

Character Traits Associated with the Five Dimensions of Personal and Social Responsibility

CORE COMMITMENTS:

Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility



Dimension 1: Striving for Excellence—developing a strong work ethic and consciously doing one's very best in all aspects of college

What is meant by "work ethic"?

- A set of values that inform how you go about your work;
- Advocates personal accountability and responsibility based on the intrinsic and extrinsic value of your work.

Character traits associated with a strong work ethic:

- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Dependability
- Self-discipline
- Initiative
- Persistence
- Resilience
- Purpose
- Motivation
- Social Intelligence

How are these traits defined?

- Accountability, Responsibility, Dependability, and Self-discipline
 - Having a clear understanding of the expectations and requirements that come with one's role as a student
 - Working hard to fulfill those expectations and requirements
 - Recognizing liability for one's conduct
 - Understanding one's role relative to other students, faculty, staff and administrators
 - *Includes:* being able to prioritize tasks and complete them in a timely manner; dealing with competing obligations, and managing multiple roles (within the environment of the college/university as well as between school life, personal life, and social life)
- Initiative, Persistence, and Resilience
 - Having creativity and the ability to self-start a new project or to recognize the appropriate next step in a project that is ongoing
 - Being able to adapt, stay positive, and persevere
 - Working toward improvement rather than being satisfied with the status quo
 - Being comfortable working independently
 - Going above and beyond what is required
 - Diligently working on a project, even when it is not going smoothly
 - *Includes:* using perception to plan ahead and plan for contingency; making use of available resources; being confident in decision-making; being able to learn from, and then move on from, mistakes

Purpose and Motivation

- Recognizing one's role (in your family, at your college/institution, etc.) and how this fits into one's short-term and long-term plans
- Knowing that there is value in one's efforts
- Pushing oneself to the next level of growth, academically and socially
- *Includes:* goal setting; requesting and taking feedback in a positive manner; reflecting on failure and success, and, when necessary, re-evaluating goals
- Social Intelligence
 - Demonstrating interpersonal skills, such as cooperation, friendliness, respect, trust, and courtesy
 - Being comfortable working as a team member
 - *Includes:* being open to the ideas of others; equitably dividing work on shared projects; sharing resources; recognizing another's job well-done; providing feedback to others when requested

Why are these traits important?

- They help to create a common "work" culture within the collegial environment
- These traits translate into the nouns of professional culture
- Understanding them will help students transition from school to work
- They are valuable across disciplines, professions, domains, and job levels

Dimension 2: Cultivating Personal and Academic Integrity—recognizing and acting on a sense of honor ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with a formal academic honors code

What is meant by “academic integrity”?

- Adhering to a code or set of standards concerning the intersection of values and academic behavior
- Acting in a way befitting a community of scholars

Character traits associated with academic integrity:

- Honesty
- Truthfulness
- Fairness
- Respect for others
- Honor
- Responsibility
- Trust

How are these traits defined?

- Honesty and Truthfulness
 - Acting in a manner that is straightforward and sincere
 - Acting respectfully when hearing the truth from someone else, even when it is not what you want to hear
 - Understanding that, in situations of wrongdoing, honesty and truth may come with warranted consequences
 - Accepting responsibility for one's actions
 - Admitting to mistakes/wrongdoing
 - Acting without guilt to protect the values of the campus community
 - *Includes:* reflecting on one's actions and thoughts, both positively and critically; taking pride in one's work; knowing one's limits; being diligent about accurately citing sources and using only one's own work in assignments; understanding why cheating on an exam amounts to cheating oneself
- Fairness, and Respect for Others
 - Treating others how one wants to be treated
 - Accepting personal differences
 - Considering how one's actions impact the feelings, values, and efforts of others
 - Recognizing the value of multiple points of view
 - Understanding that some opinions are more valuable than others
 - Making courtesy and politeness second-nature in daily interactions
 - Making sound judgments
 - *Includes:* attending class on time and prepared; acknowledging the good work of peers; sharing credit when work is shared; understanding that how one treats others and how one goes about one's daily work is as important as what is accomplished
- Honor, Responsibility, and Trust
 - Displaying loyalty to, and abiding by the goals and values of the institution
 - Respecting the opportunity to participate in a scholarly community
 - Considering how one's actions represent and reflect the mission of the institution
 - Understanding one's role as a student relative to faculty, staff, administrators, and other students on a college campus
 - *Includes:* signing, and putting into deliberate practice, the institution's honor code; recognizing the importance of the honor code for each course—on syllabi, on exams, and in class discussions; applying this code both inside and outside the classroom; seeing oneself as a representative of a scholarly community; not participating in any type of academic dishonesty (including permitting others to use one's work); appropriately reporting instances when the honor code is broken; thinking before one acts

Why are these traits important?

