

# Social and Ethical Aspects in Engineering IME-251

Engr. Dilruba Siddiqi

## Week14 Agenda

- Workplace Responsibilities and Rights
  - Confidentiality , Conflict of Interest, Team work

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## Teamwork and Rights

- An Ethical Corporate Climate
  - “Within corporation, an ethical climate is produced by a combination of formal organization and policies, informal traditions and practices, and personal attitudes and commitments.”
  - Defining features of an ethical corporate:
    1. Ethical values in their full complexity are widely acknowledged and appreciated by managers and employees alike. Responsibilities to all constituencies of corporation are affirmed.
    2. The use of ethical language is honestly applied and recognized (through job description or corporate code of conduct) as a legitimate part of corporate dialogue.
    3. The top management should set a moral tone in words, in policies and by personal example.
    4. There should be procedures for conflict resolution.
- Important Words:**
- Collegiality
  - Conducive
  - Tumultuous
  - Takeover
  - Layoff
  - Notorious
  - Indifference
  - Foster
  - Ombudspersons

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## Teamwork and Rights

- Loyalty
    - Agency-loyalty
    - Attitude-loyalty
  - Collegiality
    - “Engineers shall not attempt to injure, maliciously or falsely, directly or indirectly, the professional reputation, prospects, practice or employment of other engineers. Engineers who believe others are guilty of unethical or illegal practice shall present such information to the proper authority for action.”
    - Central Elements:
      1. Respect for colleagues
      2. Commitment
      3. Correctness and mutual support
- Important Words:**
- Grudgingly
  - Spitefully
  - Manifest
  - Sole
  - Paramount
  - Incessant
  - Injunction
  - Condone

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## Teamwork and Rights

- Managers and Engineers
  - Manager's Focus: Entirety, Wider perspective, People
  - Engineer's Focus: Technicality, Narrow perspective, Things
  - Executive Authority
  - Power Authority
  - Expert Authority
  - Type of Companies
    1. Engineers-oriented companies
    2. Customer-oriented companies
    3. Finance-oriented companies

### Important Words:

- Discretion
- Amid
- Amidst
- Preoccupation

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## Teamwork and Rights

- All employees including Engineers have human rights, employee rights and professional rights.
- Professional Rights
  - Right of Professional Conscience
  - Right of Professional Conscientious Refusal
  - Right of Recognition
- Employee Rights
  - Privacy Right
  - Right to equal opportunity
    - Preventing the Sexual Harassment
    - Nondiscrimination
    - Affirmative Action

### Important Words:

- Coercion
- Reprisal

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## Discussion Questions

1. Present and defend your view as to whether affirmative action is morally permissible and desirable in (a) admissions to engineering schools, (b) hiring and promoting within engineering corporations.
2. The majority of employers have adopted mandatory random drug testing on their employees, arguing that the enormous damage caused by the pervasive use of drugs in our society carries over into the workplace. Typically the tests involve taking urine or blood samples under close observation, thereby raising questions about personal privacy as well as privacy issues about drug use away from the workplace that is revealed by the tests. Present and defend your view concerning mandatory drug tests at the workplace.

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## Discussion Questions

In your answer, take account of the argument that, except where safety is a clear and present danger (as in the work of pilots, police, and the military), such tests are unjustified.<sup>27</sup> Employers have a right to the level of performance for which they pay employees, a level typically specified in contracts and job descriptions. When a particular employee fails to meet that level of performance, then employers will take appropriate disciplinary action based on observable behavior. Either way, it is employee performance that is relevant in evaluating employees, not drug use per se.

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## Discussion Questions

3. A company advertises for an engineer to fill a management position. Among the employees the new manager is to supervise is a woman engineer, Ms. X, who was told by her former boss that she would soon be assigned tasks with increased responsibility. The prime candidate for the manager's position is Mr. Y, a recent immigrant from a country known for confining the roles for women. Ms. X was alerted by other women engineers to expect unchallenging, trivial assignments from a supervisor with Mr. Y's background. Is there anything she can and should do? Would it be ethical for her to try to forestall the appointment of Mr. Y?

## Discussion Questions

4. Jim Serra, vice president of engineering, must decide who to recommend for a new director-level position that was formed by merging the product (regulatory) compliance group with the environmental testing group.<sup>28</sup> The top inside candidate is Diane Bryant, senior engineering group manager in charge of the environmental testing group. Bryant is 36, exceptionally intelligent and highly motivated, and a well-respected leader. She is also five months pregnant and is expected to take an eight-week maternity leave two months before the first customer ship deadline (six months away) for a new product. Bryant applies for the

## Discussion Questions

job and in a discussion with Serra assures him that she will be available at all crucial stages of the project. Your colleague David Moss, who is vice president of product engineering, strongly urges you to find an outside person, insisting that there is no guarantee that Bryant will be available when needed. Much is at stake. A schedule delay could cost several million dollars in revenues lost to competitors. At the same time, offending Bryant could lead her and perhaps other valuable engineers whom she supervises to leave the company. What procedure would you recommend in reaching a solution?

## Discussion Questions

5. In the past, engineering societies have generally portrayed participation by engineers in unions and collective bargaining in engineering as unprofessional and disloyal to employers. Critics reply that such generalized prohibitions reflect the excessive degree to which engineering is still dominated by corporations' interests. Discuss this issue with regard to the following case. What options might be pursued, and would they still involve "collective coercive action"?

Managers at a mining and refinery operation have consistently kept wages below industry-wide levels. They have also sacrificed worker safety to save costs by not installing special structural reinforcements in the mines, and they have made no effort to control excessive pollution of the work environment. As a result, the operation has reaped larger-than-average profits. Management has been approached both by individuals and by representatives of employee groups about raising wages and taking the steps necessary to ensure worker safety, but to no avail. A nonviolent strike is called, and the metallurgical engineers support it for reasons of worker safety and public health.

## Q & A

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