

# How Alverno teaches valuing in decision making

"In the bioethics field, people are dealing with value issues all the time — things like whether to tell a patient the truth, or whether to use expensive technology. Because of my education at Alverno, the first thing I do is try to assess what are the values frameworks of the people involved."

Kris Wegner Tym '92 graduated from Alverno with a double major in chemistry and philosophy and is now pursuing her master's degree in bioethics at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

"People often say things like, 'In our country or in our system, this is what we do.' They don't try to find out any other way of looking at the issue," Tym said. "I always start with a sort of values assessment. For me, the process is so ingrained now, it's the way I think. I don't know how I could go back and try to do it any other way."

Tym's approach to moral and ethical issues is not an accident. It is the result of careful thought and hard work of faculty members at Alverno College. They routinely consider questions such as:

*How will our students become responsible professionals?*

*What processes do they go through when they make professional decisions?*

*What is our responsibility for engaging the dilemmas we face?*

Alverno faculty always have paid close attention to the moral dimensions of what they are teaching. But in the last 21 years, they have been engaged in an explicit effort to de-

**Levels of Valuing  
in Decision Making**

*Level 1*  
*Identify values specific to a situation*

*Level 2*  
*Interrelate and analyze the values relevant to a situation, recognizing their strengths and limitations within*

*Level 3*  
*Relating values to a situation and determining a decision*

*Level 4*  
*Engaging in valuing in decision making in multiple contexts*

*Level 5*  
*Analyzing the value foundations of major fields of study*

*Level 6*  
*Apply to your theory of action in a professional context*

velop a framework within which they can guide student learning in valuing.

In fact, valuing in decision making is one of eight abilities which form the core of the curriculum at Alverno:

- Analysis
- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Valuing in Decision Making
- Social Interaction
- Global Perspectives
- Effective Citizenship
- Aesthetic Response

Each of these abilities is taught in courses throughout the curriculum. Students must demonstrate proficiency in these abilities, as well as mastery of the knowledge and information specific to their studies. As with each of the eight abilities, valuing in decision making has six levels, through which students progress during their years at Alverno. (See the accompanying box.)

"We teach valuing as a process," explained Zohreh Emami, associate professor of business and management, who also coordinates Alverno's valuing department. "The idea is not to have students develop a certain set of values, but to help them identify and elaborate and analyze and act on values."

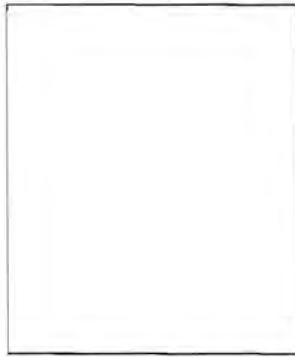
*Alverno's approach to teaching Valuing in Decision Making is spelled out in two books produced by faculty:*

*Valuing at Alverno: The Valuing Process in Liberal Education* (1980), \$8.

*Valuing in Decision-Making: Theory & Practice at Alverno College* (1992), \$10.

*They are available by writing to:*  
The Alverno College Institute  
Alverno College  
3401 South 39 Street  
PO Box 343922  
Milwaukee, WI 53234-3922.





# VALUES: The character factor

by Janie R. Hatton

Today it appears that anything goes and no one is responsible for anything or anyone. Misogyny, violent attitudes, disdain for life and acceptance of a disposable society erode the essence of education and of humanity. Because those who survive are no longer willing to acquiesce to such distortions of social civility, many educational communities have sounded an urgent call to action.

The call to action seeks to reinvest in the family unit in new and complex ways. That is what needs to be done, but it is not enough, and it is not nearly soon enough. Many remedies must be developed or reinstated — remedies that can be applied to even the most minute aspects of life. We have to seek change in our schools, churches, worksites, industrial sites and related institutions. If we fail to do this, we cannot survive.

Historically, whenever a vast majority of Americans has a strong spiritual foundation, the nation is healthy. Whenever reverence to a greater power is abolished, thwarted or suspended, people do not have the strength to develop moral consciousness. To engender wholeness, it is imperative to develop a respect for self, for others, and for property, and a reason for existing. For many young people, this is the need for orderly, healthy living, which includes:

- Knowledge of God;
- Knowledge of self, and
- Knowledge of the environment.

In the past, we as a people in America were taught values and introduced to morals and mores and charac-

ter building by parents, neighbors, elders, teachers, religious leaders and peers. But today, a social tug of war preempts the desired "good ole days" society. Those who would teach values and social mores face the threat of legal entanglements.

