

Ethics and Education

May 20-21, 2004

On May 20-21, 2004 the Fulbright Program in Ukraine and the Mykolayiv Petro Mohyla State University of Humanities sponsored an international conference "Ethics in Education". The conference sought to identify the means and conditions for developing better ethical awareness of future Ukrainian university professionals and focused the attention of educators and citizens on ethics in academia. More than 50 professionals from Ukraine, the U.S. and Switzerland took part in the conference. Ukraine was represented by faculty, students and administrators from Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Mykolayiv, Odesa, Kharkiv and Kherson. There were over 200 attendants at the plenary sessions, while attendance at working sessions, some held simultaneously, ranged between 20 and 40 participants.

Participants of the section on "Ethical Standards and Problems of University Education in Ukraine Today" concluded that ethical standards of education in Ukraine are quickly undergoing substantive change

in which both positive and negative tendencies are evident. For example, education has lost some of its prestige among many students who are pursuing education only for the degree. This has raised several ethical problems, primarily an increase in academic dishonesty. An opposite trend shows that a new and younger generation is demonstrating a pragmatic thirst for knowledge that requires real learning and cannot be quenched by official transcripts. Participants of the section on "Academic Honesty and its Role in Society" identified causes of dishonesty including:

- Tradition, which includes a legacy without freedom in a totalitarian past
- Absence of legal and organizational preventive methods against plagiarism and copying
- Overworked teachers and students (academic work loads include up to 12 subjects a semester)
- Ease of information access via the Internet and absence of control by teachers



Opening of the Conference on Ethics and Education, Petro Mohyla University in Mykolayiv

A sea-worthy vessel ready to go



Discussion in the section on “Educational Codes of Ethics — Just a Formality or a Necessity” resulted in several recommendations for adopting honor codes in Ukraine:

- Setting up working groups of student volunteers to develop a university honor code
- Inviting professors and administrators to work with these groups and to contribute intellectual and moral support
- Launching media campaigns on different levels to explain the importance of honor codes
- Establishing networks and university consortiums interested in developing an Honor Code for Ukraine

Ship-building factory in Mykolayiv



Dishonesty in academia is a serious social disease which needs to be addressed immediately. Several basic preventive methods were proposed:

- Establishing university honor boards to include students and teachers
- Setting up a Ukrainian data base of students’ work to control plagiarism
- Introducing qualitative changes to the format of student independent work and testing in order to discourage plagiarism
- Instituting copyright protection legislation

Participants of the section on “Perspectives for Developing Moral Values in Education” concluded that the main approach for developing ethical values should be to establish an educational code of ethics which will address the relationships between students, teachers and administrators, identify the means and consequences of implementing it, and evaluate results and provide for appeals. It is necessary to combine the efforts of non-government organizations, cultural institutions and universities, to engage the community and mass media in discussing educational ethics, and to create an Internet forum dedicated to this topic.

A group of participants of the Ethics and Education conference

