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Center for Leadership and Ethics dedicated at ESU's School of Business

EMPORIA, KAN. — The hallways of Cremer Hall echoed with the sound of Silent Joe ringing this afternoon during the dedication ceremony for the Koch Center for Leadership and Ethics at Emporia State University. Students, faculty, staff and alumni joined in celebration alongside the Emporia community for the new academic center housed in the School of Business.

Initial grants of \$750,000 established the center and originated from the Fred and Mary Koch Foundation, Koch Industries, Inc., and three School of Business alumni and Wichita-based Koch employees: David Robertson, president and chief operating officer, Koch Industries; Dale Gibbens, senior vice president, human resources and public sector, Koch Industries; and Kim Penner, president, Koch Pipeline Company, L.P.

"I'd like to sincerely thank our friends at Koch for investing in the future of Emporia State University," said Dr. Michael D. Shonrock, president of Emporia State University. "The Koch Center for Leadership and Ethics aligns with the university's new mission statement emphasizing leadership and will bring many opportunities to faculty, staff and students at Emporia State."

The center is led by two co-directors, Dr. Kevin Johnson, university general counsel and professor of law, and Dr. Steven Lovett, assistant professor of business law and ethics. These leaders will focus on exploring the impact of principled entrepreneurship on a free society and applying market principles to management.

As the academic year begins, the center already has goals in place to make an impact at the university. Johnson and Lovett have been busy focusing on initiatives that include awarding faculty research grants, creating a speaker series, workshop development and collaboration with both campus and community organizations on projects that are consistent with the center's mission.

"I am genuinely excited to be an active part of taking operational and management knowledge, gleaned from the real world of private enterprise and placing it directly into an academic environment where the principles and tools of principled entrepreneurship can be exposed to a process of critique, development, expansion and innovative application," Lovett said.

Since launching this past June, six faculty research grants have been awarded to recipients in academic fields ranging from information systems to physics to finance. Each faculty member awarded a grant will embed a serious discussion about the impact of leadership and ethics in a free society or free market society in a course they are instructing. The theme, nature and structure of each project will be designed by each recipient to fit the course and is grounded in academic freedom.

Dr. Jorge Ballester, professor of physical sciences, was one of the Emporia State faculty members to receive a grant funded by the center. Themes found in his research include equipping future leaders with usable scientific thinking tools and promoting scientific objectivity by placing authentic science in the center of the discussion, rather than by participating in politicized debates.

“Future leaders with a solid foundation in science will be better prepared to confront science-based problems such as energy production and climate change,” explained Ballester. “In this way they can help preserve and increase the long-term value of our institutions, country and human civilization. Scientific integrity will serve as the model for ethics.”

Dr. Kristie Ogilvie, dean of the school of business, is enthusiastic about the limitless potential of the Koch Center for Leadership and Ethics and its positive impact on students.

“The launching of the center brings new resources to both faculty and staff across the university,” said Ogilvie. “I am thrilled to see a variety of faculty bringing discussions of leadership and ethics into their classrooms and am inspired by the interactive setting the center will bring to our students.”

The center also brings a visiting scholar to the university, Dr. Brent Kinghorn, who will teach within the School of Business for the 2014-15 academic year. During his time at Emporia State, Kinghorn will hold classes in business communication, ethics and entrepreneurial management.

“As the visiting scholar, I have the ability to directly execute the center’s initiatives and then note their effects,” explains Kinghorn. “This opportunity is unique in that I get to be a part of a nascent effort at Emporia State and to investigate how principled leadership and ethical decision making might be taught in a way to benefit instructor, learner and society.”

Koch employees Robertson, Gibbens and Penner are all Emporia State alumni who have stayed connected with their alma mater. Robertson is a 2006 Distinguished Alumni, Gibbens serves on the Business Alliance for the School of Business, while Penner currently serves as chair of the Emporia State Foundation’s board of trustees.

During the dedication of the Koch Center for Leadership and Ethics, School of Business graduate and one of the center’s founders, Kim Penner, spoke on behalf of his fellow alumni about their inspiration for giving.

“I am honored to be part of today’s celebration and to speak on behalf of my fellow Koch Emporia State alums,” said Penner, president of Koch Pipeline Company. “We have each been inspired by the new vision for Emporia State University led by President Shonrock as well as the direction Dr. Ogilvie is taking the School of Business. Most importantly, we have been impressed by increased enrollment, campus improvements and the support from the Emporia community. All of these improve the lives of Emporia State students, who will go forward and make positive and lasting contributions to our society.”

The grants that founded the Koch Center for Leadership and Ethics personify the vision of the Now & Forever campaign, the largest and most comprehensive fundraising campaign in Emporia State’s history. To date, the campaign has secured \$28.7 million in gifts, grants and deferred gifts.

“We’re raising the sights of what’s possible at Emporia State University,” said DenaSue Potestio, president/CEO of the Emporia State University Foundation and vice president for university advancement. “There’s no better time than now to think strategically and intentionally about the future and connect the power of philanthropy to the power of progress.”

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