

DAVID M. HELLMICH

EDITOR

ETHICAL
LEADERSHIP
— IN THE —
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

BRIDGING
THEORY
AND DAILY
PRACTICE

Ethical Leadership in the Community College

Bridging Theory and Daily Practice

David M. Hellmich

Bluegrass Community and Technical College

EDITOR



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Ethical Leadership in the Community College

Bridging Theory and Daily Practice

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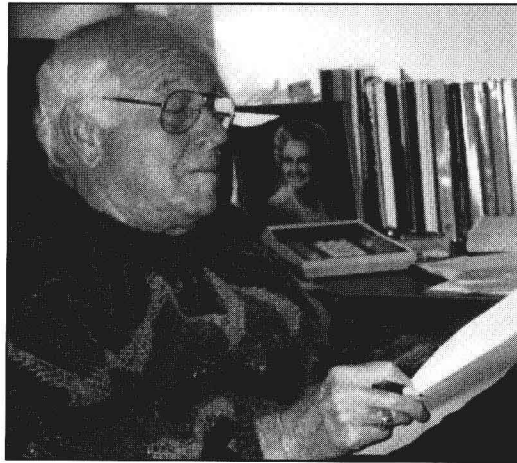
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In memory of James C. Wattenbarger,
the father of the Florida Community College System,
a great educator and a caring person.



About the Authors

The Editor

David M. Hellmich is vice president of learning support and academic affairs at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. Prior to this position, he served 13 years as an administrator and as an English professor at community colleges in Florida and Minnesota, and he has taught graduate courses in ethical leadership for St. Mary's University. His article "Ethical Leadership: Bridging Theory and Practice" in the *Community College Journal* was the catalyst for this book. He earned his Ph.D. in higher education administration from the University of Florida.

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Foreword

Leadership in our society is a privilege that enables the leader to impact both organizations and the lives of people, but it also carries many responsibilities. Perhaps the most important responsibility for anyone who is in a position of influence is to honor the public trust. While this may seem a simple and straightforward expectation, we continually read news stories about people who have violated this trust. The abuses seem to cross all vocations and walks of life, including elected officials who accept money to influence their votes, business leaders who personally benefit from backdating stock options or from falsifying financial records, military personnel and police officers who mistreat suspects and prisoners, and even scientists who misreport data.

To be sure, these stories sell newspapers. They capture the attention of readers and usually elicit an indignant reaction or a feeling of disgust. They give us something to talk about that is sure to interest other people. However, these stories diminish us all. They lead people to suspect all politicians, to distrust all leaders, and to lose faith in the fairness of our foreign policy and criminal justice system. We begin to believe in conspiracy when coincidence may be the reality. Restoring public confidence can only happen if we begin to make ethical behavior a significant value, especially for leaders in our institutions and organizations.

Community colleges, for all the good that they do for individuals and communities, exhibit the same types of lapses in ethics that we find throughout society. A search for articles in higher education and community college newspapers will yield stories about athletic scandals, sexual harassment, and misappropriation of funds. Why do these lapses continue to occur, and what can be done to strengthen the ethical foundations of our institutions? The answers to these questions can be found in *Ethical Leadership in the Community College: Bridging Theory and Daily Practice*, whose contributors present both theoretical and practical frameworks to assist community college leaders.

The definition of *leaders* should not be limited to college presidents, as leadership is disbursed throughout the organization. The president sets the

tone for ethical and fair behavior, but others throughout the organization are also in positions of influence, from trustees who set policy to vice presidents, deans, directors, department chairs, and committee chairs who make important decisions every day. Ethical values are tested frequently, especially for those in such positions of influence. For that reason, it is important to think seriously about ethical values before one is faced with difficult and ambiguous dilemmas that are all too common. The contributors to this volume have done an excellent job of providing the structure for current and future leaders to examine their values and decide how they would respond to the many case scenarios.

