CASE STUDY: Ethics in action

Ethical business practices, new thinking on corporate ethics and developing ethical leadership talent were a major focus of the Scotiabank Ethics in Action conference.

In 2013, the Rowe School of Business at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, hosted a unique public conference, Scotiabank Ethics in Action, dedicated entirely to ethics in business. Some 96 participants engaged in practical discussion and education about ethical leadership. Islay McGlynn, Senior Vice President, Atlantic Region, Scotiabank, explained the Bank’s involvement: “Ethics are embedded in Scotiabank’s culture and instrumental to what we do every day. By celebrating ethical leadership through this forum and awards program, we hope to encourage and strengthen ethics in business.”

Student-run conference gives hands-on experience

The annual conference, and Scotiabank’s support, is designed to foster a generation of business leaders for whom ethics is woven into the fabric of enterprise. Scotiabank’s support of Ethics in Action has four components: a case competition for business students; a video/essay contest on ethical leadership; the presentation of the Scotiabank Ethical Leadership Award to a Canadian business leader; and the annual one-day conference. In addition to competing for the awards, students ran the conference. Peggy Cunningham, Dean of Dalhousie University’s Faculty of Management, explains, “Rather than learning from lectures or textbooks, this initiative gives the students from all four of our schools a hands-on opportunity to be ethical leaders.”

Winner of the Ethics in Action essay contest, Irina Bojinescu, Corporate Residency MBA Candidate, Dalhousie University, described how fundamental ethics are not just in business. “If we act unethically, in life or in business, we’ve truly lost our way. We must strive to act ethically.” The team from the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, made up of students Marc-André Maheu, Clémence Jonsson, Sarah Benoit and Lucas Broussoux-Coutard, won the video award for their work on current business practices in Quebec. They said, “(The work) gave us the opportunity to identify the organizational barriers which prevent strong ethical leadership.”

Parker Baglole, Bachelor of Business Administration student from the University of Prince Edward Island and a member of the winning team for the case competition, summed up the
impact of the competition: “I truly believe I am prepared to be a more ethical individual as a result of this competition.”

The co-recipients of the first annual Ethical Leadership Award were Chief Phil Fontaine, an Aboriginal leader, and Sir Graham Day, an experienced Canadian businessman. Both were nominated for demonstrating clear and decisive ethical leadership throughout their careers.

*Nominations for the 2014 Scotiabank Ethical Leadership Award can be made at www.ethicsinaction.ca.*