- These traits are often the essence of institutional mission statements
- The foundations of higher education were built upon these traits
- They support the culture of a scholarly community
- The collegial community relies on them to foster intellectual growth
- They are transferable to any realm of life

Dimension 3: Contributing to a Larger Community—recognizing and acting on one’s responsibility to the educational community (classroom, campus life), the local community, and the wider society, both national and global

What is meant by “contributing to a larger community”?

- Giving of oneself for the welfare of others
- Giving back to a community that supports one’s development, educationally or socially, locally or globally

Character traits associated with contributing to community:

- Positive sense of self
- Purposefulness
- Self-reflection
- Social awareness
- Knowledge of context
- Humanitarian
- Non-judgmental
- Collaborative
- Thinking “big picture”

How are these traits defined?

- Positive Sense of Self and Purposefulness
 - Understanding how strengths and weaknesses contribute to growth
 - Having clear goals and actively working to achieve them
 - Knowing what is important both in daily living and in the long run
 - Seeking to be well-rounded intellectually, socially and culturally
 - Confidently pursuing dreams while “keeping two feet on the ground”
 - *Includes:* participating in activities that bring satisfaction; staying on-track amidst distraction; motivating others through one’s own actions; connecting with mentors; identifying what is necessary for success; using one’s knowledge for societal improvement
- Self-reflection, Social Awareness, and Knowledge of Context
 - Seeing one’s self, as well as society, as an ever-changing entity
 - Developing an understanding of where one fits into a broader scheme
 - Believing that one person can make a difference
 - Making an effort to take in everything that is around you, even if beyond the range of the five senses
 - Being conscious of connections between race, class, and privilege
 - *Includes:* keeping up on local and world news, but not automatically accepting everything one sees, hears, or reads; seeking opinions from various constituent groups; acting on something one believes in; using past experiences to inform present decisions; being mindful that contexts vary and one may not always be able to fully relate
- Humanitarian, Non-judgmental, and Collaborative
 - “Doing good for the sake of doing good,” without any expectation of compensation or reward
 - Giving of oneself even in the absence of gratification
 - Discerning need
 - Recognizing the oneness of the human race
 - *Includes:* putting the needs of others before one’s own; working to correct social and economic inequities; treating others how one would hope to be treated if the situation of need were reversed; proactively searching for ways to contribute, encouraging others to contribute, and identifying where contributions will go the farthest
- Thinking “Big Picture”
 - Being aware of details but not allowing them to impede progress
 - Being able to look beyond what is immediate to what lies ahead
 - Considering all of the individuals impacted by a given situation
 - *Includes:* having a flexible but reasonable long-term plan; considering one’s participation in the lives of others; learning how to translate one’s values and priorities into actions; connecting with other individuals and groups in the community

Why are these traits important?

- They aid in individuals’ and groups’ abilities to accurately respond to their own needs and the needs of others
- They foster growth for the individual participant and improvement for the community, locally and globally
- They reinforce the notion of social justice
- They promote a lifestyle of courage and risk-taking in the name of learning and developing a better society

Dimension 4: Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others—recognizing and acting on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment; engaging diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, for citizenship, and for work

What is meant by “the obligation to take seriously the perspectives of others”?

- Respecting the right of other individuals to have varying interpretations of the world
- Appreciating well-founded opinions that differ from one’s own
- Understanding the value that unique viewpoints bring to the development of knowledge

Character traits associated with taking serious the perspectives of others:

- Attentiveness
- Thinking before responding
- Open-mindedness
- Social/Cultural awareness
- Empathy
- Respect for self and others
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy
- Inquisitiveness
- Truth-seeking
- Exercising good judgment

How are these traits defined?

