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## Ethics in Academia

Diether H. Haenicke  
*Western Michigan University*

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### WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Haenicke, Diether H., "Ethics in Academia" (1988). *Center for the Study of Ethics in Society Papers*. 2.  
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Western Michigan University

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# Center for the Study of Ethics in Society



## ETHICS IN ACADEMIA

Diether H. Haenicke  
Western Michigan University

Papers Presented to the Center

Vol. 1, No. 2

January 1988

**Center for the Study of Ethics in Society  
Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008**

The purpose of WMU's Center for the Study of Ethics is to encourage and support research, teaching, and service to the university and community in areas of applied and professional ethics. These areas include, but are not restricted to: business, education, engineering, government, health and human services, law, media, medicine, science and technology.

Founded 1985

Phone (616) 383-1657

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## **ETHICS IS ACADEMIA**

**Diether H. Haenicke**

**President**

**Western Michigan University**

**This paper is based on a presentation made to the WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, April 4, 1986.**



## ETHICS IN ACADEMIA

During the last decade, philosophy departments in the United States have witnessed an amazing renaissance in one of their teaching areas: ethics. Courses have been sprouting up in business ethics, medical ethics, and ethics and the legal professions and students have been returning to our philosophy departments some of which had, for a long time, shown considerable disdain for such "applied" aspects of their discipline. The renewed focus on ethics in the professions was essentially established by members of the academic professoriate, not by business people demanding business ethics courses in the academic curriculum, nor by doctors and lawyers. This is not amazing. It has, in my observation, been a long standing practice of the academic professoriate to lecture others, but to refrain from lecturing its own constituency. Although we have begun talking about ethics, I have not yet seen any of our colleagues lecture about ethics in academia. If there is a need for a reconsideration of ethical questions in the professions, why spare our own? After all, through well-established processes judges get removed from the bench; lawyers face disbarment by their peers and judicial commissions; police officers have internal investigation procedures that may lead to dismissal; and medical doctors can, and do, lose their licenses for violations of the ethical canon of their profession. This "self-policing" is executed through

established boards of professional peers, through peer review mechanisms that view the practitioner with critical eyes, and which have the power to stop the practitioner from practicing.

It is unfortunate that a similar process or mechanism does not yet exist in our profession. Who has ever seen tenured university professors removed from their positions in the university as a result of a peer review process or by action of their professional association? If we are to consider the AAUP as the professional organization that represents the interest of American academe, then we can state that this association has never removed any one of its members from the profession nor suggested that this be done. The AAUP, traditionally, has seen its role rather as defending its members against public scrutiny and disciplinary action. This has become even more evident in recent years when the AAUP developed into a collective bargaining agent, a faculty union for the professoriate. There is, to the best of my knowledge, not a single case known in the history of the AAUP that involves even a reprimand of one of its members for ethical or professional misconduct, not to speak of disbarment. In this regard we, as a professoriate, look very different from other professions.

Why this striking difference from other professional organizations? Do we not have colleagues who abuse their positions? Are we more ethical than other professions? Or are we able to hide too easily behind the shield of academic freedom?



fact, the sexual harassment policies adopted by most American institutions of higher learning were adopted fairly recently, in many cases not without considerable opposition and only because of strong pressure brought upon the academy by the feminist movement. Fortunately, the question of what constitutes sexual harassment is, by now, fairly well defined; although in some quarters this definition is only reluctantly accepted and then not adhered to in every aspect. But beyond the question of what constitutes actual sexual harassment, another equally fundamental question is still being debated. This question is: Should professors have sexual relationships with their students at all? The medical profession has answered this question for itself: Physicians are not to have sex with their patients, although one observes with some astonishment that there are psychiatrists who consider sexual relationships with their patients as part of their "treatment." But we must state that while some few practitioners in medicine seem to have divergent opinions on this matter, the profession as a whole has taken a clear stand.

Not so in the academic world. True, some universities have developed papers and policies on this question. These policies correctly point out that any assumption of truly "consensual" sexual relationships between students and their professors is always, at best, questionable. Even if a student consents to a sexual relationship, the student remains





about and condoned the situation, they might be treated unequally with regard to their professional duties and assignments when compared to those female members of the graduate student population who had sexual relationships with the chairman. The department which, by the way, taught ethics courses, refused to act on the complaint.

II. Money. By and large, university professors are underpaid in comparison to other professions in which the years of training and the intellectual challenges of such training are comparable. Therefore, the lure of additional income is great for academics and, in many cases, a simple economic necessity. In recent years, universities have been challenged by legislatures and the business community to become more helpful in developing economic opportunities for the regions in which they are located and beyond. As a consequence, large segments of university research have taken a more applied, practical bent. Research in many of the merging "promising" fields, is now strongly oriented toward applicable results with the attendant economic benefits to the researcher. While the general trend to assist economic development is quite commendable, one has to be aware of the considerable pitfalls accompanying this trend.

Universities and industry work for different motives and purposes, all proper and honorable, but often at odds with each other. Universities, in their

[illegible]

assistants on research projects only after they have been cleared with particular industrial firms. A graduate student known to me recently claimed she was ordered to change her thesis topic after she had put two and half years' work into it because it did not lead to a commercially applicable product. All these instances, and these may be the crassest, raise, of course, significant ethical questions about the relationship between professors and their students, and about collegial relationships in general.