Many people seem to think that the rights of freedom and equality of opportunity have eliminated the community's need for cooperation and civility. Efforts to advance diversity and individualism have led to separate agendas for people of different races, genders and economic, political and religious leanings. The question is: Whose values will be valued by whom?

We Americans must learn that we cannot "have our cake and eat it too." I dream of a world where people can agree on what is deemed to be right, where people

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don't start suing each other every time they have a disagreement. No one is free until we all are able to voice what is most important to us and have our beliefs respected.

There is still the opportunity for optimism and hopefulness; reality has not closed all the portals. Moral consciousness and conduct are learned social behaviors. We can educate people to avoid the excesses of our society.

Many American families live by a redefined parental/family strata that stands firm against invasive practices that have twisted lives in our society. They turn off the television and music videos that tell our young people that nothing is wrong and everything is all right. Instead of letting telephones and beepers and separate vacations tear families apart, they share family stories. Instead of entertaining young people, they educate them in reasoning, respect and reverence.

Today, technology and the media revere those who have financial status. But that is not enough. When we in the schools look into our students' eyes, we find despair. We need to put before our students people who are fair, just and competent; people who care about our environment and other people; people who stand up for their values.

What we need is a collective consciousness that calls into question the "cesspool" thinking that has led us to this sad situation: Garbage in - garbage out. The conscious voice speaks to us from various points of reference — our experiences, hopes and conduct. If we become introspective, we know what is right and what is wrong.

The prerequisites for change are the recognition of a need to change, thoughtful analysis of the perceived problem, and a repertoire of resolves. In most instances, challenge is best countered with simplicity. We need capable, compassionate people who define their missions and are willing to eliminate excuses. We need persons of character to implement values that sustain a people.

No, everybody won't agree on what values to teach and to accept. But everyone does agree that we are off track and bound for destruction. Letting the train of immorality hurl forward is lethal.

We can start today reuniting families. If we lift every voice and sing a pledge of allegiance to morally based people, we will catapult the family unit as the saving grace of our communities and our schools.

**Voices, speak out!**



*Kathy Brunder, standing, takes the role of a beleaguered teacher. The simulation was designed to bring home to class members...*

## Simulation helps education

*In one "classroom," the teacher has to find chairs so that each student has a place to sit. When at last everyone is seated and she begins to teach, someone knocks on the door and asks if all students have their lunch tickets. After some commotion, the lunch tickets are settled, and the teacher begins again. She is interrupted by another knock: Several students are due to leave the classroom for remedial work, but there is confusion about which students should go. As the teacher gets that problem sorted out, the principal comes in with some questions about bus transportation.*

*Across the way in another "classroom," students are well into the lesson. They have viewed a short film, discussed the subject matter and are busily drawing pictures. The principal comes in and reinforces the lesson by asking questions about the students' drawings.*

This simulation actually took place in an Alverno Philosophy of Education course. Equity and equality in education was the topic of the day. All students in the class -- along with six visiting students from Aurora Weier Educational Center, a bilingual alternative high school -- had assigned roles. The simulation was planned and





*in an ill-equipped classroom, issues of equity in education.*



*Kari Brennan and Neil Klosterman, standing, demonstrate that teaching and learning are easier when there are no interruptions and the classroom is well-equipped.*

## tion students prepare for realities of the classroom

implemented by a team of four students who had read about and researched the issues involved.

"You can read about ideas and ideologies until you're blue in the face, but we wanted our classmates to actually *feel* what it's like to be in an inequitable situation," said Kari Brennan. "Everything we'd been reading about took form that day.

"Not only did this show that we really understood what we were reading," Brennan said. "But now we all know what an effective way of learning the material this (simulation) is. Now when we go to teach, we know that people really learn things when they are involved."

In a second part of the simulation that dealt with the effects of tracking students, the two "classrooms" moved together. This time, everybody had a place to sit, but they were arranged in rows that were named according to the level of the students' abilities — in-class tracking.

"This showed that you can have inequalities within a classroom," explained Brennan. "From the reading we did, this kind of inequality is usually more damaging to students than a lack of resources is."

"Afterwards, the students gave feedback about how it felt to be singled out as 'lower' than other

students, or not be allowed to go on a field trip," said Kathy Brumder, another member of the team. "None of it was good. They felt that tracking alienated students and disrupted learning."

The final part of the team's presentation was a panel discussion featuring the high school students. They were brought into the presentation because one of the team members, Barbara Barth, is their teacher at Aurora Wcier.

"They were very frank about their school experiences with racism and violence -- all the things that led to their seeking an alternative education," said Barth.

"We had been reading about students who are at risk," Brennan said. "Here we had six live people who could tell us what it was really like and how it affected their lives. It was very powerful."

