Question 1: Although there is a good deal of overlap between the ACM Code and the Software Engineering Code, can you point out anything significant that appears in one but not in the other?

One major difference between The ACM Code and the Software Engineering Code is that the ACM code has clauses that deal with society as a whole and human well-being. The ACM’s first principle is concerning the quality of life of all people, and puts a responsibility on ACM members to minimize negative consequences of computing systems to threats to health and safety. The Software Engineering Code does have some lines about working consistently with the public interest / public good, but does not go into the detail of holding society and the well-being of humanity above all else. Acting in the interest of the public good is not the same as acting with society as a whole first and foremost.

Question 4: According to section 1.2 of the ACM Code, what things should be done before taking the step of “blowing the whistle”?

According to the ACM Code, avoiding harm to others is paramount. Avoid harm entails “injury or negative consequences, such as undesirable loss of information, loss of property, property damage, or unwanted environmental impacts.” In order to minimize the possibility of these harmful actions, computing professionals must minimize malfunctions or buggy code by following standards for system designs and testing protocols. If a computing professional feels that there are system dangers present that will conflict with one of the above harmful actions, i.e. cause one of them, he/she must report these dangers to superiors at the company. If and only if they superiors do not act to mitigate or fix these dangers, then it may become necessary to “blow the whistle”. The ACM warns of the dangers of whistle-blowing, however, in that whistle-blowing in and of itself may cause some of the harm mentioned above. The computing professional must weigh the possible harm that will be caused to the company or to his/her superiors if they do choose to whistle-blow, and choose between this potential harm and the harm that may be caused by the software. The ACM code specifies that the assessment of risk/danger must be credible.