Furthermore, we might easily find the research interests of the university determined by industry. It is easily conceivable that a particular industry might tell a university professor what kind of product to develop for marketing, and the university research (plus the employment of GAs depending on this research) would then follow that direction. I know, for instance, of the development of computer games as a master's project in a computer graphics department. Needless to say, computer games are highly marketable; whereas a more basic research question might not have been. Because of financial considerations the findings in our labs might not be shared with the public, although they are of benefit to the public. Former Yale President Giammatti stated correctly that we have a right to be sure that patentable solutions will be fully and beneficially used, and that knowledge with a potential benefit to our society at large will reach the public in a timely and useful fashion. I have heard fears raised by















for the university and its members, and we must develop not only the mechanisms but also the courage to hold all practitioners of our profession to these standards.

Dr. Diether Haenicke, a professor of foreign languages and linguistics, has been president of Western Michigan University since 1985.

Haenicke holds a Ph.D. (*magna cum laude*) from the University of Munich (1962). He also attended the Universities of Marburg, Gottingen, and Freiburg (Germany) where he studies Psychology, History, and Literature. He taught on the graduate faculties of Wayne State University and The Ohio State University and has over 100 publications, including five books, on topics in romantic literature, modern poetry, graduate education, foreign study, and academic management.

Haenicke has served in many administrative roles including Dean of the College of Humanities at Ohio State and as Academic Vice President and Provost at Wayne State University and Ohio State University.

He was a Fulbright Scholar twice and is an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa and four other national Honor Societies. He holds an honorary doctorate from Central Michigan University.

Haenicke met his wife Carol, a native Detroit, in Munich, Germany. They have lived in the United States since 1963, first in Detroit (1963-1978) and later in Columbus, Ohio (1978-1985). They settled in Kalamazoo in the summer of 1985. They have two children.





## PROGRAMS--Winter 1988

JAN 22 ETHICS IN ACADEMIA: A PANEL DISCUSSION

3:00 PM Faculty Lounge, Bernhard Student Center

•Mary Ann Bunda, Educational Leadership

•George Dennison, Provost

•Neil Kent, Psychology

•Shirley VanHoeven, Communication

•Irene Vasquez, Religion

FEB 9 SOVIET BIOETHICS

7:30 PM 3770 Knauss

•Richard DeGeorge, University of Kansas

FEB 10 INSIDER-TRADING

7:30 PM 3770 Knauss

•Richard DeGeorge, University of Kansas

FEB 18 ON THE MORAL PRESENCE OF OUR PAST

8:00 PM President's Lounge, Hicks Center, Kalamazoo Center

•Gerald Postema, University of North Carolina

FEB 19 JUSTICE, INTEREST, AND INTEGRITY

10:00 AM 3020 Friedman Hall

- Gerald Postema, University of North Carolina



## ETHICS IN ORGANIZATIONS--Winter 1988

JAN 14 ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE: THE CHALLENGE  
OF AIDS--A PANEL DISCUSSION

7:30 PM Fetzer Business Development Center

- Shirley Bach, General Studies Science Area
- Donald Batts, The Upjohn Company
- John Hartline, Bronson Methodist Hospital
- Michael Manty, NWL Control Systems
- Kelli Sweet, Kalamazoo Public Schools

FEB 29 CRISIS COMMUNICATION

7:30 PM Fetzer Business Development Center  
•L. James Lovejoy, Gerber Products, Inc.

MAR 31 MORAL RULES AND MORAL IDEALS: A  
CRITIQUE OF THE GOLDEN RULE

7:30 PM Fetzer Business Development Center  
•Bernard Gert, Dartmouth College

APR 28 Program to be announced.

7:30 PM Fetzer Business Development Center

\*This series is supported by a grant from the Kalamazoo Consortium for Higher Education.

### \*Brief Description of Project

The WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society has received a grant from the Kalamazoo Consortium for Higher Education for a project entitled, "Ethics in Organizations." This project will consist of a seminar series on ethical issues faced by private, public, profit, and nonprofit organizations.

The intent of the seminar series is to develop a sustained dialogue about ethical concerns which are, to some extent, common to all organizations, whether private, public, profit or nonprofit.

The Planning Committee for the series consists of Project Director Michael Pritchard, Philosophy, WMU; Marie Hungerman, Philosophy, Nazareth College; James Jaksa, Communication, WMU; Paul Knudstrup, Fetzer Business Development Center, WMU; Wade Robison, Philosophy, Kalamazoo College; Pamela Rooney, College of Business, WMU; and Kathy Smith, Philosophy, KVCC.



## MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Ethics Center is open to anyone interested. There is no membership fee.

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Please enroll me as a member of the WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Institutional Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

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Send to: Center for Study of Ethics in Society  
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Kalamazoo, MI 49008

During 1987-88, the Center plans to publish five papers previously presented to the Center. Distribution will be free to members. In the future, the Center plans to publish four presentations a year.

Lithograph on Front Cover: The Oaklands, Western Michigan University

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