

Intellectual rationale: Individuals working in health care and technology professions are required to apply ethical and moral decision-making on a daily basis. To do their jobs safely and effectively, health care providers and technology professionals must understand much more than just the clinical or technical requirements of their jobs. They must understand the ethical environments in which they work and be able to apply a values-based framework to make ethical and moral decisions. Patient confidentiality and privacy, informed consent, and end-of-life directives are among the common scenarios requiring highly developed ethical skills in health professions, while artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and cybersecurity are among the areas requiring ethical decision-making by technology professionals. Training in applied ethics, a sub-field of philosophy, prepares students to successfully recognize, analyze, and propose solutions to issues that they face in their personal and professional lives. Applied ethics explores questions such as, *Do we have a moral duty to care for the poor? Is it ever appropriate to share a patient's health status? What should I do when I encounter unsecured data or proprietary information?* Preparation in ethics generally and in an applied context helps students live the mission of the college in the universal community and provides a framework for resolving dilemmas not just legally but with ethical integrity.

To better prepare associate degree students for meaningful careers in health care and technology, and to be citizens of the universal community, Trocaire College in Buffalo, New York, proposes, “Community and Mission: Building a New Applied Ethics Minor.” This 30-month humanities initiative will strengthen the college’s focus on ethical deliberation through creation of Trocaire’s first minor program for associate degree students. The primary goal of the new minor is to link applied ethics explicitly and deliberately across Trocaire’s general education curriculum and the associate degree programs in allied health, technology, and general studies.

Trocaire has established the following objectives to meet this goal: (1) build an interdisciplinary learning community of six humanities faculty members, two administrators, and a senior advisor from a peer institution; (2) learn from the work of two other Sisters of Mercy institutions of higher education as part of a community of interest and values; (3) develop shared definitions and a scaffolded approach to teaching applied ethics that works across the curriculum; (4) create and obtain approval from the Trocaire Curriculum Committee and New York State Board of Regents for a new minor in applied ethics; and (5) substantially revise three philosophy courses and create two new ones to deepen curricular connections in the new minor.

Audience: The new minor in applied ethics will serve Trocaire's culturally diverse, predominantly low-to-median income, 100% commuter student population of more than 1,200 associate degree students, especially the approximately 600 students pursuing degrees in allied health, technology, and general studies. Thirty percent of Trocaire students are from minority racial/ethnic groups, 30% are among the first generation in their families to attend college, and 21% are single-parent heads of household. Many enter college with difficulties in basic academic skills, including ethical deliberation, writing, and critical thinking. Our entrance examination, ACCUPLACER, indicates that 12% of students need help with reading. Students have difficulty with critical thinking and writing in essay form and have a lack of confidence in articulating their ideas. Trocaire helps students recognize their talents, maintain their motivation, and grow intellectually and emotionally as they pursue majors that translate into solid employment opportunities and increased family income.

The project will also serve six humanities faculty members and two administrators with intensive professional development, including engagement with peers at other Sisters of Mercy institutions.

Content and activities: Year one: Learning community (February 1, 2021 – January 31, 2022): During the first year of the project, an interdisciplinary Trocaire Learning Community (TLC) will engage in intensive professional development to establish shared institutional definitions of ethical deliberation and applied ethics; explore successful models for teaching applied ethics, especially in the general education, allied health, and technology classroom; and develop plans for the new minor. A primary outcome of this first year is to develop (1) a deeper capacity across the team in the teaching of ethics, (2) a shared institutional approach, and (3) an application to curricular content. The TLC will include two administrators, four philosophy faculty members, one English faculty member, and one general studies faculty member. The TLC will focus their learning around the shared commitment of Sisters of Mercy institutions to the pursuit of truth and knowledge and to the furtherance of the social, political, economic, and spiritual well-being of the human community. The TLC will meet monthly during the academic year. These meetings will feature group discussion of shared readings and/or presentations by TLC members or guest speakers. Shared readings will include, but not be limited to: Peter Singer's *Ethics in the Real World*, Robert B. Ashmore and William C. Starr's *Teaching Ethics: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, and Russ Shafer-Laundau's *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems*.

Additionally, the TLC will examine and learn from two successful ethics curricular initiatives that have driven meaningful campus change at other Sisters of Mercy institutions: the Atkins Endowed Center for Ethics, a center promoting moral reflection and deliberation in personal, professional, community, and civic life at Carlow University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and the Center for Human Dignity in Bioethics, Health, and the Holocaust (hereafter "Center for Human Dignity") at Misericordia University in Dallas, Pennsylvania. The

inaugural director of the Atkins Center will serve on the TLC as a Senior Advisor. In spring 2021, Trocaire will host representatives from the Atkins Center and the Center for Human Dignity for special meetings of the TLC, at which TLC members will learn about how Carlow has incorporated applied ethics into the curriculum of humanities and professional programs while enhancing our shared Mercy mission and embracing co-curricular activities. In fall 2021, if public health conditions permit travel, TLC members will travel by van to visit Carlow, where they will meet with multiple faculty members who have worked with the Atkins Center to learn more about the center's programming. (If travel restrictions remain in effect, the TLC will meet with Carlow personnel virtually.)

