ABSTRACT. "Schools of business are being blamed for much of the unethical behavior in business today" (Harcourt, 1990: p. 17); "Ethics can and should be integrated into coursework throughout students' college careers" (Spencer and Lehman, 1990: p. 7); "business schools have been charged with inadequate attention to ethics" (Bishop, 1992: p. 291); "The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) encourages schools of business to incorporate business ethics throughout the curricula." (David et al., 1990: p. 26). These quotations indicate the concern for providing ethics education in today's business curriculums. In 1976, the AACSB urged business educators to include ethics in their course curricula, however, over 15 years later there is still concern as to whether the coverage of this topic in the business curriculum is adequate.

A review of the literature indicates that professors are beginning to integrate this topic into its curriculum. But what are the techniques that work? And is the topic of ethics truly being integrated into the entire business curriculum?

This research assesses the integration of ethics into the business curricula today. Graduating seniors in the college of business of several universities were questioned to determine: (1) the courses in which the issue of ethics was addressed; (2) how much time was devoted to the issue by the professors; and (3) the methods employed to address the issue, and students' perceptions of their effectiveness.

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A 1988 survey of AACSB member school Deans regarding the teaching of business ethics indicates that ethics, as a curriculum topic, received significant coverage at over 90 percent of the institutions (Schoenfeldt et al., 1991). Schoenfeldt et al. found that increases in both integrated and separate course offerings are occurring and that joint efforts among departments are occurring more frequently. So there is much evidence that schools have recognized and responded to the demands for ethics education, but just what are the students actually receiving from this focus? Are students really learning about ethics? And, if so, what are the teaching techniques that they find most effective? And is
the topic of ethics truly being integrated into the entire business curricula?

The purpose of this research is three-fold. First, this study assesses the student's perceptions of their business ethics education. It is also the purpose of this study to determine if students are being exposed to ethical issues through multiple courses: that is, is the topic truly being integrated throughout the business curricula? Bishops (1982) suggests that in place of a single (ethics) course that students simply get out of the way, a cross-curricular approach should be used. If students are faced with ethical issues through multiple courses then they are exposed to diverse ethical dilemmas: and only then will students be equipped to transfer this learning to their lives after college. Finally if ethics is being covered in classes, what methods are teachers using and how are these methods viewed by students? This study attempts to answer this question as well.

The study

The study involved students enrolled in business capstone courses during the Fall of 1992 or Spring of 1993 from eight institutions geographically-dispersed throughout the United States, with various enrollment sizes. All but two of these had AACSB accreditation. Surveys were distributed to students during their classes and then picked up by the professors. A total of 395 surveys were completed (n = 35 from non-accredited schools).

Females comprised 47% of all respondents and males, 53%. Seventy-five percent of the respondents were under 25 years of age, and an approximate breakdown of respondents by undergraduate major is as follows: accounting (38%), general business (19%), marketing (12%), management (11%), finance (11%), economics (3%) and other (6%).

An instrument was designed to gather information regarding: (1) the amount of class time specifically devoted to discussing the issue of ethics in various business courses; (2) the teaching methods used to address the issue of ethics; (3) the methods of instruction students regarded as being most and least effective; and (4) an overall measure of how students felt their undergraduate instruction prepared them to deal with the issue of ethics on the job.

Questions included on a survey reported in a 1990 article regarding perspectives on business ethics in management education (David et al., 1990) were also included in the present study to assess students agreement with several other statements regarding ethics: (1) should undergraduate business instructors emphasize ethics in lectures; (2) were ethical issues emphasized in undergraduate business programs; and (3) overall, how students rate their undergraduate instruction in business ethics. These questions were included in an attempt to compare the perceptions of individuals who were students from 1981–1985 to students in 1993.

The results

As indicated in Table I, a clear majority of 1993 business students feel undergraduate business instructors should emphasize ethics in lectures (82%), however, the percentage is lower than that of 1981–85 students (92%). Fourteen percent of today's students are undecided.

These findings also indicate that the 1993 students believe ethical issues are being emphasized more in their undergraduate programs (65% vs. 24%). Only 12% of 1981–85 students considered their undergraduate instruction to be good or excellent and 33% of these considered it poor; whereas 42% of today's students rate their instruction as good or excellent and only 8% rate it as poor.

These findings suggest that students are recognizing the emphasis business schools are placing on the issue of ethics, and even believe professors are doing a fairly good job of presenting it to them.

But has ethics education been integrated throughout the business curricula? Table II indicates student perceptions of the amount of class time devoted to discussing the issue of ethics in various business courses. Not surprisingly, the issue of ethics was integrated the most into Business Law classes (76% of students reported the topic was discussed at least one full class