

CENTER FOR ETHICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES



AUBURN
Harbert College of Business

FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER



BELIEVE IN THESE THINGS, I BELIEVE IN AUBURN AND LOVE IT. - GEORGE P.



Message from the Director

The Center for Ethical Organizational Cultures continues to focus on the development of ethical leadership, providing resources and activities for students, faculty, and other stakeholders. The Center sponsors the Student Center for the Public Trust (SCPT), which offers ethical leadership certification for all Harbert students. In addition, the SCPT invites speakers each semester to address key aspects of ethical leadership. Most recently, Keith Farley, Senior Vice President of Aflac—Individual Benefits, delivered a compelling presentation on Aflac's ethical and organizational leadership and culture.

The Center continues to expand its teaching resources, including cases, behavioral simulations, and debate issues. The Center produces thought leadership pieces and op-eds. Most recently, the Center co-authored an op-ed in The Hill on brand mismanagement at Cracker Barrel, which is highlighted in this issue.

We are also the authors of three textbooks used nationally and internationally, including Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases, with the 14th edition from Cengage recently released. The Center Director also serves on the advisory board of the Food Culture Alliance, a global nonprofit initiative.

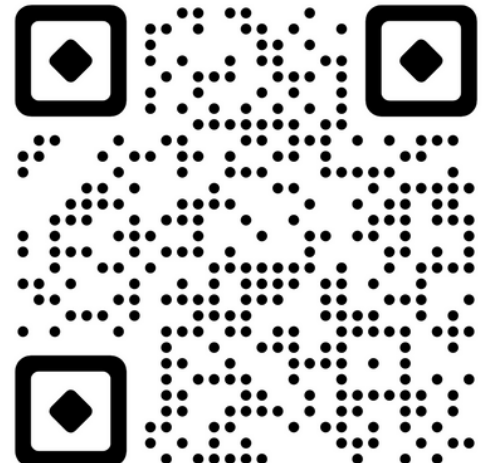
—O.C. Ferrell, Ph.D | James T. Pursell Sr. Eminent Scholar in Ethics
Director of The Center for Ethical Organizational Cultures

JOIN THE STUDENT CENTER FOR PUBLIC TRUST

Experience interaction and networking with staff, local leaders and executives.

Obtain unique skills, set yourself apart as an ethical leader and differentiate yourself from other potential job candidates.

Have the opportunity to participate in training sessions, community service projects, conferences and a unique ethical certification.



Student Center for Public Trust (SCPT)

Auburn University Chapter



Message from the President

I am deeply honored to serve as President of the Auburn Student Center for Public Trust (SCPT), an experience that has enriched both my personal growth and professional journey. Working with Dr. O.C. Ferrell and learning from his leadership in ethics has been both inspiring and transformative. This role has given me the opportunity to not only lead but also to learn; shaping how I view accountability, trust, and integrity in business and in life.

To my fellow SCPT members, I encourage you to see this organization as more than a student group. It is a platform to grow as ethical leaders, to challenge yourself, and to prepare for the responsibilities that await you in your careers. Each discussion we share and each initiative we lead strengthens the culture of integrity that will carry forward long after we leave Auburn.

I am grateful for the chance to serve in this capacity and excited to see the positive impact each of you will make, both here at Auburn and in the professional paths you pursue. Together, we are building a legacy of ethical leadership that matters.

—**Richard Mensah | B.COM | MA | CCSS | CSM | MBA/MSIS Candidate**
President, Auburn Student Center for Public Trust



Ethical Leadership Certification

Auburn University's Harbert College of Business requires all students to complete an independently administered ethical leadership certification prior to graduation. The certification will be conducted by the NASBA Center for the Public Trust. The new requirements are designed to better prepare young professionals to handle the ethical dilemmas they will face in their careers. Auburn is the first university in the country to require its business school graduates to complete ethical leadership training and attain independent certification.