- **Attentiveness and Thinking before Responding**
 - Being able to focus, concentrate on, and comprehend what another person is communicating—verbally or in writing, physically or affectively
 - Focusing what is being communicated prior to responding
 - Considering how one’s response will be interpreted by others
 - *Includes:* paying full attention when another person is speaking—noticing tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language; making an effort to capture the “meaning behind the words” in written communications; responding to others with controlled emotion and well-founded thoughts, ideas, and opinions
- **Open-mindedness, Cultural/Social Awareness, Empathy**
 - Having flexibility in one’s opinions and beliefs, recognizing that they might evolve/change as a consequence of learning from other individuals, personal experience, and intellectual growth
 - Understanding that the inherent and background differences of others contribute to their ways of thinking
 - Making an effort to accurately understand the perspective of another individual and the affective state that accompanies that perspective, and having the capability to respond appropriately to that individual
 - *Includes:* considering how “who one is” influences how one thinks, acts, and reacts; making one’s own decisions about what to believe, while also permitting oneself to change one’s mind and others to change their minds; seeking the opinions of other individuals with backgrounds different from one’s own; providing support to other individuals whose perspective one can relate to
- **Respect for Self and for Others, Self-confidence, and Self-efficacy**
 - Trusting in one’s own knowledge and abilities
 - Believing in oneself and one’s capabilities
 - Recognizing the value that one adds to a situation or experience
 - Being able to justify, express, and act upon one’s beliefs without feelings of guilt or wrongdoing
 - *Includes:* being able to convey one’s opinion or perspective, even if it is in the minority; being able to explain and provide a basis for one’s beliefs; displaying one’s strengths with assertion but without arrogance
- **Inquisitiveness, Truth-seeking, and Exercising Good Judgment**
 - Having a perpetual interest in learning more
 - Searching for knowledge through questioning and probing
 - Seeking the opinions of experts and having the ability to distinguish the value associated with those opinions
 - Being able to make a judgment without being judgmental
 - *Includes:* asking questions to delve beyond what is on the surface; questioning information when one is skeptical about its merit; recognizing that even a “reliable” source of information may not always be reliable; examining competing and contradictory evidence; understanding that while everyone has the right to an opinion, not all opinions are equally worthwhile

Why are these traits important?

- They help to create a culture of mutual respect within the collegial environment
- They demonstrate intellectual maturity
- They are associated with being a lifelong learner
- By embracing these traits, others are likely to reciprocate and take your perspective seriously

Dimension 5: Developing Competence in Ethical and Moral Reasoning—developing one's own personal and social values and being able to express and act upon those values responsibly; developing a mature sense of moral sensitivity and personal character; being able to identify and evaluate moral dilemmas and act appropriately

What is meant by “competence in ethical and moral reasoning”?

- Developing one's own personal and social values
- Expressing and acting upon values with consistency, in the context of respect for others
- Demonstrating a willingness to engage in dialogue with others
- Developing a sense of humanity and dedication to the “common good”

Character traits associated ethical and moral reasoning:

- Honesty
- Truth-seeking
- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Respect
- Courage
- Self-efficacy
- Compassion
- Empathy
- Social Intelligence

How are these traits defined?

- Honesty and Truth-seeking
 - Being truthful with oneself and with others and establishing an expectation that others be truthful in return
 - Actively pursuing the truth in order to communicate only accurate information to others
 - Understanding that honesty is not always easy—to give or to take—and that it may come with consequences if a wrongdoing has occurred
 - *Includes:* doing one's own work without cheating or plagiarizing, and encouraging others to do the same; accurately portraying who one is, no matter whose company one is in; questioning a statement or action that seems wrong; looking for missing pieces when a story seems incomplete; and seeking deeper understanding of context
- Integrity, Responsibility, and Respect
 - Staying true to oneself, one's commitments, and one's goals
 - Keeping one's word
 - Owning up to one's actions
 - Understanding that actions reflect who a person is and where one comes from
 - Treating others the way one wishes to be treated
 - Honoring the good work of others
 - Recognizing one's impact on others and the impact others have in return
 - *Includes:* expressing the right to one's own well-founded opinion and allowing others to do so as well; demonstrating follow-through with obligations; being loyal to individuals and institutions that have contributed to one's development; upholding the value of a promise
- Courage and Self-Efficacy
 - Taking a chance in the name of a positive outcome
 - Knowing one will be able to deal with whatever outcome one might face
 - Facing one's fears and tackling self-doubt
 - Believing in one's capabilities
 - Recognizing when a situation requires action and being able to determine the next appropriate step
 - *Includes:* taking a stand with a minority opinion; respectfully questioning the actions of someone with power; being able to evaluate the relative risk and reward of a situation; challenging oneself in academic and social situations
- Compassion, Empathy, and Social Intelligence
 - Showing understanding of others' emotions
 - Knowing how to reach out to someone in need
 - Taking the time to learn what is appropriate in dealing with a particular circumstance
 - Knowing when and when not to relate one's own experiences to a situation
 - Respecting the idea that different cultures have various ways of dealing with personal and social issues
 - *Includes:* listening to the perspectives of others; asking what someone needs and how one can be helpful rather than imposing one's own ideals; knowing when to elicit the help of someone with more first-hand experience; engaging in interactions and experiences that will enhance one's abilities to relate to others

Why are these traits important?

- They are the foundation of both actions and reactions
- They provide the basic grounding for development as individuals and for development as a society
- These traits reflect the most basic philosophical underpinnings of humanity
- The presence of these traits in individuals is a reflection of the greater good of society