiency, it makes sense to routinely address ethical issues and cases with a focus on the students’ offering and supporting judgments about what ought to be done, rather than only on identifying what is morally/ethically at stake in it. (See “A Model of Decision-Making” in the Appendix as one example of a framework that makes this emphasis, and the distinction it rests upon, fairly clear.)

Assigning essays to students in which they are to offer an ethical analysis of a case, including offering a judgment of what ought to be done and reasons supporting this judgment (i.e. practicing relevant reasoning/reflective skills, not only articulating awareness of what is at stake) is probably the single most effective means for securing the students’ learning both in awareness and in reasoning/reflective skills. This is especially the case if the assignment explicitly requires the students to use a particular approach to moral/ethical reflection or a particular set of conceptual tools relevant to the issues in the case (which the teacher has already modeled for the students in class and practiced them on through class discussions of cases involving similar issues). It is often very challenging for EAC faculty to grade such assignments. Many such faculty have had little opportunity to learn how to evaluate such essays and many consider the time demands of evaluating such assignments excessive, given their other commitments. But the educational value of such assignments, when they follow upon effective classroom learning of the awareness,
skills, and concepts they evaluate, is very great and is even greater when the students receive feedback on their work (i.e. it is formally assessed and the assessment provided as feedback for further learning).

With these brief reflections on teaching strategies and the previous discussion of appropriate learning outcomes for EAC programs in mind, what can be said about appropriate preparation for faculty to teach in such programs? It is important to note, before identifying the components of an appropriate training program, that some faculty will already have attained, through previous educational experiences or from self-training, more advanced expertise in the relevant skills and conceptual tools than the average non-expert. But for present purposes, the assumption (the baseline) will be that the faculty member has not had any formal or any extensive self-directed contact with the tools of ethics education.

First of all, faculty will be most effective in teaching ethics in any setting if they learn to identify and articulate as concretely as possible the learning outcomes aimed at in the ethics units they incorporate into their courses. And they will be effective in doing this only if, as indicated above, they take the assessment question seriously as well. That is, the first step to be recommended here is that the learning-outcomes-centered approach to curriculum design be consciously employed to shape their efforts at ethics education.

Secondly, faculty will need to learn sets of concepts that will enable them to recognize and name the various parts of and the various ways in which people do moral/ethical thinking. In their abstract form, these accounts of moral/ethical thinking are often called (especially by academic specialists in ethics) moral/ethical theory. But they are of interest for present purposes not chiefly because of the questions raised or the reasons given about them in scholarly debates, but because they also represent the most common patterns of ordinary people’s moral/ethical thinking. Faculty will be much better able to articulate their own thoughts, both in explaining issues and cases to students and especially in modeling ways of doing moral/ethical reflection for students, if they can identify and articulate the various components of and ways in which people perform their moral/ethical thinking. (Conceptual frameworks like the material in the Appendix can be very helpful in this regard, by helping distinguish, for more careful examination, the various sets of questions that are embedded in a moral/ethical inquiry.) As indicated above, it will ordinarily be from faculty who are ethics specialists in the departments of Philosophy or Theology/Religious Studies that these matters will be most effectively learned.

Third, faculty need to practice using these sets of concepts themselves in order to be able to comfortably use them in front of their students, espe-
cially when they need to model them for the students so the students can then practice them themselves. They also need familiarity with these sets of concepts in order to assess students’ success or not in using them and to provide appropriate feedback to students about their use. Such practice requires time and the opportunity for repetition and variation that all learning of new skills requires. Practically speaking, it also requires a sympathetic audience.

For this reason, all three components of faculty preparation for EAC teaching can be most effectively undertaken in workshop settings. Typically, such groups of faculty are from different departments and it is important, therefore, that the ethical issues and cases selected for discussion have broad appeal and not depend upon highly specialized understanding of particular fields or social roles. Eventually each faculty member will need to turn to issues and cases in his or her own field where both the interest in the issue or case and the kinds of practical and theoretical understanding they presuppose may be quite specialized. But if faculty from multiple fields are trained together, issues and cases need to be selected for their collective use with breadth of appeal and background understanding in mind.

One side-benefit of faculty from multiple fields learning together, besides the fact that it is often difficult to find more than a few faculty from any one field who are willing and able to invest the time in training at the same time, is that faculty in such workshops develop a sense of camaraderie across academic units that they will find sustaining them in the future. There is a lot to be said for making sacrifices for an activity that colleagues whom I rarely see, but who are out there in other parts of the institution are making sacrifices for, and contributing to the success of, just like myself.

There is great value in workshops of this sort being offered by a number of specialists in teaching ethics. In this way, the faculty involved in the EAC program can receive input from a variety of perspectives and in a variety of styles. There is also great value in inviting such faculty training groups to come back together after they have begun their EAC teaching so they can learn from sharing stories, seeking help from one another, and having access to those whose principal task is teaching ethics to get their help and encouragement. Of course, the importance of the support and thanks of the administration, both substantive and symbolic, is hard to overstate.

