

## **Jane Govoni, Valerie Wright, Calista Koval, and Cindy Lee** **A Values-Driven, Values Infused Education Curriculum**

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Jane Govoni and Valerie Wright are Assistant Professors in the Department of Education. Dr. Govoni is the ESOL Coordinator and Dr. Wright is the Reading Specialist. Dr. Koval is an Associate Professor in the Department of Education with a specialization in Reading and Diversity. Dr. Lee is an Associate Professor of Social Work in the Department of Social Services. These faculty members, along with their colleagues, in the School of Education and Social Services have begun to fully integrate the six Saint Leo University core values into their curricula through the initiatives of a Flagship Program and strong administrative support for a values-driven, values infused Education Program.

### Abstract

Saint Leo, a university founded in 1889 by the monks of the Order of Saint Benedict, began to examine their mission statement and twenty-three Benedictine values approximately five years ago. A committee was formed to select and define institutional core values. Two years later, six of the Benedictine values were selected to articulate the University's Core Values of excellence, community, integrity, respect, stewardship, and personal development. In 2001, the Education Department lead the way in infusing these six core values into their curriculum. The infusion of the required state standards, rigorous academic courses, and university core values provides a foundation for pre-service teachers to build on their knowledge, leadership skills, personal beliefs and values, as well as a support system in working with K-6 students. It is a premier program based on the historical overview of values in education and connects student coursework directly to Saint Leo's Benedictine heritage and core values. The pre-service teachers are beginning to live the core values, and extend them into Florida's classrooms. The next step for the Education department is to fully operationalize the core values in all course work and to begin to assess the entire process. Preliminary data are presented on student awareness and knowledge of the university core values prior to entering the education major.

### Historical Overview of Values

According to Krebs (2001), "concern over the moral condition of American society is prompting a reevaluation of the school's role in teaching values, a reevaluation that is now being conducted in every educational venue—public, nonpublic, primary, secondary, and higher education" (p. 14). Of course, this is not news for the American public; in fact, it has been a continuous theme throughout our nation's history that we "have accorded to the schools to strengthen our republic by fostering moral and civic virtue in youth (Leming, 2001, p. 62). The question remains as to how schools should choose values and be actively involved in teaching them. Nieto (2003) reminds us "teachers do not leave their values at the door when they enter their classrooms—teachers bring their

autobiographies with them: their experiences, identities, values, beliefs, attitudes, hang-ups, biases, wishes, dreams, and hopesâ€œ (p.24). Inlay (2003) confirms the unintentional teaching of values in the classroom through respect for each other, social responsibility, assessment, decision making, discipline and the fostering of individual student growth. Values and dispositions in the classroom support effective academic teaching, as well as moral and ethical development. As Weissbourd (2003) explains, schools should be â€œcreating strong communities, helping teachers manage students with behavior problems, increasing adultsâ€™ capacity for reflection (which will) certainly serve academic goalsâ€œ (p. 11). Therefore, the development, infusion, and incarnation of values across curricula is a practical approach in education, especially in light of the conflict, violence, and seemingly lack of respect in todayâ€™s society.

Throughout history, our schools have varied their focus in education and the terms used to describe them. Prior to the 1830â€™s, moral development was the center of educatorsâ€™ attention. During this time, schools were used as a means to assist the church in its mission to guarantee the salvation of its youth, and as a way to ensure social control (Leming, 2001). There was also a push for homogeneity due to an increasingly diverse population. Therefore, another task of the schools was to unify and instill similar morals, behavior, and habits into the student population.

Continuing with this view into the late 1800s and early 1900s, Americaâ€™s influx of immigrants continued to grow. It was viewed as a time for schools to socialize everyone into a common national culture, in addition to increasing moral development. â€œThe American people were very receptive to the idea that developing internalized moral restraints was essential if youth were to develop into diligent workers, responsible citizens, and virtuous men and womenâ€œ (Leming, 2001, p. 65).

Unfortunately, this soon became much too difficult for the schools to accomplish as Americaâ€™s cultural and religious diversity as well as urbanization began to increase tremendously. The schools moved toward character development with its youth, â€œwith an emphasis on obedience and respect for authorityâ€œ (Leming, 2001, p. 66). This emphasis on character development continued into the first three decades of the twentieth century. During this time character education was deemed especially important due to the breakup of family structure, crime, political corruption, and the decline of religion (McKown, 1935).

