Enron Whistleblower’s Address Blows Away BELIEF Week Audience

Sherron Watkins, Guest Speakers, and Golf Event Highlight COB Ethics Week

This year, BELIEF Day turned into BELIEF Week. At least 15 classes had guest speakers during the week of October 8–12 — a number that has grown and will likely increase in the coming years.

Enron whistleblower Sherron Watkins commanded attention as Wednesday evening’s keynote speaker. The former Arthur Anderson and Enron accountant enlightened the crowd on how arguably the business world’s greatest scandal went down. The crowd was enthralled by both the jail time served by the felons as well as the courage Watkins summoned to do the right thing.

LEAD also operated its second annual “Take an Ethical Approach” golf promotion, where over 30 students tried to hit a golf ball into a target on Dad’s Pond behind Barsema Hall. The event raised awareness for both LEAD and Sherron Watkins’ keynote appearance. LEAD would like to thank KPMG and Northwestern Mutual for contributing prizes for the golfers who challenged the island target.

LEAD Members Compete at Eller Case Competition

Senior accountancy majors Stephanie Brown and Andrew Howard represented LEAD and NIU at the 10th Annual Eller Collegiate Ethics Case Competition October 25–26 at the University of Arizona. The duo prepared their case on the ethics of hydraulic fracking in western Maryland over the course of the month leading up to the trip to the Copper State. Brown and Howard presented their solution — to use fracking as a bridge to renewable energy — to a panel of eight judges who hailed from Eller’s board of corporate sponsors. Though the team did not fare well in the competition’s first round, Brown and Howard shined with a coolly-handled Q&A session in round two.

“I’m proud of the composure and confidence they showed in spite of the adversity they faced leading up to the event,” Sam Kunde said, who made the trip as a co–coach with Bill McCoy. “It was a great effort.”

Boston College won the competition with a technically–sound presentation that also recommended fracking. The University of Florida, University of Idaho, and Concordia University rounded out the finalists.

LEAD now looks forward to next year’s competition, which will again take place in late October.
Catching up with...
Keith Karum

Keith Karum (B.S. Marketing ’09, M.S. MIS ’10) was a founding LEAD member who helped lay the groundwork for the organization it is today. After graduating with his master’s in 2010, he went to work for Alcatel–Lucent in Naperville. “As a Quote Administrator, I use our internal systems to set up orders for new wireless/wireline equipment for telecommunication carriers such as Verizon, AT&T and Sprint,” Karum said.

Karum, now a Lombard resident, makes ethics one of his priorities in the working world. “One of the main reasons I wanted to work for Alcatel–Lucent was because of the high ethical standards of the people I worked with during my internship,” Karum said. “It wasn’t just a training that people had to take once a year to remain compliant; these people were truly honest in their personal lives and at work.”

Building ethical leaders for success in their business careers is a cornerstone of both BELIEF and LEAD. Karum sees the business ethics mission at NIU boiling down to two competing factors: honesty versus the bottom line. “It really builds upon what most people already have at their core. As business students, we are taught to maximize ROI and reduce costs – but should we do this at the cost of being dishonest? Teaching ethics at the college level helps reinforce this.”

Karum’s professional success is just one example of our LEAD alumni putting what they’re learning at NIU into practice. For current members of LEAD, he offered some advice. “It really comes down to doing what is right,” Karum said. “I would advise to never compromise your values by taking short cuts. This goes a long way in life as well as your career and it is something that is always noticed.”

Sponsor Spotlight:
CAT’s Dave Templin

Caterpillar accountant and NIU graduate Dave Templin has been involved with BELIEF since 2005, when his company was one of the program’s founding partners. “I remember when it was just Pam Smith; we didn’t have LEAD and BELIEF was kind of a dream,” Templin said. “It was just Pam trying to do promotion amongst the students and faculty. To see a full-time director, everything we’ve done with BELIEF Week – it’s a great journey.”

Though he recognizes the progress BELIEF and LEAD has made, Templin still sees how much there’s left to do. “It’s good to congratulate ourselves for what we have done, but that’s about ten percent of my thoughts – 90 percent is what we still need to do.”

The student interaction is what makes the experience most worthwhile for Templin. “Whether it’s teaching in the classroom or being a part of the case competitions,” Templin said. “At the end of the day, the faculty are important too, but it’s really all about the students. That’s my favorite part.”

On the Agenda
LEAD Tackles Classroom Presentations in the Fall Semester

LEAD is beginning to hit its stride as an impactful organization in the College of Business. Perhaps the best indicator of this is the invitations we’ve received from professors to speak in their classes this semester. UNIV 101, ACCY 370, and UBUS 310 will be checked off by the end of the month.

Tim Aurand’s UBUS 310 invitation is the standout. The marketing professor generously afforded LEAD 75 minutes on November 26 to speak on “Integrated Ethics & Corporate Social Responsibility.” LEAD has decided to split the time between a 45-minute PowerPoint courtesy of Dr. Pam Smith that showcases cognitive biases dealing with ethics, and then a 30-minute “Ethical Feud” game show segment.

The game show segment, a play off of Family Feud, has a chance to be a real hit. LEAD conducted a survey of UBS 310 students on ethical topics, such as “What is the most ethically-challenged profession?” Two teams of five contestants will compete to see which team knows the class’ consensus on a number of these ethical questions. If all goes well, LEAD hopes to make Ethical Feud a staple for presentations and student organization appearances to come.

McCoy’s Corner
An Update from the BELIEF Director

It has been a little over two years since I became the first full-time director of the BELIEF Initiative. Since that time, the initiative has become a full-fledged program with increasing support. Faculty remain committed to providing direction to the program and keeping our mission at the heart of all we do. Our corporate partners have increased and continue to play an active and vibrant role in strengthening the foundation of BELIEF. The LEAD student organization is the effective conduit utilized to spread ethics education awareness throughout the college. Lastly, we are now beginning to actively involve our LEAD alumni, many of whom has expressed an interest in supporting LEAD and BELIEF after graduation.

With a strong student, faculty, corporate, and alumni base, BELIEF is poised to make even more of an impact in the College of Business and on business schools throughout the nation. Thank you for your support, for without you, there would be no program.

– Dr. Matt McCoy