As mentioned above, ethics teaching is most effective and the learning outcomes seem to be most effectively secured in the learners when they are required to write case-based essays about the issues they have been studying. Faculty in EAC programs often consider themselves too burdened to even consider making such assignments. But for many, their hesitations are compounded by their conviction that they lack adequate assessment skills to eval-
uate such assignments properly, much less also grade them as the students, in their desire for credit, will typically prefer. Therefore it is important to also consider the development of workshops for training EAC faculty specifically on assessing and grading students’ case-based ethics analyses and other written work. A very effective starting point for such a workshop is, not surprisingly, a careful, concrete articulation of the intended learning outcomes for the particular ethics unit, since it is the students’ achievement of these that the evaluator will be evaluating. If faculty have been carefully formed in the learning-outcomes-centered approach to the design of the ethics units they incorporate into their teaching, then they will already have the first step of the evaluation process in hand. But there are also definite skills to be learned about designing cases for written assignments and about how to read students’ essays and identify instances of their use of particular reasoning/reflective skills or sets of concepts. These are skills that are, again, usually learned from those who teach ethics full-time, especially if they themselves employ a learning-outcomes-centered approach in their own work. Here as well, workshops and the availability of experienced ethics teachers for assistance can contribute a great deal to both the skills and the confidence of Ethics Across the Curriculum faculty.

CONCLUSION

Ethics Across the Curriculum programs can make very important educational contributions to undergraduate learning, as well as enrich in many subtle ways the scholarly, institutional, and personal lives of faculty who participate in them and the life of the institution itself. But it is important to consider carefully what such programs can and cannot reasonably be expected to achieve; that is, what are their appropriate learning outcomes. And then it is important to structure them accordingly and to support the programs themselves and especially the faculty who participate in them adequately so these outcomes can be effectively achieved.

David T. Ozar is Director of the Center for Ethics and Social Justice and Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University of Chicago.
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This is a model of the steps of ethical decision-making. Any model of decision-making is necessarily an oversimplification. For it separates out reflective activities that we actually perform all mixed together, and identifies as separate “steps” of the decision-making process activities that are highly interdependent in actual ethical reflection. In addition, in our ordinary ethical reflection, we do not completely finish Step Two, for example, before beginning Step Three. Instead we move back and forth between the four steps, learning from one of them that we haven’t adequately answered another, and gathering data from one of them that proves informative for another, and so on. But it is still worthwhile to carefully separate and describe the several distinct sets of activities involved in ethical decision-making. When an ethical decision is particularly complex, then having a bit of a “road map” of the steps involved can often be useful. It is also valuable to ask in general terms how role-based norms relate to other moral considerations within moral decision-making.

Step One: Identifying the Alternatives

The first step consists of determining what courses of action are available for choice, and identifying their most important features. Sometimes this is easily done, without the need to stop and think carefully about it. At other times it can be very difficult. Special circumstances about the situation or our own habitual ways of perceiving and acting can cloud our vision of our options. Our questions for this step include these: What courses of action are available to us? What would be their likely outcomes? To what other choices for ourselves and for others are they likely to lead? Just how likely are such outcomes and such future choices? And so on.

Step Two: Determining What is Morally/Ethically at Stake By Reason of Our Social Roles

Once we know our alternatives, if we are in relevant social roles or relationships, we must examine the alternatives specifically from that point of
view, i.e. what those roles or relationships indicate ought or ought not to be done. The details of this process will depend upon one’s general conception of a social role and of the particular role(s) or relationship(s) that are relevant to the matter at hand. It will involve identification and careful consideration of the specific obligations relevant to that role or relationship. Each of the identified alternatives must be examined from this point of view.

Step Three: Determining What Else is Morally/Ethically at Stake

In addition, each alternative must be examined specifically from the point of view of the broader criteria of what ethically ought and ought not be done, over and above the norms of the person’s specific social roles and relationships. For one’s role-based obligations never constitute the entire moral content of a person’s life. Moreover, the obligations of roles and relationships themselves depend upon and are accepted into people’s lives for reasons. If specific role-based obligations conflict, or if they fail to adequately determine action in the situation at hand, or if other commitments conflict with the commitments most obvious in the situation, then the more fundamental moral categories need even more careful consideration because they are the key to resolving such conflicts.

The details of this process will depend upon the particular approach that a person takes to ethical reflection in its “largest” or “deepest” sense. Ordinarily, at the most general level, people do their moral reflection chiefly either in terms of maximizing certain values/principles/ideals for certain persons, or in terms of conformity to certain fundamental moral rules or rights, or in terms of actualizing certain human virtues or ideal conceptions of the human person. So the details of this process will ordinarily have one or the other of these structures or several of them together.

Step Four: Determining What Ought to be Done, All Things Considered

The process of determining what is morally/ethically at stake will sometimes yield, without further effort, the conclusion that one of our alternatives is morally/ethically better than all the rest. At other times, matters will be more complex because the various values/principles/ideals, rules, virtues, role-based norms, etc., that are involved favor different courses of action. Then one’s choice of action becomes also a choice between the alternative values/principles/ideals, rules, norms, etc.

In addition, judgments about actions can sometimes leave a person with a choice between several equally superior alternatives; and sometimes one’s leading alternatives are functionally equal because of an inability or lack of
time to get all the information needed to judge more carefully between them. In such cases, one may morally choose either of the equal alternatives, provided that they are all superior to every other alternative considered. When a person can successfully rank the leading alternatives, then the best of them is the one that ought to be done, and there may be others that we judge that ought not be done, no matter what. When a person judges several alternatives to be equal or functionally equal, then the person must choose between them; for the faculty of judgment will then have done the best it could under the circumstances.

Note that after judging, it is still necessary to choose a course of action in order to act. Choice is considered to be distinct from judgment in this model of ethical decision-making. For after a person has come to a judgment about what ought and ought not be done, he or she may still choose to act otherwise. So actually choosing to do (or not) whatever one judges to be the morally best or most required course of action deserves to be identified as distinct from the four-step process that leads to judgement. Thus, the term “decision,” is taken here to include both activities, i.e. both judging and choosing.