Moving into the 1970s and 1980s, the focus shifted back to values and moral development, and then to character education again in the 1990s. According to Lundstrom (1999), teaching character and values reappeared in the school communities; yet, the dilemma was still about whose values to teach.

Values education is known at the university level, though according to Dobrin (2001), â€œreal moral lessons are not those found in the syllabus but discovered in the demeanor of the staff and the structures and procedures of the school itselfâ€œ (p. 275). Morrison (2001) further states, â€œthe university has always taught (by which I mean examined, evaluated, posited, reinforced) valuesâ€œ (p. 273). Initiatives such as volunteerism and

service learning are popping up on campuses across the country. Billing (2000) reported four benefits to service learning: academic learning, civic responsibility, personal and social development, and opportunities for career exploration. At Saint Leo University the active engagement of service learning projects are integrated into practicum courses for all students in education. These projects allow pre-service teachers to implement the university core values as they design, implement, and evaluate a plan to meet the needs of students in the K-6 classroom.

## Saint Leo University

Saint Leo University is a coeducational liberal arts-based university located in West Central Florida, thirty miles north of Tampa with fourteen regional campuses located in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia as well as the Center for On-Line Learning. It is the sixth largest provider of higher education to military personnel in the United States. Current enrollment is over 10,000 students with approximately 1,000 at the main university campus. Saint Leo changed from a college to university in 1999. It has had an interesting journey to reach this status as following the Civil War, Thomas Dunn was granted a parcel of land in central Florida for his service. Dunn, a devout Catholic, decided to use the land to create three planned communities: San Antonio, St. Joseph, and St. Leo. The Benedictine Abbey of St. Vincent in Pennsylvania sent monks to start a church and school. In order to erect buildings, the monks sent oranges to St. John's Abbey in Minnesota and the Abbey sent back the needed materials. Hence, Saint Leo is often called "The School That Oranges Built." The current student services building, deChantal Hall was the orange processing plant. Saint Leo was founded in 1889 as an all-male school offering a Master of Accounting degree. During its history, it became a two-year military academy for boys, the majority of whom were from Central and South America. In 1920, the college was phased out and became a preparatory school for boys until 1959 when it again began to offer Associates' degrees. It eventually evolved into a four-year co-ed Liberal Arts College. Facing a lack of resources in the Benedictine community, the college was placed under a lay Board of Trustees in 1969. The adherence to Benedictine tradition began to wane. In 1997, Arthur F. Kirk, Jr. became President of the College and in 1998 asked the college community to examine its mission. Every employee of the College met and conveyed their ideas to a committee that wrote a draft of a mission statement and presented it to the entire community. This process continued until there was consensus on the mission statement of today. Once this was in place, another committee was formed to determine the congruent Benedictine values. The same process was used as that for the mission statement. Of the twenty-three Benedictine values identified, consensus was reached on six. Again, the process was used to operationally define these six core values for the university. The six core values are described below.

## The University Core Values

### Excellence

The institution is an educational enterprise where individually and collectively everyone works hard to ensure the development of the character, learning the skills, and assimilation

of the knowledge essential to become morally responsible leaders. The success of the University depends upon a conscientious commitment to its mission, vision, and goals.

### Community

The University develops hospitable Christian learning communities to foster a spirit of belonging, unity, and interdependence based on mutual trust and respect to create socially responsible environments that challenge its members to listen, to learn, to change, and to serve.

### Respect

The University values all individuals' unique talents, respects their dignity, and strives to foster a commitment to excellence. The community's strength depends on the unity and diversity of its people, on the free exchange of ideas, and on learning, living, and working harmoniously.

### Personal Development

The development of every person's mind, spirit, and body for a balanced life is stressed in that all members demonstrate a commitment to personal development to help strengthen the character of its community.

### Responsible Stewardship

The spirit of service to employ resources to university and community development is fostered. It is essential to optimize and apply all of the resources of the community to fulfill the institution's mission and goals.

### Integrity

The commitment to the university to excellence demands that its members live its mission. The faculty, staff, and students pledge to be honest, just, and consistent in word and deed.

### Initial Steps in Integrating the Institution's Core Values in the Curriculum

The Education curriculum is designed around and infused with the institution's core values and this is what truly distinguishes our program from others in the state of Florida. Each curriculum guide focuses on one or more of the university core values and shows how the value(s) enhances the study of the specific course content. Each faculty member provided input in matching the core value(s) with the corresponding curriculum guides. Based on course content, projects, class activities, and readings, the core values were executively integrated into each course.

