

# 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