12-8-2011

Reporting Illegal and Unethical Activities

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Reporting illegal and unethical activities

Dec. 8, 2011

Dear Colleagues:

This has been a fall rife with scandal and underlying tragedy for individuals connected with two of our sister institutions—Penn State and Syracuse. I write to share my views and opinions about the shortcomings illustrated in those situations. This is a topic of discussion and deep concern among all of us on this and every campus in the nation.

In reflecting on these sad and appalling national stories, it is important to reaffirm what I believe are the core responsibilities of every citizen in our University and broader communities. Above and beyond any misplaced desire to protect or preserve the reputation of an individual or an organization, it is imperative that we all remember our primary obligation is to protect and defend those among us who are most vulnerable. In the long run, our reputation and strength as an institution will only be enhanced by our commitment to come to the aid of victims and discipline any individuals who take advantage of the positions of trust in which we have placed them.

If you encounter a situation in which you see someone being victimized, or you encounter something you believe to be a crime, call our Department of Public Safety. Do this first. Afterward you can inform your supervisor. Our public safety officers are trained to determine the facts of any incident. Simply call (269) 387-5555 to alert the proper officials.

As is sometimes the case in any large organization, there may be a time when you hesitate to report a crime, because you worry that you or your position may be vulnerable. Much earlier this year, we decided to enhance our ability to receive information from faculty and staff about possible wrongdoing in a way that would address such concerns. We now have a contract with a highly respected company called EthicsPoint that provides an anonymous website to report possible criminal or ethical violations. There is also a phone line that can be used to report wrongdoing. We had intended to publicize this option after the coming holiday break, but because of the timely nature of this tool and a strong statement issued by our Board of Trustees today, I want you to know the system is already in place.

If you feel the need to maintain anonymity and report a situation that is legally or ethically wrong, you may do by going to wmuhotline.ethicspoint.com, select Make a Report in the top right menu and follow the prompts. To use the phone line, call (855) 247-3145. I suspect—and hope—we may never need this tool, but am mindful that, at nearly 30,000, we are a community the size of a small city and we might have someone who does not meet our exacting standards.

Thank you in advance for your commitment to ensure every thing we do is accomplished using the strongest moral, legal and ethical standards.

Best regards,

John M. Dunn, President