

CENTER FOR ETHICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES



AUBURN
Harbert College of Business

FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER



O.C. Ferrell, Ph.D | James T. Pursell Sr. Eminent Scholar in Ethics

The Center for Ethical Organizational Cultures continues to focus on the development of ethical leadership providing resources and activities for both students, faculty and other stakeholders. The Center sponsors the Student Center for the Public Trust (SCPT) that provides ethical leadership certification for all Harbert students. In addition, the SCPT invites speakers in each semester to speak on aspects of ethical leadership. Most recently, Keith Farley, Senior

Vice President of Aflac—Individual Benefits, provided a compelling presentation on Aflac's ethical and organizational leadership. The Center continues to expand its teaching resources, including cases, behavioral simulation, and debate issues. The Center provides thought leadership pieces and op-eds; most recently, an op-ed piece was published in The Hill, "How a \$15k Bud Light giveaway needlessly cost AB InBev \$27 billion." The piece was referenced on Fox's Hannity two months later. In addition, we wrote a piece for The Conversation, "Super Bowl Ads: It's Getting Harder to Score with Consumers," which was viewed by over 91,000 readers and picked up by Fast Company and many Hearst newspapers. We have been invited to field a team for the 2025 Daniels Fund National Ethics Case Competition. The Harbert students will compete against universities nationwide competing for \$250,000 in prize money. The Center also produces academic research and has published 3 articles on ethical leadership and AI this year. Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases, Cengage, 14th edition was revised this year. The Director serves on the Food Culture Alliance advisory board. This international nonprofit focuses on strategies to increase society's preference for nutritious and sustainable foods.

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.

SIGN UP NOW!





Duda Schramm Seifer, MBA Auburn University Chapter President of the Student Center for Public Trust

Serving as President of the Auburn Student Center for Public Trust (SCPT) has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my journey through Auburn's MBA program. Working alongside O.C. and Linda Ferrell, whose insights for ethical leadership are inspiring, and engaging with speakers who challenge and motivate us, has shaped the way I view integrity in both life and business. As I prepare to graduate, I reflect on the growth this organization has brought me, not just as a leader but as a person. To my fellow SCPT members, know that what we do here is more than attending meetings or hosting events. It's about building a foundation of trust, transparency, and ethical leadership that will serve you for years to come. These moments, these conversations, and these shared commitments have the power to transform not only your career but also the legacy you leave behind. I'm grateful to have been part of this journey with you, and I can't wait to see the incredible impact you will make in the future.



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 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

Guest Speaker Series



November 2024 | Keith Farley | The Aflac Way

Keith Farley is the current Senior Vice President of Aflac Individual Benefits. He previously led eBay's North America legal team, where he founded the Internet's first e-commerce person-to-person platform, Trust and Safety team. He was the general counsel at Chegg, Inc. for nearly 6 years, and he served 14 years with the U.S. Justice Department.



April 2024 | Chuck Gallagher | Every Choice Has a Consequence

Chuck Gallagher, a renowned ethics speaker whose life story embodies both the consequences of ethical failure and the power of personal redemption. A former tax partner with a thriving career, Gallagher faced a dramatic downfall when unethical decisions led to his federal conviction and imprisonment. Emerging from this experience, he has since dedicated his life to helping individuals and organizations navigate ethical challenges.



November 2023 | Robert Chesnut | Intentional Integrity

Rob Chesnut is the former Chief Ethics Officer at Airbnb. He previously led eBay's North America legal team, where he founded the Internet's first e-commerce person-to-person platform, Trust and Safety team. He was the general counsel at Chegg, Inc. for nearly 6 years, and he served 14 years with the U.S. Justice Department.



April 2023 | Danny Smith | Corporate Environmental Compliance

As Corporate Environmental Compliance Manager at Carnival Corporation, Danny Smith directs a diverse range of environmental compliance matters for a fleet of nearly 100 cruise ships across Carnival's nine international brands. As a professional lawyer and engineer, he provided vast regulatory, compliance, risk, and policy insight. Mr. Smith discussed the challenges of multi-jurisdictional compliance requirements across worldwide operations, along with essential components for success.



September 2022 | Alfonzo Alexander | The Truly Sustainable Leadership

As the Chief Ethics & Diversity Officer of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) and President of NASBA's Center for the Public Trust (CPT). Alfonzo oversees strategic diversity initiatives, ethics, compliance, and facilitates special projects with the CEO. Under his leadership, the CPT has cultivated new partnerships and nearly 100 campus programs. Distinctive to the Harbert College of Business experience, his leadership established the Ethical Leadership Certification & Training Programs, while advancing the Being a Difference Award.



April 2022 | Nicole Sherwin | Athletic Compliance & Student-Athlete Advocacy

As the Assistant Director of Compliance at Auburn University, Nicole Sherwin addressed the hot topics of Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) and the Transfer Portal. Highly knowledgeable in each bylaw and the relationship to ethical conduct through each layer, she addressed her obligation to student-athletes, coaches, the department, Auburn University, and our community.



March 2022 | Greg Jackson | Supply Chain Recycling & Circular Economy

As the founder and CEO of Groundz Recycling and Urban Farmer, the world's first organic waste recycling company for supplying urban farm composting, Greg Jackson addressed his innovative model, which recycles organic waste such as coffee grounds and eggshells, converts the matter to compost, and distributes the compost to urban farms. He is also launching a bird-friendly cocoa certification program.

AI Ethics Research

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the entire world of business. AI is being used in almost all areas of business operations and decision making. There have been many ethical challenges in using AI, especially the impact on society. Our research on this topic indicates the implementation of ethical principles is lacking in practice. AI developers often have technical backgrounds and are not always aware of how applications can violate basic ethical considerations.

In a survey of AI managers, we found they also may not have a background in ethics and lack the ability to oversee the work of developers in creating AI applications. Examples of AI ethical principles include fairness, safety, privacy, security, transparency, accountability, and avoiding discrimination and bias. The biggest risk concern is the pace of AI development and understanding its capabilities.

The impact of AI in society remains uncertain, with prominent tech figures such as Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, and Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple, along with many other experts and industry leaders, advocating for a temporary pause on AI development until its risks are better understood. The entire organization should be involved in identifying risks because the capability of AI to disrupt social, economic, and educational systems impacts all stakeholders. For example, while some educational institutions have banned the use of ChatGPT to prevent cheating, others are establishing ground rules for the appropriate use of AI to contribute to society.

While there is no comprehensive regulation of AI in the United States, Congress has asked the FTC to recommend reasonable policies to prevent harm to consumers. The most comprehensive legislation is the 2024 European Artificial Intelligence Act. The Act identifies high-risk, limited-risk, and minimal-risk applications.

The Center is continuing our research and publishing on this important ethical challenge. Contact us if you would like copies of our publications.