In her chapter, Desna Wallin points out that in 2005, the board of directors of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), upon the recommendation of the AACC Presidents Academy Executive Committee, adopted a code of ethics for community college chief executive officers (available at www.aacc.nche.edu). Colleges should consider adopting similar ethics statements for employees and for trustees. Of course, ethics statements do not guarantee ethical behavior, but they do serve to remind leaders that ethical considerations should guide their behavior.

I have always believed that leaders should clearly state expectations for behavior. They also need to create a safe environment for employees to communicate concerns and problems without fear of retribution. Today's community colleges should be environments in which people are involved in decisions and are encouraged to take acceptable risks. Honesty and openness should be very high values for community college leaders. Judgments should be fair, dispassionate, and equitable—and in alignment with the institution's mission rather than with a conflicting self- or special interest.

As contributor Gary Davis points out, Rotary International's Four-Way Test presents a useful guide for decision-making. The story behind the Four-Way Test is instructive: Herbert Taylor was in line for the presidency of the Chicago-based Jewel Tea Company when he was asked to join the Club Aluminum Products Company to save it from bankruptcy. The challenge of rescuing the troubled company was an opportunity too appealing for him to turn down. He left his secure position at the tea company to take the presidency of the aluminum products company in 1932—the height of the Great Depression. Taylor knew he could revive the company only if he had the full commitment of his employees and only if their decisions and behavior were beyond reproach. He developed a four-question test (noted in Chapter 13) for ethical behavior that personnel were asked to memorize

and that became the standard for every aspect of the company's business. Taylor credited his test for the gradual turnaround of the company. In 1943, Rotary International adopted Taylor's Four-Way Test, and it has since been translated into more than 100 languages.

I would like to think Taylor was right in his belief that businesses, institutions, organizations, and individuals guided by ethical principles will be the successful ones. If that logic is valid, the current and future community college leaders who are guided by the thoughtful information found in this book will be successful leaders.

George R. Boggs

President and CEO

American Association of Community Colleges

Preface

No institutional mission in or out of higher education is more rewarding than the mission of the community college. Few people in or out of higher education, however, face as many daily challenges in pursuing their institutional mission as do community college faculty, staff, presidents, and trustees. They are charged with educating the most diverse student body ever to enter postsecondary education's physical and virtual doors, and they are challenged to do so in the face of soaring costs and languishing budgets, ever more oversight from external agencies, and too few hours in the day to keep on top of it all.

These challenges—and many more—test the leadership skills of community college faculty, staff, presidents, and trustees. Many of these are excellent leaders who embrace such challenges as opportunities to redefine their institutions (and thereby contemporary higher education) so that they can effectively serve the ever-changing needs of their students. The very best of these faculty, staff, presidents, and trustees do so while maintaining a constant commitment to the daily practice of ethical leadership. They are the extraordinary community college leaders because they are the ethical leaders.

Ethical Leadership in the Community College: Bridging Theory and Daily Practice addresses the importance of ethical leadership and explores real-world applications so that community college leaders can develop the institutional savvy to be extraordinary ethical leaders when the avalanche of day-to-day responsibilities threatens to bury ethical intent. This collection of essays is divided into two sections: The first section provides brief theoretical foundations for ethical leadership and relates these foundations to daily practice; the second section explores in-depth daily practice for these ethical leaders.

The first section, Foundations of Ethical Leadership, begins with two essays by community college philosophy professors. In "Virtue Theory and Leadership Theory: Cross-Cultural Models for Administrators and Faculty," Richard B. Benner, Sr. examines virtue theories and theories of leadership drawn from diverse cultures in order to suggest a leadership model

that contains guidelines for faculty and administrators who share in the goals and responsibilities of the community college. In "Plato's *Republic* and the Ethical Leader," Gordy Wax argues that ethical leaders are concerned about what is best for the organization; thus, they examine their decisions in light of institutional mission.

Next, in "Considerations of Power, Influence, and Cultural Norms for the Ethical Community College Leader," I explore the responsibility of faculty, administrators, and presidents for being aware of their relative positional power and for using this power to establish and enforce cultural norms that promote ethical behavior; in turn, they have a responsibility to act when made aware of cultural norms that exist beyond their primary sphere of positional power that are inconsistent with promoting ethical behavior. Desna L. Wallin follows this chapter with "Ethical Leadership: The Role of the President," in which she argues that community college presidents must set examples of integrity, fairness, openness, and consideration, because those at the top determine the tone for the entire institution. She develops this idea by exploring the meaning of ethical leadership, mythologies of ethical presidential leadership, ethical issues challenging presidents, and principles of ethical presidential leadership.

