Promoting Personal Responsibility and Ethical Decision Making

Potential QEP Topic White Paper

St. Petersburg College

The encouragement of personal integrity is paramount in education. However, we are now seeing a drop in how seriously some students take this mission. According to one study, members of the "millennial" generation self-report themselves as cheating more often than previous generations. (Christensen, 2011, p. 114) Further, older generations see millennials as entitled and not hard-working. (Graves, 2012) Perhaps tellingly, this generation increasingly sees themselves as "self-absorbed," "wasteful," and "greedy." (The Guardian, 2015) Perhaps even worse, personal responsibility may also be on the decline: while the newest generation are the most educated on the subject of the environment, they're also the least likely to personally help do anything about it. (Abad-Santos, 2012) This may stem from cultural influences or a decline in educating the importance of integrity, and possibly a combination thereof.

At St. Petersburg College, we have the unique opportunity to not only work with this generation, but all generations to encourage personal responsibility and respectful engagement with others to better serve their communities. We are already effective at increasing civic engagement: our internal numbers show that SPC graduates are more likely to vote in an election, volunteer in their community, and participate in the electoral process than when they first matriculated. (Smiley, 2014) Subsequent employers of our graduates are reporting an uptick in "ethical understanding and behavior" of our students. (Monroe, 2014) Further, students indicate that they are well prepared for understanding ethical issues and behavior and largely prove it through our graduating general education assessment. (Monroe, 2014) While the overall numbers are largely positive, we can go even further.

As a college-wide initiative, we can increase buy-in to personal responsibility, to appreciate diversity of thought, and increase moral reasoning skills. This can be achieved through both a top-down and bottom-up – in concert – approach. Texas Tech University implemented a QEP initiative entitled "Do the Right Thing: A Campus Conversation on Ethics." Their plan was to implement an expectation of higher standards university-wide starting from high administration all the way down to individual students. (Texas Tech University 2011, p. 2) On top of this, they added ethics curriculum college-wide, including an engineering business ethics-and-law day, ethical research workshops, and most sweepingly, an introduction to ethics module in multiple freshman seminar courses (Texas Tech University, 2011, p.6) Through these efforts, a majority of surveyed students agreed that this would help them in their professional and personal life, a study indicated that the students "viewed academic integrity violations in an increasingly negative light," and individual acts of academic dishonesty decreased. (Texas Tech University, 2011, p. 7)

Trent University in Ontario also implemented a college-wide academic integrity module where every student is required pass at the beginning of each academic year. It teaches citation methods, the importance of avoiding of collusion and cheating, and basic skills such as not having your cell-phone on your person during an exam. (Capell, 2014)

Unique among predominantly two-year institutions, St. Petersburg College hosts the Applied Ethics Institute and requires all graduates to take a three-credit-hour applied ethics course. Our institution is well suited to spear-head such a far-reaching endeavor. The ethics faculty and staff able to facilitate a college-wide initiative to increase awareness of personal responsibility, tolerance, and the importance of a strong work-ethic. Modules can be implemented into multiple courses to encourage academic integrity, the college can host ethics-

concentrated events and hold open forums for the free exchange of thought while encouraging tolerance and diversity.

<div align="center">Works Cited</div>

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