Trocaire will engage in exchange with faculty and staff from Misericordia through a partnership established as part of a recent NetVUE grant that Trocaire received from the Council of Independent Colleges. In an effort to leverage that funding for the benefit of the minor, Misericordia faculty will participate in professional development activities with members of the TLC and share information about and lessons learned from the creation of Misericordia's Center for Human Dignity in Bioethics, Health, and the Holocaust, especially as they relate to educating the next generation of health professionals.

Year two: Curriculum development (February 1, 2022 – January 31, 2023): During the project's second year, the TLC members will use their learning from year one to develop plans for the minor, revise three courses, develop two new courses, and obtain approval for the new minor from the Trocaire Curriculum Committee and New York State Board of Regents.

The new 18-credit minor will feature six courses. Trocaire has already identified five courses for the minor, which will be revised or created as part of the proposed project. The complete minor requirements and qualifying courses will be determined early in the second year

along with the goals and learning outcomes for the minor.

The courses that will be revised include: (1) Introduction to Philosophy (PH103), which will be required for all students pursuing the minor. This course also currently fulfills a humanities requirement in Trocaire's general education program; (2) Ethics in Health Care (PH205), a required course for all students majoring in allied health fields; and (3) Ethics in Data Science (PH206), a required course for all students majoring in technology fields. Students pursuing the minor will be required to take PH205 or PH206. The new courses will be Topics in Bioethics (PH350) and Ethical Constructs Through World Religions (PH301). (See Attachment 9 for course descriptions of the revised and new courses.)

Faculty will use the Association of American Colleges and University's (AAC&U) Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubric for ethical reasoning to guide the structure of the minor and course revision. According to the AAC&U, the VALUE rubrics "provide needed tools to assess students' own authentic work, produced across students' diverse learning pathways, fields of study and institutions, to determine whether and how well students are meeting graduation level achievement in learning outcomes that both employers and faculty consider essential."

During the course revision process, faculty will revise and develop the courses individually or in pairs using materials from the year one TLC meetings and with the VALUE rubric for ethical reasoning in mind. The TLC will continue to meet twice per semester during year two for faculty to share progress on their course revisions, solicit feedback on their syllabi, and engage in continued discussion. Consulting Dean Jennifer Blickwedehl will meet with faculty members individually, as needed, to discuss course development. In early summer 2022, Blickwedehl will submit the new minor and the revised and new courses to Trocaire's

Curriculum Committee for approval, which usually takes up to eight weeks. Once the Curriculum Committee has approved the minor and courses, Blickwedehl will submit the minor to the New York State Board of Regents for approval. The Regents typically provide approval within one to two months.

Year three (six months): Curriculum development (February 1, 2023 – July 31, 2023) In spring 2023, Trocaire will officially launch the new minor in applied ethics, and faculty will teach the revised and new courses for the first time. The TLC will meet twice during the spring to share results and lessons learned. Dissemination efforts will begin, and the summative evaluation will be completed.

Project personnel: The project leadership team will include: Dawne Bost, Assistant Dean for Academic Operations and Coordinator of the Mary Clare Development Center, as Project Director; Thomas Mitchell, Professor of Philosophy, as Project Co-director; and Jennifer Blickwedehl, Associate Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, as Consulting Dean. Amy Zielinski, Assistant Professor of Biology and Vice President of the Faculty Senate, will lead project evaluation activities.

Bost holds an M.A. in English and will soon complete her Ed.D. in Health Professionals Education. In her current role, she provides leadership support to the Vice President of Academic Affairs in the areas of curriculum development, academic policies, integration of mission in the curriculum, learning outcome assessment, and faculty professional development. Bost will coordinate TLC activities during year one, ensure that all project activities listed in the work plan are carried out, and serve as the liaison with the NEH and the Trocaire administration, including submitting all required reports to the NEH.

Project Co-director Thomas Mitchell holds an M.A. in Theology from Christ the King

Seminary, a B.A. in Philosophy from St. John Vianney Seminary, and an A.A. in Nursing from Trocaire College. He has taught at Trocaire since 1972, was named Full Professor in 1992, and has served as Dean of the Division of Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Allied Health and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. As Co-director, Mitchell will serve as a faculty lead in the TLC, helping to design, manage, and lead discussion topics for TLC meetings. Mitchell will also work with faculty throughout curriculum redesign.

As Consulting Dean, Blickwedehl will support Bost, assign faculty to teach courses, manage faculty participating in the project, ensure that all revised courses meet Trocaire's curriculum requirements, and steward the revised courses through the curriculum committee. (Trocaire faculty are unionized, and their contracts restrict them from participating in many administrative decisions and activities. Blickwedehl's role is critical for successful completion of project activities.)