According to Dr O.C. Ferrell, James T. Pursell, Sr. Eminent Scholar in Ethics and Director of the Center for Ethical Organizational Cultures at Auburn University, instilling ethical conduct is critical to shaping organizational culture in today's highly competitive business environment. Students are required to complete the online certification program's six modules and pass an exam at the conclusion of each section. Read the full article to learn more.

"I believe in honesty and truthfulness, without which I cannot win the respect and confidence of my fellow men."

-The Auburn Creed

Spotlight on Ethics & Leadership

Research & Insights from Dr. O.C. Ferrell

Featured Op-Ed

“Brand Mismanagement at Cracker Barrel” – The Hill

Dr. O.C. Ferrell and Dr. Linda Ferrell co-authored an opinion piece in The Hill, Washington D.C.’s leading political and policy news outlet, analyzing the ethical and reputational challenges faced by Cracker Barrel.

[Read the article here: https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/5500820-brand-mismanagement-cracker-barrel/](https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/5500820-brand-mismanagement-cracker-barrel/)

Recent Ethics & Social Responsibility Publications (2019–2025)

2025

- “Bridging the Gap: Aligning Developers and Managers in Implementing AI Ethics” (Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice, 2025)
- “The Self-Regulation Imperative: Effectively Managing Legal & Ethical Risks” (Journal of Direct Selling Research, 2025)

2024

- “Building a Better World: The Role of AI Ethics and Social Responsibility” (Journal of Macromarketing, 2024)
- “Does Being Ethical Pay? Evidence from the Implementation of SOX Section 406” (Journal of Business Research, 2024)
- “Navigating the Nexus: Teaching Marketing Ethics, Social Responsibility, and Sustainability” (Journal of Marketing Education, 2024)

2022

- “Broadening the Definition of Socially Responsible Marketing” (Journal of Macromarketing, 2022)
- “Perspectives on Socially Responsible Marketing: The Chasm Widens” (AMS Review, 2022)

2019

- “Business Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Brand Attitudes: An Exploratory Study” (Journal of Business Research, 2019)
- “Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Ethics as Independent Scales” (Journal of Product & Brand Management, 2019)

Impact

Through more than 20 books and 100+ scholarly articles, Dr. Ferrell’s work continues to shape how businesses, policymakers, and educators approach ethics, social responsibility, and stakeholder trust.

Center for Ethical Organizational Cultures 2025 Activity Report

Daniels Fund Inaugural National Business Ethics Case Competition



The Center for Organizational Ethical Cultures was invited to participate in the 2025 Daniels Fund National Business Ethics Case Competition. The Auburn University MBA team, selected through interviews, consisted of Noble Sefton, Jordan Groh, Jake Richardson, and Brooke Baker. The team was one of approximately 100 competing at the national level, and Auburn University was the only university from Alabama invited to participate. The competition required teams to prepare and participate in a screening essay round to move to the final competition in Denver, CO (April 3-4). Of the 100 teams involved in the competition, 80 teams were eliminated, not advancing to the final round. Auburn effectively performed better than Duke, Georgia Tech, University of Missouri, Bentley University as well as many other prestigious schools.

Upon advancing to the finals, Auburn's team spent at least 15-20 hours each week working on the case for the final competition. Our team gained practical tools to navigate ethical challenges that will help them advance in an area not widely understood in business. The Center helped to create NASBA Ethical Leadership Certification that all Harbert graduating seniors take in their senior year. The competition gave our students an opportunity to interact with students across the country in an immersive experience that also provided great visibility for AU, the Harbert College and Center for Ethical Organizational Cultures. The competing teams were vying for \$250,000 in cash prizes (with the winning team members receiving \$60,000) an added bonus to enhance competitive rivalry. The Auburn team performed exceptionally, but, did not place in the top 3. The Center plans to participate in the 2026 Daniels Fund Business Ethics Case Competition.

About the Daniels Fund: <https://www.danielsfund.org/about-daniels-fund/mission>