Notre Dame professor to teach business ethics in South Korea as an ‘International Scholar’

The Rev. Oliver F. Williams, C.S.C., a noted expert in business ethics and associate management professor at the University of Notre Dame, will be spending the 2012-13 academic year introducing Korean student to the concepts of ethical leadership and international efforts to use commerce as an instrument of peace.

Williams has been designated as an International Scholar and visiting professor at Kyung Hee University in Seoul, South Korea. He will be teaching a course for both graduates and undergraduates on business ethics, as well as on “The United Nations Global Compact: Peace Through Commerce.”

The UN Global Compact is the world’s largest voluntary corporate citizenship initiative with over 5,000 businesses around the world as members. “Peace through commerce” refers to a philosophy that says corporations have responsibilities to the societies they operate in, particularly in developing countries. Commerce is considered in terms of its potential to build connections between disparate parties – crossing cultural, religious and personal boundaries – in order to reduce conflict and promote social wellbeing.

“South Korea will be a great learning experience for me,” said Williams, who is the director of the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Religious Values in Business at the Mendoza College. “After the Korean War in 1953, almost everyone was poor. Today, South Korea ranks in the upper quarter of the Legatum Prosperity Index. Understanding this modern-day miracle will be a great challenge, and I hope to share some of the lessons and best practices of Global Compact companies with important companies in the country.”

Williams, the editor or author of 15 books as well as numerous articles on business ethics in journals, plans to write a book for the Routledge Global Institute on the development of corporate social responsibility, its history and its promise. He also will present workshops on “Business as a Vocation” for the Catholic Church in Seoul.

A member of the Mendoza College of Business faculty since 1983, Williams specializes in the areas of business ethics, corporate governance and Catholic social teaching. He is the director of the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Religious Values in Business at the Mendoza College. A former naval officer, Williams earned his doctorate from Vanderbilt University and his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Notre Dame. He is a Catholic priest in the Congregation of Holy Cross. He served as associate provost of Notre Dame from 1987-94 and is a past chair of the Social Issues Division of the Academy of Management.

In 2006, Williams was appointed a member of the three-person Board of Directors at the United Nations Global Compact Foundation. He recently served as a chair for a session on "Building a New Ecosystem for a Sustainable Economy," among other responsibilities, at the United Nations’ Third Annual Global Forum for Responsible Management Education, held June 14-15 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.