Date: Mon, 17 Mar 1997 12:57:03 -0700 (CST)
From: Keith Miller <miller@uis.edu>
To: Donald Gotterbarn <dgot@dmu.ac.uk>
Subject: Re: your mail

>
> PREAMBLE
>
> Computers now have a central and growing role in commerce, industry,
> government, medicine, education, entDate: Mon, 17 Mar 1997 12:57:03 -0700 (CST)
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> PREAMBLE
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> Computers now have a central and growing role in commerce, industry,
> government, medicine, education, entertainment, social affairs, and
> ordinary life. Those who contribute, by direct participation or by
> teaching, to the design and development of software systems have
> enormous opportunities both to do good and to cause harm. To assure,

"enormous" seems a bit dramatic; "significant"? "substantial"?

> as much as possible, that this power will be used for good, software
> engineers must commit themselves to making the design and
> development of software a beneficial, and respected profession. In
> accordance with that commitment, software engineers shall adhere to
> the following code of ethics.
>
> The code contains eight keyword principles related to the behavior of
> and decisions made by professional software engineers, be they
> practitioners, educators, managers and supervisors, or policy makers, as
> well as trainees and students of the profession. The Principles identify
> the various relationships in which individuals, groups, and organizations
> participate and the primary obligations within these relationships.
> .
> Each principle of this code addresses all three levels of ethical obligation

remove "all" from "all three levels" in the line above

> owed by professional software engineers in each of these relationships.
> The first level identified is a set of ethical values which they share with
> all other human beings by virtue of their humanity. The second level
> consists of obligations shared by all professionals for a higher order of
> care for those effected by their work. The third and deeper level

rewrite (into active): The second level obliges professionals to a higher
order of care for those effected by their work.

should "deeper" be "deepest"?

> comprises several of those obligations which derive directly from
> elements unique to the professional practice of software engineering.
> The clauses of each principle are illustrations of the various levels of
> obligation included in that relationship.
>
> (Keith, we need names for each of the three types of statements in the
> paragraph below. The first is "aspirational" and the second and third are
> called ??????????????????v?)

Level One: Aspire (to be human)
Level Two: Expect (to be professional)
Level Three: Demand (to use good practices)

As adjectives: aspirational, expected, demanded

> The clauses under each principle consist of three different types of
> statement. Aspirational statements, which provide vision and
> objectives, are intended to direct professional behavior. These directives
> require significant ethical judgement. Statements which express the
> obligations of all professionals and professional attitudes. Again they do
> not describe the specific behavior details but they clearly indicate
> professional responsibilities in computing. The code also contains some
> more specific behavioral responsibilities within software engineering
> which are more closely related to the current state of the art. The range
> of statement is from the more general aspirational statement to specific

> measurable requirements.
>
> Although all levels of professional obligation are recognized and
> because the Code contains different types of statements, the Code is not
> intended to be all inclusive nor is it " intended that its individual parts
> be used in isolation to justify errors of omissions or commission (BCS).
> The list of Principles and Clauses is not exhaustive, and should not be
> read as separating the acceptable from the unacceptable in professional
> conduct in all practical situations. The Code is not a simple ethical
> algorithm which generates ethical decision.

should "decision" be "decisions"?

> In some situations standards
> may conflict with each other or with standards from other sources.
> These situations require ethical judgement to act in a manner which is
> most consistent with the code of ethics, given the circumstances. These

Change the sentence above to "These situations require the software engineer
to use ethical judgement ...."

> ethical tensions can best be answered by thoughtful consideration of
> fundamental principles, rather than reliance on detailed regulations.
> (Keith, we should give some indication of how to prioritize here ??-
> First consider Public health safety and welfare(fairness and the well-
> being of others), then consider the impact on your kids college fund,
> then software quality ...etc. Simon says, "Please tidy this up!!")

Very tough to be specific on this, Don. How about this: "These principles
should influence you to consider broadly who is affected by your work
(utilitarian); to examine if we are treating other humans with due respect
(Kantian); to speculate on how the public would view your decision
(publicity test); to analyze how the least empowered will be affected
by your decision (Rawlsian); and to consider if your acts would be considered
worthy of the ideal software engineer (virtue ethics)."

> Since this
> code represents a consensus of those engaged in the profession one
> should determine to act in a manner "likely to be judged by informed,
> respected, and experienced peers in possession of all the facts as the
> most ethical
way to act in the circumstances. (ACS)" >
 > But even in this generality,
the code provides support for the software >
 engineer who needs to take
positive action by documenting the ethical >
 stance of the profession. This
provides a documented ethical foundation >

The phrase "documented ethical foundation" appears in two many ways here.

 to which individuals within teams

and the team as a whole can appeal. >
    By indicating the ethical
obligations in a particular relationship, the code > places constraints on
what others may ethically request of software > engineers. The code helps to
define those things which are ethically > improper to request of an software
engineer. >

Don't the last two sentences give the same information?

> The code has an educational function, by stating what is
required of > anyone wishing to join or continue in the software engineering
> community. Because it expresses the consensus of the profession on
> ethical issues it can be used as a guide to decision making and as means
> to educate both the public and aspiring professionals about the
> professional obligation of software engineers.

Sounds reasonable to me.

Keith
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