

# WALTON OUTREACH

TYSON CENTER FOR FAITH AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

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### Faculty/Staff Testimonials

#### **Vikas Anand, MBA Director**

Having a center such as the Tyson Center is of tremendous benefit to MBA students. Presentations and contributions from the Tyson Center help students to understand that there is more to business than numbers and shareholder satisfaction, and that those additional considerations may actually be important for the long term health of the organization. As our programs get more constrained with required courses the offerings of lectures and other activities from the Tyson Center makes a difference to the MBA Program, and through the MBA students to society in general.

#### **Theres Stiefer, Director, Center for Management and Executive Education**

I read this somewhere and I believe it fits perfectly here. The intentions and motives behind every decision made on behalf of a business, an organization, its leadership, and its employees manifest into positive or adverse consequences based on the transparency of the original intentions and motivations with which such decisions are made. The center and Dr. Neal have instilled in me the practicality of “spirituality in the workplace” – it is an everyday, useful, desirable, and necessary method for attaining business success at any level in any organization.

#### **Richard Redfearn, Grant Programs Manager**

The study of business is tied to the study of Success. In books like *In Search of Excellence* and its many spin-offs, authors Peters and Waterman and others pose the now “common sense” fact that a firm’s employees - and the job satisfaction of ALL employees - are crucial to success. More recently, Collins and Porras in *Built to Last* and Sisodia, Sheth, and Wolfe in *Firms of Endearment* have helped businesspeople learn that a firm’s core values of passion for employees and sense of social responsibility for society at large are the best of sound business management

practices. Here in our home at the Sam M. Walton College of Business, it is the Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace that leads all of the business disciplines in the consideration of the great worth of being “committed to higher values and to living in alignment with principles taught by the faith and spiritual traditions [from the TFSW Mission statement].”

The success of the Walton College is inherently interwoven with our successful understanding of the principles of ethical and spiritual interconnectedness that are taught and advocated by Dr. Judi Neal and her staff at the Tyson Center. To appreciate this, try an exercise: read the Walton Credo and the Vision of the TFSW side-by-side. There is a strong correspondence of the powerful concepts of vision...respect...community.

Speaking as an advocate for external support for Walton College scholarship, I also draw upon the teachings that Dr. Neal shares with our community. The shared values of the Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace are evident in many of the grant proposals we will be submitting, implicitly and explicitly. Written in the style of an NSF merit review, the presence of the TFSW as a full partner in the Walton College automatically creates a “broader impact” for ANY application that we make for external funding, because the critical success factors of celebrating “what is good, humane, and effective about leadership and organizations” (again quoting from the TFSW Mission) are an integral part of our community of scholars.

### **Michele Halsell, Director, Applied Sustainability Center**

The Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace adds a much needed dimension to how we conceive of business as a key actor in the world and how we relate to employees and foster workplaces that are ethical and inclusive and values-oriented. Faith and spirituality in the workplace can be the starting point for values-driven leadership and decision making. Faith and spirituality is not only a dimension of diversity in the workplace, it can also be instrumental in fostering an environment that values other forms of diversity in the workplace. The Tyson Center is a key asset that helps to differentiate the Walton College from other business schools.

### **Carole Shook, Instructor, Logistics and Supply Chain Management**

The Tyson Center is an extremely valuable resource for the Walton College. It is the only center of its kind at a public university. Judi has done several presentations for my classes when I taught Human Capital, and I have sent my students to numerous events sponsored or put on by the Tyson Center. Several students approached me with an interest in learning how to get involved in the Tyson Center activities after Judi’s presentation. All students have given positive feedback when they attended Tyson Center events. Usually they say, it isn’t about being forced to learn about or join a particular religion, it is about being accepting of the whole person which

will help me be a better businessperson. A lot of the topics relate in some way to ethics – something all students, but especially business students, need a firm foundation in, especially since we do not have a course which all business students must take in ethics. I think getting students to talk about religion and how it impacts their workers is important. After Judi's presentation or a Tyson Center event, we are able to talk more about religion and how each of us are different with religion and many others ways. This sort of presentation allows students to be more open. Students do not realize this in school because they usually have a lot in common, but in the real world you will frequently work with people very different from you in many ways. If they can start thinking about tolerance in learning about religion as it relates to the business world they are able to better handle differences they encounter in others through school and in their early careers.

