Code of Ethics Essay

When approached with the problem of ethics, the tone in a room automatically goes somber. It's a topic so covered and drilled that it tends to bore people to the point where they simply "check out" mentally. As engineers, this must not be the case! Over the course of these reading assignments, my group and I have re-discovered the importance of an ethical code amongst the engineering community.

The first prompt we addressed is a very basic question: what is the purpose of a code of ethics? Through some group discussion, we resolved that the main reasons where to ensure public safety, fairness, and that the objective in all we do is for the betterment of humanity. Problems tend to arise when greed gets in the way, and that is why an ethics code is a great idea within industry.

The next prompt we discussed was how each one of us would address an ethical issue. During this discussion, my personal response mainly concerned the end user. As the development process carries on, always make sure the customer is satisfied with you progress. Whenever an issue arises, don't make any rash decisions without first consulting the customer. Always check this response against a code of ethics to ensure that you are doing all you can to do the right thing. The major evils in industry that can easily lead to a slip in ethics are cutting costs, making a hasty product to appease a due date, and also plagiarism.

The next topic my group discussed was the case study on the Space Shuttle Challenger. Growing up, I had heard the horror stories of this space crafts demise, but hadn't had a real chance to really ponder what happened. In this article, it became apparent to me that there had been multiple short cuts that had been taken in order to produce a shuttle launch by the desired time. In all other space shuttle launches, it wasn't abnormal for a shuttle mission to go off without a hitch after being marked with thousands of safety violations, but all it took was a single shuttle failure to make all those excuses go away. Through our discussion, we discussed how each one of us would approach such a situation had we been engineers in the program. Together, we came up with very similar responses in that we all though action was 100% necessary. Through some tenacity, we would ensure that we personally would do all we could do to make sure our work was as sound as possible, even if it meant taking completing un-paid hours in order to ensure the shuttles integrity. The other approach we would take to such a scenario is to make sure that our pride wouldn't get in the way. The largest cause of failure in the engineering would comes from engineering who are too prideful to admit they are wrong, and as a result accidents like the Space Shuttle Challenger happen. Summarizing our entire discussion, our group decided the following attributes would greatly benefit an engineering in his pursuit of an ethical career: 1) selflessness, 2) Honesty, 3) Efficient and Continuous Communication, and 4) Integrity(no short cuts).

In our next group discussion topic, we continued to ponder the Challenger case study. After reading the *Virtue of Ethics*, we selected three of the six issues. We

believed that Responsibility, Fidelity, and Integrity best fit our case study. We selected Responsibility because it is essential to always be held accountable for your actions. Fidelity was selected for the sake of those in charge to trust the advice of their engineers. Finally, integrity fits the case study perfectly as it is a constant balance between satisfying the customer (the shuttle sponsors) as well as creating a safe mission for the astronauts on board. This also comes into play when prioritizing issues – if it ever comes between making a due date and safety, always choose safety. As far as the other three, they are definitely applicable, but just not as relevant as the previous three. Specifically, honesty was left out because we doubt there was any real deception about the safety of the craft- no one though the mission would fail. Self-discipline was left out because it is highly doubtful that anybody who was aloud to work on this project would be chronically lazy and apathetic about their job as this is a highly competitive industry. Finally, we thought that charity wasn't an issue for much the same reason as self-discipline – safety and the lives of the astronauts were of the utmost importance to everyone involved on the project.

Through this essay, I have re-learned the importance of an ethical code amongst the engineering industry. As stated in the text above, ethical issues in society are every present and the need to some kind of standard will be the linchpin to the betterment of society as technology continues advances.