

2025-2026

ANNUAL REPORT

**CENTER FOR ETHICAL AND
SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE
LEADERSHIP**

A LETTER FROM

THE CESRL TEAM



We have created a foundation to foster values-driven, ethical business leaders who are **empowered to have a positive impact on society.**



Dear CESRL Friends and Supporters,

As we conclude our fourth academic year of programming, for the Center for Ethical and Socially Responsible Leadership (CESRL), we are proud to reflect on all that has been built and accomplished to impact the Broad College of Business students and community. We have created a foundation to foster values-driven, ethical business leaders who are empowered to have a positive impact on society.

CESRL's student-centered programs are designed to transform Broad College into a vibrant hub of active engagement and personal growth, ultimately laying the foundation for successful careers. Programs this year included Michigan State University's second Ethics Week, large scale Ethics lectures, including Sherron Watkins - whistleblower for the ENRON scandal. We partnered with the State of Michigan and their Rehabilitation Services division to expand our experiential learning programs for our Executive MBA program. We continued our popular Lunch and Learn Series and hosted the Ethics in the News undergraduate case competition, and the third MSU Sustainability Debate. Again this year, we have increased student engagement by nearly 50%.

By integrating ethics across the curriculum and supporting our faculty, we aim to enrich teaching and learning college-wide. Increased faculty engagement has been a key part of this effort. Over the past three years, CESRL has awarded 30 teaching and research grants totaling \$100,000. These grants have the potential to impact 2,000 students annually.

Central to CESRL's mission is amplifying connections to real-world organizations and fostering cutting-edge research within the Broad College. Through robust partnerships with campus programs and external entities, the Center hosted several signature events this past year designed to bridge the gap between academia and industry practice. CESRL brought world-class expertise to campus during the 2025-2026 academic year. Feature lectures by prominent figures such as Sherron Watkins and Kay Firth-Butterfield, the worlds first Chief AI and Ethics Officer, provided our community with invaluable, firsthand insights into navigating contemporary ethical landscapes. We look forward to continuing our mission with an exciting line up of programs in the 2026-2027 academic year.

With gratitude,



ANJANA SUSARLA
FACULTY DIRECTOR



BETH HAMMOND
MANAGING DIRECTOR



CESRL IMPACT AND STORIES

Elevating Ethics and
Social Responsibility

SHERRON WATKINS, ENRON WHISTLEBLOWER

Sherron Watkins is best known for her role as the whistleblower at Enron. In 2001, she alerted leadership to the accounting irregularities that eventually led to one of the largest corporate scandals in U.S. history. Her decision to speak up—at great personal and professional risk—was a defining act of ethical leadership.

Since then, Sherron has been a leading voice in conversations about corporate responsibility, governance, and the importance of values in business. She has testified before Congress, advised leaders across industries, and inspired countless students and professionals to think more deeply about what it means to act with integrity in challenging situations. Her story is not just about exposing wrongdoing, it's about the responsibility each of us carries to do what is right, even when it is hard.

Sherron started her time on MSU's campus in Allison Dellapelle's Accounting 201 class with over 400

undergraduate students. Dellapelle is well regarded by students and has received a teaching grant from the Center for Ethical and Socially Responsible to help infuse ethical concepts into her classes. Topics covered in ACC 201 was the Fall of Enron & Creation of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, Forensic Accounting & Decision Making, and the impact of whistleblowing. Students were given the opportunity to ask Sherron questions about her experiences, the impact of whistleblowing and the field of accounting.

Sherron moved from the classroom to a lecture and filled the room with hundreds of students, faculty and staff. The audience heard about Sherron's journey to accounting, her career path that lead her to ENRON, and her experience seeing unethical business behavior firsthand and what actions she took. The event ended with audience questions, and a long line of people wanting to talk directly with an industry leader.

RESPONSIBLE AI

As AI reshapes industries from finance to healthcare to supply chain, the next generation of business leaders need to navigate the ethical, strategic, and organizational dimensions of artificial intelligence. Business leaders can no longer treat responsible AI as a compliance exercise. Instead, future leaders need an understanding of accountability, transparency, and human-centered design of AI.

The Roy S. Pung speaker series in Spring 2025 brought this mission to life by connecting students with a thought leader who grappled with these challenges in the real world. We were delighted to welcome to campus Kay Firth-Butterfield, former Head of Artificial Intelligence and member of the Executive Committee at the World Economic Forum and is one of the foremost experts in the world on the governance of AI. We also hosted a lunch and learn session on responsible AI.

The positive momentum and energy from these events is the springboard for the certificate program in AI Ethics and Sustainability which will debut in 2027. We hope to inculcate an understanding of the principles of responsible AI in concrete business decisions: how firms govern algorithmic systems, where automation creates risk, and what it means to lead with integrity when the technology itself is still evolving.

