CARROLL SCHOOL'S 'PORTICO' OPENS DOOR TO BUSINESS ETHICS
New First Year Course Connects Ethics, Leadership And Globalization

CHESTNUT HILL, MA (September 2008) – To meet the challenge of teaching undergraduates business ethics in a way that connects with both students and the real world, Boston College's Carroll School of Management this semester launched Portico, a course for entering freshmen unlike any previously offered before at BC or other undergraduate business programs.

A major initiative of CSOM's Winston Center for Leadership and Ethics, Portico's combination of lectures, visits with seasoned executives and hands-on case studies places students at the intersection of the three driving forces of business education today: ethics, leadership and globalization.

"We can't teach business ethics in a vacuum – we have to bring it to life so the subject really resonates with our newest students," says Carroll School Dean Andrew Boynton. "Portico connects ethics with leadership and globalization in ways that will equip Carroll School undergraduates to recognize and respond to the ethical challenges of contemporary business."

Students started Portico while their classmates were still unpacking their dorm rooms. Before Labor Day weekend, the class toured business landmarks in Boston – from the Custom House to the site of offices used by investment schemer Charles Ponzi – and Lowell. Students also visited Konarka Technologies in Lowell, a solar energy concern.

Supported by a large gift from an anonymous donor, Portico will expand next year as a mandatory course for the nearly 500 freshmen who enter the Carroll School.

In the wake of scandals such as Enron and WorldCom, undergraduate business programs revamped their ethics courses and many now are in the process of further fine-tuning instruction on the topic. A task force of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business reported in 2004 that ethics education would be tied to accreditation and that it should be woven into the curriculum.

As the focus on business ethics intensified, the topics of leadership and globalization rose to the fore of business study. A working group of CSOM administrators and staff in the summer of 2007 saw a unique opportunity to combine the three topics into a freshman course guided by the institution's Jesuit tradition of discernment.
Keeley says the course requires "fine-grained encounters" with business leaders, case studies involving local companies and team projects.

"For the student as he or she goes through a business program, there is a practice of discernment," says Keeley, who also directs programs of the Winston Center. "But it is not simply lining up strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It's about determining what your heart's desire is. What are you being called to do?"

The broad scope of the course led to the creation of an interdisciplinary team of faculty and guest lecturers, including Assoc. Prof. David Quigley (History) and Assoc. Research Prof. Richard Spinello (CSOM), as well as Boynton and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education Richard Keeley (CSOM). Guest lecturers include local executives.

For Quigley, working with colleagues at CSOM has been a rewarding experience.

"Andy Boynton and Dick Keeley came up with a great idea to energize the freshmen experience by bringing together faculty and expertise from across the University," says Quigley, who is also the director of the Institute for the Liberal Arts. "This is one of the most exciting projects I've participated in at BC and a great chance to figure out what we do well and how we can do better."

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