At the annual department meeting in the Fall 2002, faculty members at the University Campus and across Centers introduced themselves by sharing their plan to infuse the core

value(s) in their teaching, working with other colleagues, and interacting with students and staff. The overall intention of a values-driven, values infused program is not only to add the core values into course work, but also to practice the values in our daily lives. Each faculty member developed an approach to implementing the core values within courses, such as through class discussions on why values were selected for a course, brainstorming individual interpretations of values, mind mapping of the role of values in society, written reflections connecting values and course content, analysis of case studies that require ethical decision-making, lesson plans requiring a focus on value knowledge/ prosocial skills, opportunities for service learning projects, evaluations of students' teaching performance in practica and internships using ethics criteria such as "appropriate response to negative or positive student to student comments," assisting with the creation of learning communities among students' peers through group projects and group emails, and writing a philosophy of education paper that includes a section on students' commitment to character or moral education.

In the Department of Social Services, every curriculum guide and therefore each course shows how the core values are integrated into syllabi and classroom teachings. For example, in the Human Behavior Perspective course "Integrity" is the core value that has been integrated. The class works together to break down the definition of "Integrity" and provides examples of how Saint Leo University as an institution has demonstrated this value and then each student explains how they are demonstrating this value in their own personal lives. One way the students are asked to think about "Integrity" is to intentionally think about the line they will not cross when it comes to being honest and/ or dishonest.

Since it is our first year of infusion, we realize that there are areas to improve upon such as further negotiations on selecting the most appropriate core values for courses developing a product that serves the needs of all University sites, and accurately documenting and assessing the reality of our values-driven, values infused program. On the other hand, the strengths that we have seen based on our initial efforts include continuous administrative commitment and involvement in the process, faculty and staff willing to serve on committees, and a University-wide willingness to see our infusion program become a full reality.

#### Pre-Questionnaire Results

Prior to the implementation of the core values in the Department of Education, a questionnaire was given to all juniors entering the Education program in order to document preliminary data on the experience, knowledge, and learning of the six university core values based on general education courses. A list of the core values was given to the students and they were asked to define in their own words each of the core values. The results are as follows:

Core Value and % of Students who Did Not Define Value

Community, 10%

Respect, 6%

Integrity,23%  
Responsible Stewardship,42%  
Personal Development,13%  
Excellence,6%

Perhaps the high percentage of students who did not define "Responsible Stewardship" is due to the fact that most students were not aware of the term. Some felt that their definition might not be correct, and preferred to omit writing a personal definition. The lack of students not defining "Integrity" is unclear. The students were asked to check the three university core values that they believed to be most important for a citizen. The value of "Respect" was reported by 97% of the participants. 68% chose "Integrity" and 65% reported "Community" as an important value for a citizen.

The students reported "Respect" (97%), followed by "Personal Development" (52%) and "Excellence" (48%) as the three most important core values for a teacher. In selecting the top three values that should be emphasized in the classroom as a teacher, the same three values were selected but varied as to percentage by students; 65% chose "Respect," 23% "Excellence," and 10% "Personal Development." In looking at the university core values where more emphasis is placed upon in one's daily life, the students primarily chose "Respect" (48%), followed by "Personal Development" (32%) and "Excellence" (26%). It is important to note the consistent reporting of "Respect, Excellence, and Personal Development" in the student survey results. It is obvious that these three core values are of importance to our students in the classroom as well as in daily living. Finally, in providing data to show how much the university core values have been integrated into the students' general education program, 48% strongly agreed that the values were integrated into the program and 48% believed that the core values were somewhat integrated. This is a good response rate when considering the integration process was only in its second year when these students entered as freshman.

Overall, an in-depth integration and assessment of our six core values is a goal that the Department of Education at Saint Leo University is sincerely committed to seeing fully developed in the near future. The efforts, time, and commitment thus far by all faculty have been phenomenal. Support by other institutions, such as the Wisconsin schools of Alverno College and St. Mary's, along with the Values Institute in Tallahassee have greatly assisted us in our process. The 10 Principles and Practices for Promoting Character Development in College has also been a supportive guide for our university. We plan on being a model program for other universities and colleges in the upcoming years.

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