By anchoring responsible AI education in practice, we want to transform learning outcomes from passive awareness into active, critical judgment—exactly the kind of thinking Broad graduates need to lead responsibly in an AI-powered world.



The discussion on how AI could affect the future of the job market—and how we can adapt and prepare for it—was incredibly valuable.

Student Participant



The Future of Ethical Leadership

The positive momentum generated by CESRL's Responsible AI programming is laying the foundation for the AI Ethics & Sustainability Certificate launching in 2027, helping students develop the judgment and leadership skills needed to navigate an increasingly AI-driven world.

SUSTAINABILITY DEBATE



One of the goals of the Center for Ethical and Socially Responsible Leadership is to provide experiential opportunities for all of our students. One of our signature events is the Sustainability Debate, which was founded in 2024. This event pairs teams of two students to compete directly against another team to argue the affirmative or opposition side of a timely, and complicated business scenario. Past topics have included the impact of mandatory corporate carbon disclosures on net zero economy, the role of ESG in corporate decisions, and is nuclear energy the right solution for the grid demands of AI. These complex topics give our students

the space to conduct some serious research and prepare to defend their position on the argument.

The debate is a great opportunity for our students to practice and improve their critical thinking and communication skills, while also meeting their Broad 360 requirement for ethical competency and learning. The purpose of Broad 360 Integrative Experiences Requirement is to encourage students to expand upon their coursework themes through experiential learning and co-curricular activities. This requirement incentivizes students to explore further, apply their knowledge and practice skills

necessary to their long-term professional success within 6 areas, including ethics.

The Sustainability Debate is judged by industry experts who challenge our students to prove their arguments with data, expand their thinking, and perform at the top of their abilities. Over the past three years we have had over 100 graduate and undergraduate students compete in the Sustainability Debate. The overwhelming feedback from the students is focused on the unique format of a formal debate, and how this experience elevated their comprehension on the topic and their communication skills.



Where Ideas Meet Evidence

The Sustainability Debate is judged by industry experts who challenge our students to prove their arguments with data, expand their thinking, and perform at the top of their abilities. Through rigorous questioning and thoughtful discussion, students are encouraged to consider multiple perspectives, strengthen their reasoning, and develop the confidence to communicate complex ideas in a professional setting.







CESRL IN NUMBERS

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

2967

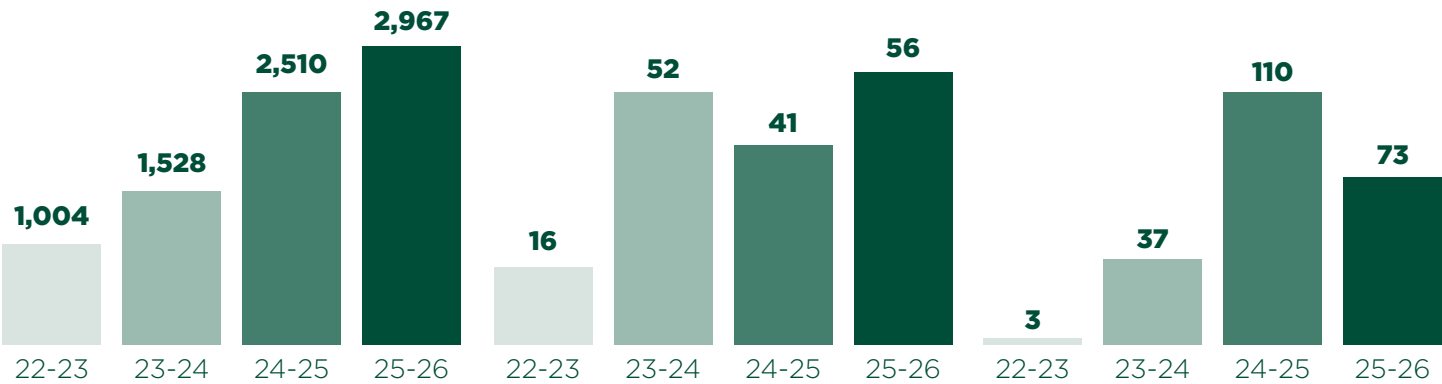
NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENGAGED

56

NUMBER OF STUDENT PROGRAMS OFFERED

73

STUDENTS ENGAGED IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



STUDENT SURVEY

Across our signature events, over 1,700 surveyed students agree:



