Pursuit of Excellence

Statement of Ethical Principles

Texas Tech University Ethics Center 2011
“Texas Tech University is committed to achieving **excellence** in all aspects of its community. We expect this in the expertise and performance of our faculty, staff, and administration, as well as the continuing education of our students. A high standard of professionalism, including opportunities for professional contact and continuous growth, is expected of our faculty, students, staff, and administrators."
The university is committed to academic integrity and to the effective and just implementation of a system designed to preserve and protect it. The university intends to be a model of excellence, following best practices in its professional work, displaying the highest standards in its scholarly work, and offering venues to showcase national and international examples of achievement.”

Texas Tech University
Statement of Ethical Principles
Pursuit of Excellence

What is Excellence?
External & internal definitions

Areas of Excellence
Academics
Teaching
Sports, Community & Organization

TTU’s Statement of Ethical Principles

Pursuing Excellence
Strategic planning
Benchmarking performance

Intellectual & moral virtues
What Is Excellence

**Excellence is not a thing but a state of being**

The state of excellence doesn’t usually just happen to us, like hunger or thirst do. We can pursue excellence *by our own actions*.

**Excellence is also about being aware of the consequences of our actions.**
What Is Excellence

Historically, virtue refers to human excellence

To understand what a good person is and how a good life is lived, Aristotle studied human excellences, which came to be called virtues.

He identified 2 kinds of virtues:

- **intellectual virtues**, which are excellences of the mind
- **moral virtues**, which are excellences of character

Intellectual virtues can be taught, and schools teach them.

Intellectual virtues include...

- Science
- Intuitive reason (understanding)
- Speculative Wisdom
- Practical Wisdom (prudence)
- Art

(Robert McKelvie, 2010)
What Is Excellence

Moral virtues are formed by acting in the same way over and over again, until they become habits.

Moral Virtues include . . .

Justice

Temperance

Fortitude or Courage

Practical Wisdom (prudence)

“Prudence” is special in that it is an intellectual one, but guides human choices, while the moral virtues are all about doing, or action.

(Robert McKelvie, 2010)
What Is Excellence

*Eudemonia* (happiness) – is a sense of well-being, resulting from achieving excellence in the fulfillment of one’s functions.

However,

**Moral virtue** is necessary for happiness because otherwise people sabotage their own well-being by making lots of bad choices and acting badly.

(Robert McKelvie, 2010)
Today, happiness can have external & internal definitions.

**External definitions**
- Qualities identified by others or organizations

While we may not necessarily agree with every quality that others identify, we can learn, appreciate, and be considerate.

**Internal definitions**
- Qualities we identify for ourselves

Identifying one’s own qualities of happiness can be a life-long process, but establishing them for yourself is a pathway to excellence.
For students -
excellence is often described in their class syllabus

For faculty -
excellence might mean having an article accepted by a widely respected journal

For staff -
excellence might be found in achievements such as student retention or alumni giving
Internal Definition

For students –

excellence could mean putting in the time and effort for a subject they love

For faculty –

excellence may be showing students enthusiasm and interest in the subject they are teaching

For staff –

excellence might include giving work a little extra attention during a stressful period in the semester
TTU intends to be a model of excellence

✓ following best practices in its professional work
✓ displaying the highest standards in its scholarly work
✓ offering venues to showcase national and international examples of achievement
Excellence at TTU

We expect excellence . . .

✓ in the expertise and performance of our faculty, staff, & administration

✓ in the continuing education of our students

✓ from our university community in high standards of professionalism, including opportunities for professional contact & growth
“Just two years ago, many were writing off Tech’s goal of Tier One research status as a pipe dream — a goal that would not be reached for at least two decades.

Today — two years later — we find ourselves at an incredibly important crossroad.

Texas Tech has outraised and out-researched virtually every other school working toward the same goal, and we are on track to set an even higher pace in the coming months. . . .

Instead of meeting expectations, our faculty, staff, and students have exceeded all of them — and that is a testament to their innovation and creativity.”

*Tyler Patton*

Student Government Association President (2010)
Academic Excellence

Students’ **excellence** is recognized when they

- ✓ write well & speak clearly
- ✓ stay up-to-date with their field’s literature
- ✓ take responsibility for their own career development
- ✓ accept advice concerning program planning, selection of courses and professors, research, degree requirements, and professional expectations
Students’ **excellence** is recognized when they

- conduct high-quality research and scholarship
- work toward greater autonomy & self-direction
- exemplify the highest ethical standards
- take the initiative in creating research projects & generating ideas on their own
- are motivated, collegial, & industrious to the best of their ability in all required courses and activities
Teaching excellence is a process

- by which students are motivated to learn in ways that make a sustained, substantial & positive influence on how they think, act, and feel
- that elevates students to a level where they learn deeply & remarkably

An excellent teacher contributes positively to the learning environment by providing exceptional energy, keen interest in students, and extraordinary strengths in 5 roles:

Excellence in Teaching

1. Subject matter expert
   - thorough knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject matter
   - going beyond the standard textbook materials
   - developing important and original thoughts
   - thinking about the discipline and evaluating its quality
   - showing strong interest in broader issues

2. Excellent communicator
   - effective oral & written communication
   - good organizational abilities and planning skills
   - helping students learn to use effective communication skills
   - using teaching tools appropriately and effectively
   - bridging language and cultural barriers

3. Student-centered mentor
   - making student learning the highest priority
   - stimulating students to learn through a variety of methods and encouraging active participation
   - instilling a desire in students for life-long learning
   - not giving up on students

Excellence in Teaching

4. Pedagogical expert
- setting appropriate learning goals, communicating them clearly, and providing constructive feedback to students
- evaluating student work fairly & promptly
- working to overcome obstacles that might subvert learning
- promoting open expression of diverse opinions while maintaining an atmosphere of integrity, civility & respect
- guiding students through exploration of the creative, critical thinking & problem solving processes

5. Systematic assessor
- setting clear objectives
- using appropriate outcome assessments to continuously improve student learning experiences
- employing a systematic approach to assess teaching & keeping the class material fresh and new
- inviting constructive student feedback to the instructor
- advocating learning over testing

An excellent athlete is one who not only achieves technical success on the field, but also shows sportsmanship to opponents and support to teammates.
“While we can’t control what other teams do, what officials do, how our fans react, or a host of other things, we control how hard we work. The Lady Raiders simply refuse to be out-worked.”

Kristy Curry,
Lady Raider’s Head Basketball Coach
Excellence in Community

- Being an excellent member of a community has a lot of components. It includes being a good friend, as well as being a good citizen.

- It means not using more than your share of available resources and also working to expand the resources available to others.
“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michaelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’”

Martin Luther King Jr.
What is organizational excellence?

“Excellent organisations achieve and sustain superior levels of performance that meet or exceed the expectations of all their stakeholders.”

Organizational excellence involves

- a culture of continuous improvement
- longevity (sustaining)
- balancing the needs of ALL stakeholders

(David Richards and Derek Medhurst, using The European Foundation for Quality Management’s definition, 2010)
“Excellence is taking pride in all you do and continually striving to give your best. This includes taking care of each and every detail.”

Kent Hance, Chancellor, TTU
Pursuing Excellence

Personal & organizational strategic plan toward excellence:

- Have specific needs, goals & mission
- Conduct SWOT analysis: 
  *Strength, Weakness, Opportunity & Threat*
- Gather data
- List objectives & create a timeline
- Regularly evaluate your performance
Pursuing Excellence

Identify weakness & strengths

Assess your performance

Talk to others

Gather information

- looking at your grades/transcript
- examining how much time/effort you spend on each assignment

- talking to professors/friends to assess where you stand in relation to being an excellent student or friend
- talking to colleagues and learning from their experience (coffee break & team meetings)
- networking at conferences & seminars

- research can begin with visiting the library, or searching for information online
- websites, online databases, and publications share benchmarking information
Focus

List objectives & create a timeline
- objectives should be manageable and measurable
- assign a practical deadline to each objective

Action

Evaluate
- set standards about how to measure results
- constantly track your progress and make adjustments

Commitment

Persistence

Pursuing Excellence
Pursuing Excellence

“The real contest is always between what you’ve done and what you’re capable of doing. You measure yourself against yourself and nobody else.”

Geoffrey Gaberino
1984 Olympic gold medalist, 4x200-meter freestyle relay
“All of us have found ourselves at one time or another overwhelmed by a class, a test or a paper. . . . The therapists at the counseling center know what you’re going through and they can help. . . . Getting help when you need it is a sign of strength and evidence of a commitment to honor and excellence.”

Jennifer Bard, Professor, TTU Law School
Many organizations improve their performance using “benchmarking”.

Benchmarking can help an organization to:

- ✓ Celebrate areas of strength to build confidence
- ✓ Identify areas of weakness that could be a hidden barrier to higher performance
- ✓ Gather valuable information needed to sell the organization as a good investment
- ✓ Kick-start a strategic planning process by reviewing the “big picture”

(Linda Mollenhauer, *Benchmark`s of Excellence for the Voluntary Sector*, n.d.)
1. **Performance benchmarking**: the comparison of performance data obtained by studying similar processes or activities. Comparisons of performance may be undertaken between companies, or internally within an organization. It is useful for identifying strengths & opportunities for improvement.

2. **Best practice benchmarking**: the comparison as done in ‘performance benchmarking’ & identifying, adapting, and implementing the practices that produced the best performance results, i.e. “action.”

(Robin Mann, “Everything You Need to Know about Benchmarking,” QFINANCE. Web. n.d.)
Pursuing Excellence

“Good Enough Never Is.”

“Set your standards so high that even the flaws are considered excellent.”

*Debbi Fields*, Founder of Mrs. Fields Cookies
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Questions? Comments?
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