

# Guest Ethics Column: Smith: Leading with devotion to ethics

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In an age of transparency, responsibility and accountability, ethics and a devotion to ethical principles become enabling factors. Thus, whether in school or serving as a professional in a firm, institution, or organization, it behooves us to become acquainted with relevant codes of ethics and conduct.

As examples, I chose a set of firms, institutions and organizations that proudly proclaim their codes of ethics and conduct, including Hewlett Packard or HP Company (<http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/globalcitizenship/ethics/>), Texas Tech University ([http://www.depts.ttu.edu/officialpublications/catalog/\\_EthicalPrinciples.php](http://www.depts.ttu.edu/officialpublications/catalog/_EthicalPrinciples.php)) and the University of California (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/manual/appendix4.html>), the Council of International Schools (which accredits international K-12 schools and facilitates partnerships among more than 500 member schools and greater than 450 colleges and universities on five continents) (<http://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=232> and <http://www.cois.org/page.cfm?p=309>), The Forum on Education Abroad (<http://www.forumea.org/standards-index.cfm>), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (<http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code.asp>), and the Institute of Internal Auditors (<http://www.theiia.org/guidance/standards-and-guidance/ippf/code-of-ethics/>).

Reading through these codes offers insights into what leaders consider as ethical principles and practices across a wide swath of endeavors. Among the most prominent concepts are the following:

- Respecting different cultures and customs and the dignity of others, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or national origin, color, creed, ancestry, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, social class, political affiliation or economic condition
- Treating others fairly
- Protecting free speech, privacy and the practice of one's religion
- Ensuring cooperation and communication in all relations with others including keeping open channels of communication
- Holding employees, volunteers and organizational entities responsible and accountable for behavior and actions, individually and collectively
- Honoring individual employees or volunteers rights to fair and proper performance reviews, with due process guaranteed, including opportunities for appeals
- Ensuring truthfulness and transparency in individual and collective actions

- Promoting life-long learning, creativity and innovation, and honoring intellectual integrity and honesty
- Abiding by federal, state and local law and regulations
- Promoting sustainability
- Defending individual intellectual property rights, where appropriate
- Avoiding or managing conflicts of interest and commitment
- Insuring consistency among ethical principles and organizational policies and practices
- Striving for honor and excellence in individual and collective efforts

Although the above list may seem boringly proscriptive, its contents are taken seriously in the vast majority of firms, institutions and organizations of democratic countries. Thus, the take home message for leading with a devotion to ethics is this: Understand what is expected of you ethically in every milieu that life's journey takes you throughout your career.