"Having the high school students provided some reality for my classmates, and it was wonderful for my students," said Barth. "They realized they had information that was sought after, and they were listened to and treated with respect. They're proud of themselves, and I'm proud of them, too."

Julie Stoffels, associate professor of education and coordinator of secondary education at Alverno,

teaches the course. She saw other benefits of including the high school students in the activity.

"They come from a school where financial resources are limited, but where the attitude of the teachers is one of caring and acceptance," Stoffels said. "It helped these soon-to-be teachers understand that, as a teacher, you may not be able to control the environment, but you can create an atmosphere that will communicate to the students that you believe they can learn and that will help them to learn.

"This class is a culminating course; most of the students taking it are graduating or only have to do their practice teaching before they graduate," Stoffels continued. "We teach for valuing at Level Five in this course. The students have to analyze the historical and philosophical development of educational thought, and investigate how social and cultural forces impact on theories and practices.

"The students not only have to develop their own philosophy of education, but they have to decide how they will communicate it to others," she said. "They really were demonstrating their professionalism as teachers."





an individual's range of opportunities in life hinge upon the state of his or her health. Yet, the notion of universal access clearly conflicts with physicians' autonomy to choose their patients, primacy of individuals over the community, and society's strong resistance to government involvement in the health-care sector.

### Changing our values framework

To accommodate cost realities in our health-delivery system, while acknowledging the importance of access, additional values must be woven into our current values framework. My own reading and observations have led me to believe that we must not abandon our commitment to autonomy and patient advocacy, but we must blend in our commitment to additional values: *fair access*, *personal responsibility* and *community*.

To ensure *fair access*, we must minimize financial, geographic and cultural barriers to a minimally adequate level of health care. We also must impartially distribute available health-care resources based on health-care needs, rather than on other individual or group differences. The clear ethical challenge inherent in this prescription, however, is defining the "minimally adequate level of health care" to which everyone ought to have access. To be acceptable, the definition should be constantly reviewed to accommodate changing information on medical capabilities and consumer preferences. Moreover, to assure accountability, those who define the "adequate level" should also be bound by the definition.

*Personal responsibility* must also be incorporated into the values framework of our health-delivery system. Each person should, within his or her means, help bear the cost of the system as a whole. In addition, each person must assume greater responsibility for his or her own health. Our traditional emphasis on individual freedom must be balanced by education and counseling

about lifestyle and behavior that affect health.

Finally, our commitment to each individual's importance requires our health-delivery system to incorporate a sense of *community*. The importance of community can be affirmed through community-rated insurance premiums; through guaranteed health benefits, despite job changes or poor medical history; and through affording citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions as to whether and how the system serves their needs. These changes would give all of us a sense of ownership of our system and confidence that our needs and the needs of our loved ones will be met throughout our lives.

While fair access, personal responsibility and community historically have not been important to the values framework of our health-delivery system, these values always have been deeply anchored in the moral traditions we share as a nation. America was founded on the belief that all individuals deserve equal opportunity to pursue their goals in life, and *fair health-care access* helps in attaining that ideal. Justice, another moral ideal to which our nation always has been dedicated, requires that individuals make equitable contributions to basic public goods, and equitable contribution implies the notion of *personal responsibility*. Our long-standing celebration of the diverse moral, religious and cultural traditions joined in our single nation supports our growing commitment to *community* in our health-delivery system.

It is not possible in this limited discussion to provide a precise blueprint for the design of a new values framework for our health-care system. It does seem clear, however, that in order to properly address cost realities within a health-care system that lives up to our moral ideals, we must strive to incorporate the values of fair access, personal responsibility and community, while maintaining our commitment to autonomy and patient advocacy.





# Valuing is at heart of senior nursing clinic

*Alverno nursing students advocate for elderly clients and enable them to live out health-care values: Patient autonomy, fair access, personal responsibility and community*

"This course has expanded my idea of nursing. I've only done hospital nursing," said Lynn Adams, a graduating nursing student. "This is very different. I can explain and provide information, but the clients have the choice to do it or not. They're in control."

Adams is part of an Alverno Weekend College course in which nursing students manage a health clinic for residents of a city housing center. Her group works with residents at Becher Court on Milwaukee's South Side. The weekend program enables registered nurses (RNs) to continue working while earning their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees.

Every other Saturday, students weigh in residents who choose to attend, take their blood pressure and review medications. They consult privately with the residents to discuss any questions or problems. Then, students provide an educational program on an issue which residents have requested.

