The virtues required of good teachers are virtues which are virtues in everyday life, and those virtues essential for teaching effectiveness are courage, loyalty, maturity, self-discipline, and competence. To me, the point is clear: A good teacher is a morally good person. From this perspective, given equally sufficient education and training, an educational institution composed of teachers in which these qualities are more highly developed should produce better-educated students than an otherwise equal educational institution in which they are less. Now, to evaluate the truth of these claims.

As a practitioner of the scientific method, I would want to conduct a controlled experiment to determine the answer. However, a controlled experiment cannot be established in this instance. It is impossible to create an institution of moral (“good”) teachers and an opposing institution of immoral teachers, and then record who’s students are consistently “better-educated” or “more successful” in their careers (assuming we could even agree on operational definitions of these variables). Not only can we not conduct experiments to determine the answer, we cannot even evaluate empirical data. Although we could examine the academic records of former students and the records of their successes or failures in post-graduate careers, the goodness of their former teachers cannot be measured. And so many other factors influence success or failure in academics and in careers that no definite conclusions would likely be possible based solely on examination of past records. Rational analysis, however, provides an alternative approach. By understanding how being a good person relates to the role of a teacher, we may better understand and more accurately evaluate my claims.

Start with trust. I think most of us could agree that a workable, operational definition of trust is individuals acting in accordance with the expectations of others. To be effective, any educational process, large or small, must possess the characteristic of obedience. Students must do what their teachers direct if education is to be controlled to any extent and if learning is to occur.

Students obey in one of two ways: willingly or unwillingly. If unwillingly, obedience is obtained through intimidation and fear. Willing obedience, however, is a product of trust. Based on experiential knowledge, I know that students who trust their teachers and accept their directions complete those directions with greater effectiveness and greater learning than students who do not trust their teachers.

Why do students come to trust their teachers? The answer, in part, involves morality. Students trust their teachers when they expect those teachers to make morally right decisions. One question arises immediately, however, concerning this claim.

Those who contend that people act out of self-interest might also contend that moral rightness is a separate issue. They might claim that students trust teachers when they believe teachers will make decisions that serve the interests of their students. In the classroom, this claim implies that students would trust teachers who were competent in

The educational welfare of one’s students and the pursuit of the larger institutional purposes may, however, sometimes conflict.

Craig W. Steele
Department of Biology and Health Services
Edinboro University, Edinboro PA 16444
their profession and concerned with the education of their students. The educational welfare of one's students and the pursuit of the larger institutional purposes may, however, sometimes conflict.

In order to increase the chance of (financial) success for the educational institution, teachers may be expected, for example, to teach according to outdated course outlines or syllabi which would be too costly or too administratively difficult to update. They might be directed to teach using outdated or, literally, antique equipment which would be too costly to replace with modern equipment. They might be directed to teach classes of hundreds of students in cavernous lecture halls or to accept doubled or tripled class sizes in order for the institution to minimize faculty salaries and maximize tuition monies. They might be directed that research, not teaching, should be their primary concern, and that decisions on tenure and promotion depend on their ability to attract extramural research funding, with its concomitant "overhead" monies. Conventional educational practice demands that teachers direct their students to proceed as if these unacceptable situations did not exist, even though the education of the students might be jeopardized. Exclusively self-Interested students, therefore, would distrust a teacher who makes morally right decisions, if the students recognize that such decisions might put their education at risk.

Students would trust a teacher who puts their welfare above other concerns, although they might realize that the institution would not consider such a teacher to have the "right" moral perspective or to be "politically correct." Some students might also realize that an educational institution with many such teachers would not be an effective organization.

There is more to trust, however, than simply serving the interests of students. Even if it were true that people always act out of self-interest (a view with which I do not agree), there must be more to consider. A teacher receives directives and must decide to comply or not. If strict self-interest prevailed, only a teacher who made decisions that would benefit the interests of the individual student would be trusted.

We will ignore the problems of teachers acting in their own best interest in applying the self-interest theory to those involved in education and focus on the student's perspective. Usually, a teacher's decisions would benefit some of the students, but not others. No teacher acting on the basis of students' interests could consistently satisfy the self-interests of each.

Students, whether they express the idea clearly or not, recognize a teacher who favors one individual as a teacher they cannot trust. A teacher acting to further the self-interests of only one, or a few, students would not be acting fairly in the sense of recognizing each student as an individual worthy of equal consideration.

I believe students recognize fairness as a fundamental moral quality, and that they expect teachers to possess it. They will trust a teacher only if they expect the teacher to act fairly. They will, in general, trust a teacher who exhibits certain moral qualities, which makes it reasonable to claim that they will trust a teacher if they believe he or she is a good person.

I should also mention another basis for trust. Teachers who have convincingly demonstrated their teaching ability and professional competence often enjoy their students' respect. Do they also enjoy their trust? Ability has, undoubtedly, generated trust on occasion.

