INTEGRATING ETHICS INTO THE BUSINESS CURRICULUM: PANEL DISCUSSION

John Fraedrich, College of Business, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901-4629; fraedric@cba.siu.edu

O.C. Ferrell and Linda Ferrell, Anderson School of Management, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131; ocferrell@mgt.unm.edu, lferrell@mgt.unm.edu

Samuel P. Robinson, College of Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901; srobinso@siu.edu

ABSTRACT

There has been increasing interest in integrating ethics into the classroom. Many have accredited such interest to the corporate scandals (Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Andersen, Tyco, and many others) that have plagued businesses starting in the late 1990s and continuing into the 21st century and that have resulted in financial failure to stakeholders and society. These scandals have brought business schools under serious criticism for "neglecting one of the most important and critical aspects of business education," that is business ethics (Luthar & Karri, 2005).

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has called for the integration of ethics into curricula of business schools. According to Cosier (2008), this integration should be occurring irrespective of the method of delivering education – whether this integration occurs through social networking, distance learning, or other forms of delivery made possible by technological advancements. What is derived from Cosier is that there is a need for academic institutions to take decisive action in the building of an ethical foundation for future business leaders. Though government regulation and litigation form part of the solution, many see academic institutions as a "mechanism to bring about positive ethical change" (Dufresne & Offstein, 2005).

Evidence suggests that integrating ethics into the classroom brings about positive and socially desirable outcomes. For example, Lopez et al. (2005) found that tolerance for unethical behavior had actually decreased with formal business education. Another study showed that both male and female undergraduate students (from freshman to senior status) as well as MBA students who received ethical instruction in the classroom believe that ethics are tied to positive business outcomes. It is not enough that business schools offer ethics courses – what is required is exposure to both stand-alone courses and ethics that are integrated into the curriculum.

The purpose of this special session is to invite, stimulate interest, and encourage participants, both on the panel and among the attendees, to not only reflect on current approaches used in ethics education, but also on what can be included in our classes to improve this critical component of the curriculum.

REFERENCES

Cosier, R. A. (2008). *Ethical Objectives. BizEd,* 7 (5), 52-57.

Dufresne, R. L., & Offstein, E. H. (2005). Ethics in management education: Perspectives from the United States Military Academy at West Point. In *Management Education and Development Conference Paper Abstracts*, Academy of Management.

Lopez, Y. P., Rechner, P., Sundaramurthy, C. & Olson-Buchanan, J. B. (2005). Enhancing ethical perceptions: Impact of integrated ethics curriculum vs. a stand alone ethics course. In *Management Education and Development Conference Paper Abstracts*, Academy of Management.

Luthar, H. K., & Karri, R. (2005). Exposure to ethics education and the perception of linkage between organizational ethical behavior and business outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics, 61*, 353-368.