Review Summary
Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility
Resource and Development Review
(Report Date: 5.08.2024)

A Resource and Development Review of the Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility (CESR) was conducted on 5.08.2024. The review team membership* was composed of Dr. Adam R. Thompson, voluntary director of the center.

Center Mission: CESR's mission is to highlight the significance of and encourage the exploration of personal morality, social responsibility, and critical thinking more broadly across the disciplines and various methods of inquiry. Their academic and research focus is to teach, study, and provide programming that empowers individuals and communities to more confidently navigate the moral contours of the complex situations and contexts.

Assesment:
The CESR is well positioned to grow and strengthen the department and, so, the college in which it is housed. Currently, on a $0 budget, Dr. Thompson has managed to maintain six out of the eight programs that constituted the CESR's suite of programming as the Kutak Center for the Teaching and Study of Applied Ethics in the College of Law. During that time, the operating budget was ~ $30,000, which provided for Dr. Thompson's salary and benefits. Other funds were gained through grants and private donors. Similar funding opportunities abound. In addition, UNL is flush with resources that, developed in the right way, would significantly impact CESR's capacity to thrive as a Philosophy and CAS asset.

A very small initial investment will provide Dr. Thompson with the means for a more concentrated effort on maintaining and developing CESR's current excellence. CESR's curricular programming is wide and already includes experiential learning initiatives. One of those experiential learning initiatives provides support to a local high school ethics bowl team. The other experiential learning initiative employs a graduate student to design embedded ethics modules for computing and information technology courses in the School of Computing at UNL and in the College of Information Science and Technology at the University of Nebraska-Omaha (UNO). Each curricular program extends the sorts of desirable opportunities that Philosophy, and, as a result, CAS can offer. In addition, each is interdisciplinary, scalable, and multi-realizable. For example, CESR's embedded ethics work involves the disciplines of computer science, software engineering, information technology, and philosophy. An increase in funding for the program simply increases the number of courses the center can service, and the number of internal and external opportunities it can offer for raising literacy and critical skills in responsible computing. An increase in funding would also translate to an increase in the quality of the embedded modules. Finally, since the model is one-way, discipline-independent—i.e., ethicists are the only constants, course content is the variable—more funding would allow the embedded ethics programming to extend to academic programs and disciplines outside of computing and technology. Hence, the

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center could design and implement ethics modules in physics courses, chemistry courses, or courses in agriculture or climate science or any other discipline in looking to support their students' understanding of ethics and social responsibility as it applies to their field.

CESR could serve to increase course enrollments within Philosophy by bundling courses to earn a programmatic major/minor by taking specific courses within a certain bundle. In particular, Dr. Thompson is interested in working to establish a Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) program at UNL. Dr. Thompson has already identified standing courses and current faculty at UNL that, when bundled appropriately, would constitute a strong PPE program. Like the embedded ethics program, PPE programs offer a model for meeting the student demand for concentrated and practically valuable courses of study that prepare them for a wider range of professional engagements.

Dr. Thompson maintains CESR's research capacity through partnerships internal and external to UNL. Internal to UNL, Dr. Thompson has partnered with two separate groups on a catalyst grant—one in the area of computing and one in the area of natural resource management and civic engineering. External to UNL, Dr. Thompson has partnered with an individuals at UNO and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) on ethics and AI focused projects.

Thus, as it stands:

(a) $0 is enough to continue limited but impactful programming;

(b) The most impactful programming requires CESR expertise but is otherwise open to any discipline and is scalable;

(c) Dr. Thompson and CESR's partners are excited to work to increase the effectiveness and impact of the center; and

(d) As funds increase the quality, effectiveness, and reach of CESR's effort increase exponentially.

Thus, small operational investments in Dr. Thompson and small programmatic investments in curricular programming is highly likely to return high academic and research value.

Recommendations:
Center status should be retained and strengthened.

1: Retain Dr. Thompson
Dr. Thompson has cared for the development of CESR since 2013. As of now, the center runs on an operational or capacity budget of $0 and a programmatic budget of $10,000. The center's continuation requires retaining Dr. Thompson.

2: Increase Dr. Thompson's Compensation*
Currently, the work Dr. Thompson does for the center is not compensated. Rather, Dr. Thompson oversees the center voluntarily. It is unclear how much longer he can or should do this. Compensating Dr. Thompson for his valuable work would provide him with the means to exert a more concentrated effort on maintaining and developing CESR's current excellence and strong programming. In addition, Dr. Thompson could pursue more programmatic funding opportunities and internal or external partnerships.

3: Increase Programmatic Funding*
Even without operational funding to compensate Dr. Thompson's work, programmatic funds can go a long way to support CESR's mission. For instance, through the Riedesel Fund, Dr. Thompson oversees the work of the Riedesel Fellow who designs and implements embedded ethics modules at UNL or UNO. This year the Riedesel Fellow also worked with and trained a volunteer to do develop and implement the module. In addition, increases in programmatic funding would bring back the programs that Dr. Thompson had to mute after the move from the College of Law—namely, Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl and the luncheon colloquium series. In short, the graduate student work that we compensate through programmatic funds increases CESR's exponentially.

4: Provide Resources for Securing Foundation Funding*
One of the most promising things to occur at CESR was being put in direct contact with individuals at the NU Foundation—specifically, Ellen Fitzsimmons. The support they provide when pursuing external funding from foundations was integral to the success of our embedded ethics program. There is no doubt that continued or increased support toward securing external funding from private and public foundations would significantly contribute to CESR's mission. Prior to the move from the College of Law, the center was isolated from those sorts of resources and discouraged from pursuing external funding. One of the most encouraging things post-move has been CAS's attitude of support in this regard.

5: Create Workshops, Conferences, Seminars or Other Products as a Source of Revenue
One way that many centers generate revenue beyond grants and private donations is through the cultivation of programming that interested parties can purchase. For instance, the College of Information Science and Technology created the Center for Management of Information Technology ([link](#)), which offers a paid subscription to their services to public and private firms.

*For details, see Expansion Plan (especially Action Guidelines and Funding Menu)

Responsibility for Monitoring:
Progress towards addressing these recommendations will be the responsibility of Dr. Adam R. Thompson and others as appointed by Dr. Thompson's direct and indirect supervisors.

***Team Membership**:
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