"Many students stayed with the same clients each week," said Stephanie Roelke. "We identified the client's concerns and developed an action plan. These people really trusted us; they would share everything with us. They saw us as part of their community here."

"I think that was because we didn't just come in and tell them what to do," added Kathy Schrank,

an acute-care nurse with 25 years of experience. "We conducted a community assessment to see what resources are available nearby, and worked to determine the psychosocial needs of the elderly. We studied the developmental tasks of the elderly.

"We observed that their core values don't change, but may shift with changes in their lives," Schrank con-

tinued. "One thing I learned is that finances are a big issue here. The residents put a high value on their independence, and the ability to live within their means is an important part of remaining independent. So we tried to direct activities that would help them save money and empower them to remain independent."

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*Becher Court residents Virginia Lewandowski and LaVern Maruncah and student Kathy Schrank reminisce about old photographs of leisure-time activities.*

ing a letter to an old friend. Roelke went to a recreation therapist and obtained pictures of leisure activities from the 1930s and 1940s. She had residents sit in a circle, showed the pictures, and asked them to reminisce about their own earlier days.

"This group has done a yeoman's job of bringing out the residents' feelings and providing comfort as well as information," said Delores Nix, assistant professor of nursing, who supervises the class.

"The key is that, at the end of the experience, the student realizes that everybody has different values, but we can still help them if we know where they are coming from," Nix concluded. "Caring is the essence of nursing. All the valuing and ethical considerations come out of that."



Alverno College encourages its students to go into their communities and act on the value systems which they identify and strengthen through their work in valuing in decision making. As an institution, Alverno also models that kind of involvement and action.

## Students learn to raise their voices

"...people could walk around with their hat turned every which way and not get shot..."

"...that all the drive-by shootings would stop..."

"...to be able to not have things stolen from you and getting ruined..."

"...that everyone, everywhere will be able to come out from hiding from violence, gangs, drugs and guns..."

These were some of the responses given by sixth-grade students when asked to complete this statement: "My dream of peace is..."

How do you begin to help these students see that they are part of a community? That they are not just victims, but have a voice in their community? That they have civic rights and responsibilities? That their education is important in preparing them to exercise those rights and responsibilities?

Alverno College, Milwaukee's Alexander Graham Bell Middle School and the Harvard Graduate School of Education teamed up to consider those questions and to find answers that work.

Barbara Kiemen, a sixth-grade teacher at Bell, and Andrea Johnson, associate professor of professional communication at Alverno, spent a week at Harvard's Institute on Writing, Reading, and Civic Education. There, they developed a program for the middle-school students, "Experiencing Civic Identity." Based on a course at Alverno that helps college students develop effective citizenship through a study of gang violence, the program integrates social studies, language arts and civic education.

"There are very few students in our school who have not been touched by violence," said Kiemen. "We started out by asking the kids to talk about it. What was nice was that they started thinking about the question: How can we make our future better? A lot of them didn't know they could do anything."

To acquaint students with the idea that they belong to a community, they toured their own school and were introduced to counselors, administrators, staff, and other teachers.

"We told them that we all work really hard — everybody in this building — and we're all responsible for you.



*DREAMS OF PEACE: Sixth-grade students from Bell Middle School hold doves inscribed with their classmates' ideas of peace. They are, top row from left, Latisha Tramble, Jessica Cziske and teacher, Barbara Kiemen. Front row from left, Derrick Taylor and Cimmaron Mannan.*

You are a Bell Middle School kid," Kiemen explained. "We wanted them to see themselves as belonging to this community, and to see communities as alternatives to gangs."

Students viewed movies about the Jewish Holocaust and South African Apartheid, and wrote their reactions. They read writings by Maya Angelou and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall about violence, and wrote responses. Next, the girls in the class invited Wisconsin Supreme Court Judge Janine Geske and other local leaders to speak at a mother-daughter breakfast.

Debra Kenner, director of the Milwaukee Education Trust, read her favorite poetry to the students. Students wrote to thank her. Some included poems of their own.

"It's delightful to see that they trust this woman to take them seriously and write back to them," Kiemen said. "The whole idea is that they know if they write to somebody, they are part of something. Now they know they have a voice; one person can make a difference."

"Their writing skills have certainly improved, and we have been able to look at the different ways writers write, and the different kinds of writing for different purposes," Kiemen said.

The boys in the class wrote and invited Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson to a father-son luncheon. The governor did visit the school on April 15, and while there, he signed into law four education bills. It was further evidence that the students are an important part of their larger community.

"Valuing, citizenship and problem solving are abilities all Alverno students must demonstrate," Johnson said. "This project is an example of how Alverno as an institution practices what we teach."