



PRESS RELEASE

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LCC TO HOST ETHICS PANEL FOR THE COMMUNITY MARCH 22

Lansing, MI – Is performing or obtaining an abortion ethically acceptable? How about conducting stem cell research? Does the death penalty violate ethical behavior? If someone finds a wallet on the street stuffed with money does that person have an ethical obligation to track down the owner and return the wallet and its contents?

Defining ethics is a complex undertaking and the answer can evolve over time, molded by situational ethics and a sliding scale of ethical conduct. Hoping to provide insight into the thought-provoking realm of ethics, Lansing Community College is hosting a panel discussion titled “Why Ethics Matters” as part of National Ethics Awareness Month.

The panel, the first of its kind at LCC, will bring together six mid-Michigan scholars from various academic disciplines who have spent considerable time grappling with the thorny issue of ethics.

Rebecca Beard, a LCC professor of management, will moderate the 90-minute give-and-take starting at 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 22, in Room 134 of the Gannon Building on LCC’s downtown campus. “We’ll likely be dealing with questions covering a wide variety of situations we encounter as citizens each day in our life,” Beard said. “It’s really about increasing our awareness of ethical decision making and ethical behavior.”

So what is ethics? “It’s about how a person should act, the kind of person they should be, and what a good life constitutes,” said Tamra Frei, an assistant professor of philosophy at LCC who teaches a class on ethics and will take part on the panel. “Sometimes in my class we talk about finding a wallet and other times we’ll wrestle with ethical questions dealing with abortion, animal ethics, the death penalty and sexuality.”

But ethics often deal with fuzzy circumstances and situations and what is ethical behavior to one person may not be to another. The Webster’s Dictionary takes a shot at a definition: “1. A principle of right or good behavior. 2. A system of moral principles or values.”

Panel participant Joseph Warren, an attorney and professor of history and humanities at LCC, notes the elusive nature of ethics: “At the beginning of the class I ask my students: ‘If I could guarantee you would never be caught, tried or punished, how many of you would commit your crime of choice?’ Generally about half of them put their hands up. I say ‘remind me never to turn my back on you.’ I think that changes once they understand the consequences for themselves and for the society they live in and what it would mean if everybody thought and lived that way.”

David Schwinn, a business professor at LCC who teaches ethics, summed it up this way: “The students come into the class thinking it’s basically a no-brainer and then they walk away at the end of the course being as puzzled about it as I am. Ethics can be very complex because what is right or wrong, good or evil conduct in the workplace to one person or organization or country is not necessary right or wrong to other people, organizations or countries.”

Here are the members of the well-rounded group of experts taking part in what is expected to be a free-wheeling and fascinating discussion:

- Tamra Frei, Ph.D., and assistant professor of philosophy at Michigan State University who teaches a course in ethics.
- David M. Kozishek, Ph.D., and assistant professor at Michigan State University’s College of Human Medicine, department of Family Medicine and Center for Ethics & Humanities in the Life Sciences.
- Thomas Rasmusson, J.D., an adjunct professor in International Law and Foreign Relations Law at Thomas M. Cooley Law School.
- Lucy M. Smythe, an attorney, radiologic technologist, and LCC professor of health law & ethics, Community Health & Nursing Department, Health & Human Services Department.
- David Schwinn, a business professor who teaches managerial ethics at LCC’s Business Department
- Joseph A. Warren, Ph.D., J.D., and professor of history and humanities at LCC

Students, faculty and members of the public are welcome to attend a 5:30 p.m. reception on Tuesday just before the panel discussion.

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About Lansing Community College

Lansing Community College is Michigan’s third largest community college with more than 30,000 students attending each year. LCC offers courses in general education for those interested in transferring to a four-year institution, career and workforce development, developmental education and personal enrichment. To meet the professional development and training needs of regional employees, the college offers customized programs for credit, non-credit and continuing education. The University Center at LCC offers students the opportunity to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees from six partner universities on the downtown LCC campus. For more information, visit lcc.edu.