Grant Goals

The President's Initiative on Ethics in Public Life seeks to "embrace the challenge of restoring the consideration of ethics in public life to a central place on the University's educational and research agendas." *(http://www.umich.edu/pres/committees/ethics.html)* As the Final Report of the University of Michigan Task Force on Ethics in Public Life noted, the University has a strong academic foundation from which to meet this challenge, but at this time discussion about public ethics is diffused, occurring in pockets across the institution; in general, faculty, staff, and students are not regularly or consistently engaged in discussing the ethical dimensions of issues that they confront in the academic setting and beyond. We seek to foster a change of culture, developing a University culture in which public ethics — including both acting ethically and addressing ethical issues — is valued and prominent.

A primary goal of the funding opportunity is to develop a broad intellectual community engaged at a heightened level of discourse on issues of public ethics. We want to nurture informed, reflective, critical deliberation about ethical issues across the curriculum and throughout the University, as well as informed ethical behavior by individuals and institutions alike. In its combined attention to thought and action, the initiative also seeks to foster both theoretical and applied ethics, as well as their integration or interaction.

The role of the Ethics in Public Life Initiative's funding opportunity in nurturing such a community of ethical inquiry is fourfold:

1. To seed new and innovative activities, expanding the total number of opportunities for faculty, students, staff, and the public to engage in consideration of ethical issues including academic integrity.
2. To bring more members of the University community into the discussions of ethical issues in public life.
3. To heighten understanding and improve deliberation, discourse and debate about ethical issues; to nurture moral discernment and discourse among the members of our community.
4. To strengthen and expand connections among individuals engaged in moral deliberation, and to create networks of opportunities for engagement in moral deliberation, so that we begin to build a comprehensive, multifaceted, conversation. Ultimately, we hope that this ongoing conversation will help us understand better how, practically and theoretically, we can effectively address moral concerns in a pluralistic institution.

We construe public ethics very broadly, to include individual behavior, personal and professional; institutional behaviors, policies, and practices, whether at the University or in business, government, religion, the military, and so on; social structures and institutions, including issues of social justice, equity, and other topics typically covered by social theory in various forms; and issues of national and international scope, such as world health, human rights, etc.

In the first phase of the funding opportunity, we are especially interested in enhancing the undergraduate experience with respect to ethics in public life.