



## The Center for the Study of Ethics

by Happiness Peterson  
November 28, 2004

John F. Kennedy wisely noted, "Too often we enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

The UVSC Center for the Study of Ethics is aiding students and community members in avoiding this pitfall by offering opportunities to understand the world around them. They are encouraging evaluation of issues that, in earlier days would have been considered inappropriate for a dinner conversation, but have now been mainstreamed to the point that it is more uncomfortable not to have an opinion on them.

The key to forming educated opinions is dialogue. In a community considered by much of the state, and even the country, as being strictly conservative, staunchly religious, and somewhat homogeneous in appearance, the Center for the Study of Ethics is filling a crucial role in creating civil dialogue on controversial issues, thus fostering a more educated community.

The Center for the Study of Ethics was founded by Dr. Elaine Englehardt in 1993, and has since chartered a steady course. The center's director, Dr. David Keller, and associate director, Brian Birch, joined the ranks in 1996, and have led the program to its current success.

According to Keller, the main focus of the Center is to "organize, host, and promote public forums on controversial ethical topics that tend to be emotional, in a non-threatening way." Keller believes that when people are afraid of their beliefs being attacked, they won't express their views. This inhibits fair and honest civil discourse.

The center is a neutral, non-politically affiliated office that ensures its programs allow all views of the political spectrum to be expressed. This point has been a crucial one in light of recent criticisms of the school; great effort is spent in ensuring that knowledgeable experts and speakers are brought in from many sides of the political and religious spectrums.

The Center seeks to provide a more extracurricular approach by bringing lectures and panels that David Keller hopes students will look back on and

have "a memory of a vibrant experience."

The Center is putting UVSC on the map as it takes a leadership role in the increasing emphasis on ethics in nationwide college curricula. In 2001, UVSC was awarded the prestigious Theodore M. Hesburgh Award for Faculty Development to Enhance Undergraduate Teaching and Learning at the American Council on Education Conference in Washington D.C.

The award was given in honor of UVSC's Ethics across the Curriculum program that was developed by the Center for the Study of Ethics. According to the Hesburgh website, the award is presented "to the college or university judged to have the most effective faculty-development program."

No longer is UVSC in the shadow of BYU. UVSC addresses things in a different context. As David Keller explains, "the mission of BYU is to study reason within the framework of faith, while UVSC can explore faith in the context of reason."

Some community members have criticized the center as having an agenda; yet again, its directors emphasize the neutrality. An old saying states, "A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still." The Center upholds the wills of its students and community, but also supports the notion of popular cultural icon, Stephen R. Covey that people should "seek to understand before seeking to be understood." For more info contact David Keller @ 863-6363.