The first section ends with chapters by Gary W. Davis and by Sharon K. Anderson, Clifford P. Harbour, and Timothy Gray Davies. In "Why Presidents and Trustees Should Care About Ethics," Davis demonstrates that presidents and trustees must regularly make difficult decisions, distinguish ethical from legal obligations in making such decisions, and acknowledge that the ethical dilemmas they face do not yield to easy solutions. Anderson, Harbour, and Davies, in "Professional Ethical Identity Development and Community College Leadership," identify and explain the need for a greater commitment to professional ethical identity development in community college leadership initiatives. They conceptualize professional ethical identity development as a consequence of the successful resolution of the tension between the traditional values of the community college and the personal values developed over an individual leader's professional lifetime, and they show how professional ethical identity development may be incorporated into graduate leadership programs, statewide leadership academies, and institutional professional development sessions.

The second section, *Daily Practice of Ethical Leadership*, begins with chapters by Beth Richardson-Mitchell, Linda Lucas, and David E. Hardy.

In "Ethical Leadership: A Faculty Obligation," Richardson-Mitchell reflects on her vision of the community college faculty leader who communicates to students what it means to be a whole person, practices ethical leadership, and engages students in character development exercises. In "The Interface of Ethics and Courage in the Life of a Chief Academic Officer," Lucas uses paradigms of justice and caring to explore several real-life scenarios. She frames the issues and identifies questions for each scenario as well as the criteria for ethical decision-making. Hardy follows with "Threats to Ethical Leadership: The Hubris of Absolutism, the Politics of Affinity-Based Decision-Making, and the Development of Unethical Followers," in which he uses a constructed case study approach to discuss the danger inherent in absolutist ethical posturing. He concludes with a discussion of the limitations of various professional codes and with suggestions for ways that community college leaders can develop a personal ethical creed.

Next, in "Leading From the Head and the Heart," Susan K. Chappell uses concrete scenarios to explore ethical dilemmas involving conflict between what the leader knows or feels to be right and his or her sense that acting in this way might somehow put the welfare of another human being in jeopardy. Sherry Stout-Stewart follows with "Transformational Leadership and Ethical Dilemmas in Community Colleges," in which she uses several scenarios to develop her thesis that leading with commitment and having the ability to make and support decisions are the trademarks of an effective and successful leader. She also emphasizes that with the number of projected retirements in the community college system, many women who perceive themselves as transformational leaders will inevitably assume the role of CEO.

The second section ends with chapters by Louis S. Albert, Gary W. Davis, and by Clifford P. Harbour, Sharon K. Anderson, and Timothy Gray Davies. In his chapter, "Presidential Support for Civic Engagement and Leadership Education," Albert contends that community college presidents must exemplify the highest forms of professional and ethical behavior and that elected officials, community leaders, faculty, staff, and students want their presidents to be role models of ethical behavior. He also emphasizes that ethical presidents have an obligation to strive for student learning that pays attention to the student as both a future and productive member of the workforce and as an ethical and responsible citizen. Davis, in "A Guide to Ethical Decision-Making by Presidents and Boards,"

builds on his chapter in the first section by moving from the fact that trustees and presidents need a system for ethical decision-making to eight simple questions they can use to make ethical decisions, with each question allowing them to analyze the ethical content of their decisions. Finally, in “The Consequences of Compromised Ethical Identity Development in Community College Leadership,” Harbour, Anderson, and Davies build on their first essay by using three vignettes to describe and explain strategies that reflect an inappropriate balance between personal ethics of origin and the organizational values for community college leaders. They propose an organizational process for assisting leaders in developing an integration strategy that promotes respect for personal ethics of origin and the critical values of community college education.

David M. Hellmich

September 2006

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