The Tyson Center contributes in many ways to our campus. It brings the topic of religion and business together. We are unique among business schools because of the Center. Problems with religion are common in the workplace. For example, some Muslims have certain times of the day that they must pray according to their religion. A local manufacturing company had switched around the starting time of shift changes, and this had a direct effect on those workers, who went on strike, and the plant shut down. Only through negotiation and willingness to listen was the situation resolved as it has already become very ugly. These are some of the basic tenets of management. Our students must start getting out of the box when they think of managing employees. Some companies have chaplains that assist people with some of life's hardest things – such as death, divorce, problems with the kids/spouse, addictions. Understanding that when you are a manager that you will have to deal with these sort of problems that your employees are having helps you to be a better employer. If students do not think about these things then the bottom line profits could be affected because for every company the people are the thing that always make the biggest difference. Without the Tyson Center these sorts of things would never be discussed. Instead there would only be theories. The Tyson Center provides a way for theories to be shown in action.

The Tyson Center has been very important to me. It, along with Judi, have been welcoming of me. Frequently I find because I am not a professor I don't have the same opportunities to participate in activities and committees. The Tyson Center is willing to allow anyone to join. In fact, some of the professors that have participated are atheists. Religion is considered to be a tabu topic in higher education in many ways. The Tyson Center allows the discussion to get started and in the end we see that we are not all that different no matter what our religion is. The Tyson Center has provided numerous helpful events that I have grown from and become a better instructor. Many of the events have dealt with how to manage the people with different religions. The money for the Tyson Center was given with a heartfelt desire to better the students of the University of Arkansas and to help make our school special in a unique way. Religion is important to me. It is wonderful to be able to demystify the different religions through the Tyson Center and help people see that really underneath it all we value the same

things no matter who we pray or don't pray too. If the world could learn to understand that then it might be a lot better place to live in. I hope that the Tyson Center continues to be supported through the Walton College so that we can teach our students to be good stewards to the cares and desires of others. The Tyson Center opens the door to that no matter what a student feels about religion. I have written several cases based on things I learned at the Tyson Center that I have used in the classroom. In addition, the Tyson Center was a lifeline to me when I went through some bullying in my former department. It gave me strength to know that somewhere within the Walton College I was valued. I was making a difference as well by helping students learn how to deal with their own difficulties.

There are many guest speakers that are brought to campus to talk about faith and spirituality. The Center just existing reminds students that it's ok to talk about faith. We developed the project I've been using in my classes as well. Professionally it has opened my eyes to the importance of accepting the whole person and how important it is to find ways to further incorporate this material into the class. Personally, I have appreciated your constant kindness and frequent willingness to help. Over the past couple of years I've had a hard time thanks to my coworkers who are out of touch with reality. The only positives in my work life day to day have been the students and the Tyson Center - it represents something so positive and with so much promise. I thank you for letting me be a part of it!

### **Anne O'Leary-Kelly, Associate Dean**

Reactions to Judi Neal's presentation on faith and spirituality in the workplace in a leadership class:

The students were unaware that companies addressed issues of spirituality at work. In particular, they were surprised by the fact that some companies have specified offices and individuals who address these issues. They expressed interest in the topic. Several students suggested that they enjoyed the discussion and felt it was a nice addition to our conversations and learning about leadership. They stated that they felt the discussion was very even-handed. In particular, one student who expressed concern to me before the class about having someone talk to us about religion/spirituality at work approached me after the session to let me know it was very interesting and handled very fairly. Judi does a wonderful job of presenting this information fairly and without privilege given to any one perspective.

The Tyson Center for Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace provides the opportunity for students to talk about spirituality issues within the context of their courses. Also, it provides opportunities for guest speakers and leadership roles for students who are highly interested in spirituality at work.

I really appreciate having the opportunity to bring these conversations to students in class. I do not feel qualified or adept at such discussions, and Dr. Neal is a wonderful resource and facilitator of these conversations. I believe that religion/spirituality issues will be increasingly influential in the workplace, so we are ahead of the pack in teaching our students about these issues.

**Karen Pincus, Professor, Accounting**

As a class speaker in Ethics and Corporate Governance, Judi's presentation on her experiences as a whistleblower and the many changes it brought to her life makes a strong impression on my students. There is a huge difference between reading about an ethical dilemma and hearing someone speak about how they faced a dilemma in the workplace. The Tyson Center has benefitted honors students by being willing to work with them on their honors thesis projects, particularly those students who wish to do a case study.