LEARNED SOMETHING VALUABLE



WERE INSPIRED TO ACT IN A POSITIVE WAY



WOULD BE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING A SIMILAR PROGRAM IN THE FUTURE

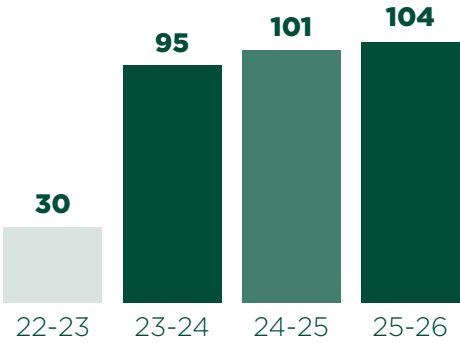


THOUGHT THE PROGRAM WAS WELL EXECUTED

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

104

TOTAL BROAD FACULTY INVOLVED WITH CESRL



30

GRANTS AWARDED TO MSU FACULTY TOTALING OVER \$100,000





FACULTY GRANT AWARDEES

Infusing Ethics and Social Responsibility in the Broad College, in Partnership with Faculty

Integral to CESRL's mission is its partnership with college faculty, aiming to cultivate **thought leadership** in ethics and social responsibility while simultaneously infusing these topics in classroom instruction. Each of our grant recipients below help extend Broad's commitment to ethics and social responsibility, through curriculum development or topical research.

RESEARCH GRANT AWARDEES



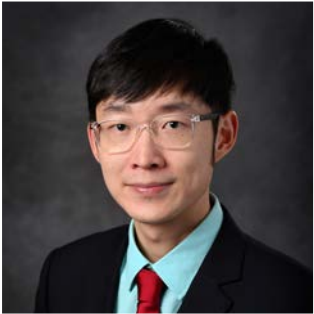
Jordan Barker

Supply Chain Management

"The research focuses on the time-to-recall decision for serious medical recalls. These recalls have the potential to harm, and in some cases fatally harm, consumers. Firms do not generally have the option to avoid these serious recalls, but they do have some autonomy to choose when to

initiate the recalls. My coauthors and I are looking at conflicts of interest on the board of directors that may either speed up or slow down this decision of when to initiate the recall, which has serious ethical concerns to consumers. Among the potential conflicts of interest that may affect this decision, we consider director ties to customers and suppliers which would be identified using the ISS Directors dataset."





Han Zhang
Supply Chain
Management

“This research will address ethical and socially responsible areas by examining how companies can collectively confront shared social responsibility

challenges—such as labor conditions, environmental protection, and ethical sourcing—through strategic alliances. By identifying behavioral mechanisms that promote cooperation, the study highlights how status-seeking and prosocial motivations can drive firms to contribute to industry-wide initiatives that no single company could sustain alone. Through a combination of theory and laboratory experiments, the research advances understanding of how to design collaboration mechanisms that reduce free-riding and foster collective accountability, enabling more effective corporate action toward ethical and sustainable business practices.”



Jae Min Cha
Marketing

“This research will address ethical and socially responsible areas by identifying when restaurant waste-reduction practices such as upcycling, donation, or

composting are viewed as authentic contributions to environmental and social responsibility, and when they risk being dismissed as greenwashing. More specifically, the proposed study will examine how foodservice diners respond to a range of waste-reduction practices and whether these efforts are perceived as genuine sustainability actions or primarily as marketing claims. Because credibility is central to sustainability communication, the study will also investigate how both diners and employees evaluate the authenticity of waste-reduction practices and what types of evidence or messaging make those efforts feel believable, reduce skepticism, and help prevent accusations of greenwashing.”



Hang T. Nguyen
Marketing

“This research will address ethical and socially responsible areas by showing how female CMOs elevate firms’ corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments and enhance

the ethical quality of market-facing communication, ensuring that what firms say aligns with what they do. By reducing the risk of greenwashing and strengthening stakeholder trust, the project highlights marketing leadership as a critical driver of responsible business conduct. In doing so, it advances understanding of how organizations can embed ethical values in branding, customer engagement, and strategic decision-making to promote fairness, accountability, and long-term societal benefit.”

TEACHING GRANT AWARDEES



Kymm Hadlock

Finance

“The funds from CESRL will create case studies for ethical exploration of topics in consulting, investment banking, private equity, wealth management, and corporate finance. Students will read the case and write a reflection or create a presentation about the outcome. Some classes will work

independently where other classes will work in groups to address the ethical issues that are happening in the finance industry today.”



Kevin Markle

AIS

“This grant allows for the development of new course content. One part of the course is learning about sustainability reports prepared by companies and trying to determine what can be learned from them. I am learning right along with the students and what I have discovered is that

they are like a firehose...or more accurately like hundreds of firehoses: there are just so many dimensions that people care about under the E, the S, and the G, the volume is overwhelming. No clear standards have been agreed on, so there is huge variation in what and how companies are reporting. It makes it hard, if not impossible, for us to digest it all.”



I have a good understanding of what it means to be a good leader and am more confident that my values and morals align well.

Student Participant

4

**TEACHING GRANTS
AWARDED**

4

**BUSINESS
DISCIPLINES
REPRESENTED**

700+

**STUDENTS
IMPACTED
ANNUALLY**

Preparing Ethical Leaders

CESRL-supported teaching projects bring ethical decision-making into the classroom through experiential learning, real-world business challenges, sustainability reporting, social impact strategy, and responsible AI.