The interdisciplinary TLC team will include project leadership and the following five faculty members: Amy Breski (general studies), Robert Kieffer (ethics/philosophy), William Korthals (ethics/philosophy), Michael Mitri (ethics/philosophy), and Solomon Nelson (English). Korthals, Kieffer, and Mitchell will work together to revise Introduction to Philosophy. Kieffer and Mitri will revise Ethics in Health Care, and Breski and Mitri will revise Ethics in Data Science. Kieffer will work with guest scholar William Schweers, Jr. to create Topics in Bioethics, and Mitchell will create Ethical Constructs Through World Religions. Nelson will work with the philosophy faculty to incorporate appropriate writing assignments and activities into the courses, and Breski will provide faculty internal support to ensure that Trocaire's Mercy mission and values are integrated into the new and revised courses.

Guest scholars: William Schweers, Jr., an attorney and Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Carlow University, will serve as the project's Senior Advisor. He was the inaugural Director of Carlow's Atkins Endowed Center for Ethics. Schweers is also Co-chair of the University Faculty Assembly. He received his J.D. from Duquesne University and a B.A. in English from Washington and Jefferson College. As Senior Advisor, he will participate in all TLC activities, share lessons learned from the Atkins Center, and support faculty members in the course revision and development process.

Institutional context: Trocaire College, a private, career-oriented Catholic institution of higher education located in Buffalo, New York, serves a culturally diverse, predominantly low-to-median income, 100% commuter population of more than 1,300 students in 25 academic programs, including three baccalaureate, 13 associate degree, and nine professional certificate programs. The majority of students (88%) pursue associate degrees in nursing, allied health, and technology. Students interested in the humanities major in general studies.

The humanities, which includes faculty in philosophy, English, and religious studies, are housed in the Art and Sciences Division. The College has a total of five full-time and six adjunct humanities faculty members. All students pursuing an associate degree at Trocaire are required to complete a minimum of 18 credits of general education coursework, including six humanities credits. Typically, students take English Composition (EN101) and Introduction to Philosophy (PH103) to meet this requirement. Additional humanities courses are required by individual major programs. For instance, students majoring in allied health and technology fields must take either Ethics in Health Care (PH205) or Ethics in Data Science (PH206).

Trocaire's Mary Clare Development Center will support project activities. The Center's mission is to support all faculty, promote excellence in teaching, and promote professional

development opportunities. The Center, of which Project Director Bost serves as the Coordinator, provides extensive faculty professional development with a trained staff and dedicated space and resources. Trocaire will collaborate with Carlow University and Misericordia University, both fellow Sisters of Mercy institutions and members of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education. Trocaire has partnered with both institutions in the past on professional development activities.

Follow-up and dissemination: Trocaire expects that initial enrollment in the new minor will be five to 10 upon its launch in early 2023 and that it will grow to at least 30 students within five years. The professional development activities pursued by the TLC will have a lasting impact on the humanities at Trocaire. The revised and new courses will continue to be offered after the conclusion of the grant period as part of the new minor and the health and technology curriculum. Trocaire expects that participating faculty will continue to revise their other courses, incorporating what they have learned about ethical deliberation. Beginning in year two, members of the TLC will share what they have learned with colleagues across the college through the annual mandatory faculty professional development days held in August. Members of the TLC will use a train-the-trainer model to showcase course adaptation for their peers. Members of the TLC will also share project results and lessons learned about incorporating ethics into professional programs with peers regionally and nationally. Participating faculty will make presentations at professional conferences and meetings, possibly to include those sponsored by the Assessment Network of New York, the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, the Council of Independent Colleges, and Niagara University's CCTL Committee. At least one faculty team member will write an article about their pedagogical experiences for publication in *Inside Higher Ed*, or another appropriate venue.

Evaluation: Amy Zielinski will lead formative and summative project evaluation efforts, which will include developing and administering pre- and post-surveys to all faculty members participating in the TLC professional development program. In year two, she will conduct in-person or phone interviews with most members of the TLC. At the end of years one and two, Zielinski will meet with Bost and Blickwedehl to complete the formative evaluation by discussing project activities, survey results, and any necessary adjustments to project plans.

During year two, the TLC will design a common learning outcome to allow faculty to measure ethical deliberation in the revised and new courses. Faculty will write and assess benchmarks for meeting learning goals for individual assignments and projects within courses. Individual course outcome results generated by faculty will be submitted to the evaluation coordinator for application to the more holistic VALUES critical thinking rubric.

Zielinski will collect and track the following benchmarks and quantitative measures: number of students enrolled in each of the revised courses; success rates on individual course assignments; and success rates on the individual course outcomes developed for measuring applied ethics in the revised and new courses. At the conclusion of grant activities, Zielinski will compile and compare all data collected throughout all 30 months to prepare the summative evaluation, which Bost will submit to the NEH, and TLC members will review in the final semester gatherings.

Following conclusion of the grant period, Trocaire will continue to track the project's lasting impact, with longer-term success to be measured by an increase in (1) the number of students pursuing the applied ethics minor, (2) the number of allied health and technology courses that feature content related to ethics, (3) the number of scholarly publications and conference presentations written and delivered by Trocaire faculty, and (4) sustained interaction and collaboration with faculty at other Sisters of Mercy institutions of higher education.