Press Release - January 1, 1999

Organization Formed to Establish Software Engineering as a Profession

A Software Engineering Coordinating Committee (SWECC) has been formed by the two largest professional societies in computing to establish software engineering as a profession. The committee will sponsor projects to document the body of knowledge, define performance standards for a licensing examination, recommend accreditation criteria, develop model educational criteria and maintain a code of ethics and professional practice for professional software engineers.

Although software development has been practiced for over fifty years, and the term "engineering" has often been associated with the field, there is no widely accepted set of standards and professional practices that can be used as a basis for defining software engineering as a true profession. In short, there is no generally accepted definition of what a "software engineer" must know and do. A professional discipline such as law, medicine, or civil engineering, is typically characterized by a body of knowledge that is widely accepted as the foundation of the field, and by generally accepted practices, academic standards and ethical standards that are based on this body of knowledge. Professions that affect public health and safety are also typically associated with licensing and/or certification processes for practitioners. SWECC was formed to establish the core elements that will make software engineering a true profession.

SWECC was formed by the Association for Computing (ACM) and the Computer Society of the Institute for Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE-CS), which together represent over 100,000 active computing professionals around the world, well over half of whom are active in software development and related fields. In 1993, the two societies recognized the importance of establishing software engineering as a profession by establishing a Joint Steering Committee to begin that process. This committee defined a code of ethics for software engineers and initiated a long process of codifying the core body of knowledge that all professional software engineers would be expected to know.

Also produced were a model set of accreditation standards and several presentations and panels on the subject of software engineering as a profession. SWECC is a permanent, successor entity to the Joint Steering Committee that will take these efforts into a completion, deployment, and ongoing support phase.

For further information on SWECC, contact the chairman, Leonard Tripp of Boeing Commercial Airplane Co. (Leona rd.Tripp@PSS.Boeing.com), or the Vice Chairman, Dennis Frailey of Raytheon Systems Company (D-Frailey@ti.com).

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