

Ethics in Business

By CARRIE JOHNSON

Students Get Hands-On View

While staggering ethical lapses in business grab headlines, sound ethical practices rarely garner much coverage. Four years ago, the Ethics in Business Awards were developed to change that. Created through a partnership between the Austin Samaritan Center and St. Edward's University, the awards honor businesses, nonprofits and individuals who practice the highest ethical principles in the course of daily business.

Students from St. Edward's complete preliminary interviews that help the awards committee select semifinalists. Next, student and alumni teams — primarily from the MS in Organizational Leadership and Ethics program — complete assessments of all semifinalists. The teams research and evaluate the organizations' and individuals' conduct based on five principles adapted from *The Ethical Imperative* by John Dalla Costa: respect life, be fair, be honest, strive for justice and honor the environment. Then, students compile a report so that the awards committee can select the winners.

Last year, St. Edward's contributed more than 3,000 hours of research, analysis, training and support for the awards.

"Students get to see how real businesses deal with real ethical issues when they bump against real business problems," said **Linda Ford**, assistant professor of Management and director of Ethics in Business research. "The students also practice critical analysis in a real-world setting, so they better understand the processes for organizational assessment."

Jennifer Hornick, MSOLE '05, agrees. "As an awards researcher, I applied the leadership and ethics principles I've learned as an MSOLE student in real life and conducted hands-on qualitative research — something I had never done before."

Hornick also found it "uplifting" to attend the Oct. 19 awards ceremony, where Grande Communications, Goodwill Industries of Central Texas and Marian Dozer, chair of the Board of Austaco, were announced as winners.

Carol Warkoczewski, MSOLE '05, who led the research team that assessed nonprofit winner Goodwill Industries, took the experience one step further. In January, she and Ford provided a post-awards consultation about the ways Goodwill Industries could broaden its own ethical best practices. The duo made an hour-and-a-half presentation during Goodwill's quarterly leadership meeting and facilitated a discussion about their recommendations. "After we left, the attendees continued the discussion and are now implementing some of the ideas from our meeting," Warkoczewski said.

Ford and a handful of students have already begun coordinating with the Samaritan Center for the 2005 Ethics in Business Awards. New this summer is a three-credit-hour course, Building Ethical Organizations (MSLE 6314, which is cross-listed as MGMT 6399, Applied Ethics), that will allow student researchers to earn credit for their efforts.

"The university's involvement with the Ethics in Business Awards is all about the integration of learning and service,"



TAYLOR JONES

Carol Warkoczewski, MSOLE '05 (left), and Assistant Professor Linda Ford with Gerald Davis and Frank Curtis (right) of Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, which won a 2005 Ethics in Business Award.

explained Ford. "Having a full-semester course ensures that getting the assessment done doesn't overshadow the teaching and learning that are essential for our students' experience."

"Serving on the research team takes a huge commitment of time on top of the rest of the students' course work and their professional and family lives. Offering course credit acknowledges the learning that takes place."

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