On the other hand, teachers who successfully accomplish institutional objectives by expending minimal resources certainly satisfy their administrators. Predictably, such teachers may make unfair decisions, especially if they extend little value to their students as persons. They can be expected to act according to agendas best suited for achieving their own goals. The educational welfare of their students will be a consideration, but it will have significance only in the pursuit of personal and institutional success. For those directly teaching students as opposed to administrators or administrative faculty, the difference becomes critical in developing trust. At the classroom level, with time, students will recognize the difference between teachers who try to treat them fairly and those who see students primarily as means to their own ends. Students will real-
ize that teachers who consider only personal and institutional accomplishments use their students merely as tools for advancement. Thus, we return to the importance of fairness and the greater issue of being a good person. If fairness is important in developing trust, several considerations arise. To act fairly, our behavior must be consistent with respect to standards that the group recognizes as principles that should be acceptable to group members. Students use group principles in justifying and evaluating each other's actions; principles which, in fact, constitute the qualities by which students identify a good person.

What is the nature of the principles (or standards) that students regard as applicable? If students consider such principles because of their concern with fairness, then they must apply reason in evaluating the fairness of their teachers' actions. The principles must be considered from a perspective that provides equal consideration to each individual student. Over time, consistent actions by a teacher that meet this standard of fairness is the initial step in developing trust. Fairness is an essential element of what it means to be a good person in an educational environment.

To examine this idea further, other principles of conduct that should be collectively recognized in an educational institution must be considered. Our rational analysis, therefore, leads us to the issue of professional ethics.

What principles should an educational institution recognize? What generalizations can be made concerning a professional teaching ethic (PTE) that establishes standards of conduct for members of the educational institution? What principles make sense as those teachers would accept? If the ethic is understood by members of an educational institution and is accepted by them as the codification of acceptable principles for justifying teachers' actions, the PTE will also serve as an effective behavioral constraint. The ethic would play a critical role in any decisions by teachers that directly affect the educational welfare of students.

How can we determine the appropriate elements of a compelling PTE? First, the members of the profession must recognize its provisions as the appropriate standard for morally evaluating their actions. Second, the PTE must make sense to members of the profession. It must be acceptable because it makes sense; otherwise, group members will neither know how to apply the PTE consistently, nor will they consider it compelling.

The PTE must also actually affect behavior. Teachers must desire to act in accordance with it because they recognize it as the way to justify actions to others. The PTE should consist of principles or values that teachers could not reasonably reject.

Without the background of a moral education, however, teachers may not be motivated to act in accordance with moral guidance. A moral education is the process of learning what is acceptable behavior and recognizing that others expect such behavior. However, most people who grow up in a social environment, learn what is acceptable and what is not. Although they may not always adhere to such guidance, they do develop the motivation to be seen as justified in their actions. Obviously, teachers are the products of various social environments. Most teachers, however, should be expected to understand the fundamental social value of what society expects regarding morally acceptable behavior.

Perhaps the first step in developing a PTE is to recognize the qualities that teachers must possess to be successful in teaching, i.e. to produce educated, literate citizens. In my opinion, these qualities are the virtues of courage, loyalty, maturity, self-discipline, and competence. These qualities constitute functional requirements of educational activity. Properly educated and trained teachers should understand their importance. To be compelling and effective, a PTE, must incorporate these qualities.
Functional requirements and fundamental social values of society apply to any educational institution; the more professional the institution, the more strongly they apply. Thus, these two factors should be the sources for the principles that comprise the PTE. These principles should define what it is to be a good person in an educational environment.

We can now return to my claim that an educational institution whose teachers possess the teaching virtues will be more effective than one whose teachers do not. If such virtues are incorporated into the PTE, and if teachers become committed to the PTE, they will be committed to developing qualities that enhance success in teaching. If teachers, and their administrators, are committed to the fundamental values of their society, again logically incorporated into the PTE, such commitment put into practice will generate trust. And trust allows a faculty (a “teaching force”) to make maximum use of its capabilities.

A PTE that is a compelling moral system for a teaching force makes the moral commitments of a teacher the highest order desire he or she possesses. That is what being “morally motivated” means — that we recognize what we really ought to do. If the virtues functionally required for successful teaching are those of the accepted PTE, the teaching force will indeed be more effective than one in which such virtues are less developed. A teaching force whose members possess the virtues of moral (and physical) courage, loyalty, maturity, self-discipline, and competence is superior to one equal in ability but lacking these virtues.

If properly structured, efficiently promulgated, and widely accepted, a PTE will help develop a potent teaching force. Leaders of educational institutions striving to improve their organizations should place development of a compelling, effective PTE and development of the teaching virtues high on their priority list. By doing so, they truly place the students first, because these virtues all bear on the establishment of trust among teachers and students, a pivotal condition that can be an important “learning multiplier” in the classroom.

Candidates for positions in the upcoming elections are:

For President:

Tim Mulkey, Indiana State University
Jeanene Yackey, Fontbonne Science Academy

For Steering Committee:

Bill Brett, Indiana State University
Thomas A. Davis, Loras College
Dick Wilson, Rockhurst College
Norman Woldow, Maryville University

Full Curriculum Vitae will appear in the next issue of Bioscene.