

NPEI's Advisory Board Chair is being Recognized by Luther College for His Outstanding Service to the Community



Dr. John Helgeland, the NPEI's Advisory Board Chair, is being recognized by Luther College for his outstanding service to the community. Paula J. Carlson, President of

Luther College, writes that his award is "based on criteria which include meritorious service to society, loyalty and service to Luther College and fidelity to the ideals of Luther College...It will be a pleasure for us to recognize your accomplishments and service."

Dr Helgeland is being recognized, in part, for the work he has done for the NPEI and the Group Decision Center at NDSU. He and a small group of committed faculty saw a growing need for enhanced democratic participation in society. They worked diligently to establish the first ethics institution in the state of North Dakota. The NPEI's central questions, as articulated by Dr. Helgeland, are what kind of world do we want to live in, and how do we get there? To answer these questions, Dr. Helgeland put into place the requirement that we not think in the immediate future, but plan for the next 10, 50, or even 100 years. This extended time horizon has allowed the NPEI and those working with it to think in innovative ways about how to solve both old and new problems. The questions and time line require pragmatic paradigm shifts in decision making rather than ineffectual, reactive responses.

Because of Dr. Helgeland's dedicated efforts, the North Dakota Board of Higher Education chartered the NPEI in 2000. Dr. Helgeland served as NPEI Director from

2000 until his retirement in 2015, and he has since taken on the task of Advisory Board chairperson. During Dr. Helgeland's tenure, the NPEI at NDSU has addressed important ethical challenges facing the area and nation, such as the ethics of agriculture, education, political life, health-care, and business. Our last series of public panels linked success to education and healthcare. Panel participants included the presidents of Moorhead State University at Moorhead and North Dakota State College of Science, local business owners from healthcare, chiefs of police, and other leaders in worlds of education and health.

In addition, the NPEI has supported projects aimed at improving the quality of life in the region. One such effort examined changing values in places undergoing rapid transformation through oil development. The end result was a set of values and moral principles people used to make decisions about changes in their communities, which has been published in leading journals and distributed widely to the public. The work on community values and principles is being continued through the NPEI's engagement with refugees and immigrants in the Red River region.

Dr. Helgeland was central in the formation of NDSU's Group Decision Center in 1998. The GDC's function is as an electronic consensus-forming laboratory comprised of a network of 40 laptop computers equipped with award-winning software that offers businesses, government organizations and non-profits an easy to use, high-return-on-investment way to receive quick analytical results. Groups can participate in strategic planning, surveys, and decision making through a system that allows each person to simultaneously and

anonymously contribute to consensus building. One of the first successes was the reconfiguration of North Dakota's judicial districts, which could not have been achieved with other methods open to politicking and face saving.

Finally, Dr. Helgeland has been a dedicated proponent of an Ethics Commission for the North Dakota legislature. The NPEI put on a panel to discuss the proposal, which drew a number of state representatives and senators from both political parties. The NPEI has since been asked by a state legislator to assist with efforts to create the commission.