By connecting theory to practice, these experiences help students develop the judgment, accountability, and leadership skills needed to create positive impact in their careers and communities.





Allison Dellapelle

AIS

“The objective of the Principles of Financial Accounting course (ACC 201) is to provide Broad students with an opportunity to understand financial accounting

principles and how financial statements are used to make informed, ethical and effective business decisions. This experience will focus on Breakout Learning, an AI-driven education platform that takes the traditional learning model and transforms it into an engaging, real-life scenario-based environment. Within Breakout Learning, students would be placed in decision-making roles where they must evaluate trade-offs among performance goals, stakeholder expectations, and professional integrity. The experience will unfold across several weeks throughout the semester, and student-led discussions would aim to connect technical course concepts such as estimates, accruals, and reporting choices to questions of judgment, transparency, and accountability. This approach would deepen both conceptual and professional learning, encouraging students to think critically, communicate effectively, and view accounting decisions through an ethical and societal lens.”



AIS



Derek Harmon

Management

“The funds from CESRL will create case studies for ethical exploration of topics in consulting, investment banking, private equity, wealth management, and

corporate finance. Students will read the case and write a reflection or create a presentation about the outcome. Some classes will work independently where other classes will work in groups to address the ethical issues that are happening in the finance industry today.

The course will be structured in five integrated modules: (1) Philosophical Foundations: Moral theories and frameworks for doing good, (2) Effective Altruism: Logic, critiques, and contemporary debates, (3) Global Challenges: Applying EA reasoning to poverty, climate change, animal welfare, and existential risk, (4) Personal and Professional Impact: Lifestyle, giving, and career choices, and (5) Organizational and Strategic Impact: How businesses and nonprofits can align with social impact logic, culminating in a Giving Game—an experiential exercise in allocating real funds to high-impact charities.”





ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

The Corporate/Nonprofit Advisory Board will help guide and shape the center’s work and focus by sharing their extensive experience, their exposure to issues around ethics and social responsibility within their industry and outside it, and their ideas on social

responsibility and leadership. Board members will be individuals who have an affinity for the Broad College or MSU and who want to help positively influence the next generation of business leaders.



Madhur Agarwal
CCH Tagetik | CEO



Jared Ambrosier
Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget | Chief Procurement Officer



Danielle Brown
Mammoth Brands | Chief People Officer



Brenda Cucci
Ability2S | Founder and CEO



Michelle Massey
TechSmith | Vice President, Community Outreach and Customer Operations



Jenny Piatt
Vocational Rehabilitation, State of Michigan | Bureau Division Director



Jo Sperry
Peckham Inc. | President and CEO



Sarvesh Suri
International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group | Regional Industry Director



LOOKING FORWARD

Preparing Ethically Competent Business Leaders Who Are Motivated to Have a Positive Impact on Society

As we reflect on the past four academic years, we are grateful for the leadership of Dean Sanjay Gupta, Dr. Sriram Narayanan, Dr. Jennifer Dunn, and Jerry and Leslie Behar who founded the Center for Ethical Leadership. Without their initial energy, ideas, and support our center would still be an idea for the future, rather than a reality for our students, faculty and staff today. We are thrilled to have engaged with over 35% of our Broad College student population this past year alone.

As we turn to our fifth academic year, we are excited about the program line up for the next year. Some of the highlights being offered are the SPARK grants for cohorts of students in the college. These funds support student led efforts for programs that focus on ethics or social responsibility. These grants funded case competitions with over 100 student participants. CESRL will be launching an AI, Ethics, and Sustainability Certificate for graduate students in 2027 and will include 9 credits of courses that cover relevant issues including AI, sustainability practices, and ethical business challenges. We are thrilled to host Sarah Wynn-Williams as our featured speaker for our Warrington Ethics

Lecture. Sarah is an international lawyer, former diplomat, and the whistleblower for Meta. She is the author of the book *Carless People*. We are looking forward to our students learning from her vast experience, courage, and unique global policy perspective and how speaking up is always the right course of action.

We will continue to provide impactful learning opportunities through the Sustainability Debate, the Leadership in Action Conference, the Ethics in the News Undergraduate Case Competition, and our engaging Lunch and Learn series. We will continue to offer Faculty Teaching and Research Grants, as well as our prestigious Social Impact Award, presented in collaboration with the Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Our programming embodies a creative, intentional, multifaceted, and multidisciplinary approach. Moving forward, we remain dedicated to our mission of developing ethically competent business leaders motivated to create positive societal impact.

We invite you to engage with us and reach out with any questions or ideas you may have.



**CENTER FOR
ETHICAL AND
SOCIALY
RESPONSIBLE
LEADERSHIP**

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