



Guelph Engineering Society



Report on PEO Student Conference at Queen's University,
Nov 27-29, 2009.

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1. Purpose of Conference

The purpose of this conference is to bring student together to interact with the PEO and discuss a certainly topic , providing valuable feedback to both groups. This year's topic was Ethics.

2. Personal Goals for Conference

I had aimed to increase my own personal network, as well as touch base with friends I've made at past conferences. The topic was one that interests me, and I hoped to bring back that which I learned to share with the school. Each university covers Ethics at varying levels, and through different methods, and I was interested how UoG fit in when compared to others.

3. Summary of Events

The following is my summary of the sessions I attended:

Saturday November 28, 2009

Session 1 - Tom Harris – The world (of Eng'g) is flat (maybe)

- Thomas Friedman – The world is flat – book on how technology (internet) have gone beyond the global community, now instantaneous
- Not all engineering grads do eng'g rarely charted career path
- ... we're awesome ... makes us useful ... ethical behavior (focused on individual responsibilities)
- PEO CoE largely Deontological – practice is largely utilitarian (we put a price on human life)
 - o “Values become variables in eng'g decision making”
- Recommendations
 - o Broaden your reading list
 - o Seek new opportunities
- Abraham Lincoln quote

Session 2 – Burnie Enis – PEO Manager of Practice and Standards

- Evolution of the Code of Ethics

- Hindenburg (1937, no ethical study) and Challenger (1986, ethical studies occurred almost immediately)
- 1937
 - Still a fascination with technology
 - Tech was simple, was discrete
 - Believed to be beneficial
- 1986
 - Dissatisfaction with technology
 - Tech was increasingly complex, is highly integrated
 - Believed that it had a dark side
- Science and society compromise
 - Policy questions reduce to risk-benefit analyses
 - Politics asked the questions, science provides the answers
- Early codes were rules of thumb for common situations
- CoE's were further developed largely for selfish reasons to increase credibility
- Paramount duty to public did not appear in the Act until 1969
- Public concerns
 - Unwarranted claims and predictions
 - Unforeseen side effects of technology
 - Unmanageable uncertainty
 - Trapped by technology
 - Value paradox
 - Divergence between social and technological values
 - Interaction of social and technological values

Session 3A – Paula Klink, Engineers Contributing to Society

- 3 engineers in the 70's who shaped the word
 - Leonid Brezhnev (Metallurgical), Jimmy Carter (Nuclear), Yasser Arafat (Civil)
- Mr. Bean – Electrical Eng'g, Alfred Hitchcock – Electrical Eng'g
- Tom Landry – Industrial Eng'g – Dallas Cowboys
- Engineers do things everywhere in non-eng'g fields
- Engineers can really contribute in a lot of ways through management

Session 4 – Howard Brown, “Ethics, Engineering and Politics”

- Slides provided (see scanned copies)

Session 4.5 – John Gerretsen MPP, Minister of the Environment

- A mixture of backgrounds is always good in a political arena
- Biggest political errors are through overstatement

Session 5 – Panel Discussion

- A series of questions towards ethics, continuing education, and the PEO and licencing.

- Got into curriculum, and extra-curricular experience and how it benefits/hinders students

Sunday November 29, 2009

Session 6 – Steven Haddock, “Enforcing the Code of Ethics”

- Read the code of ethics
- Cases from the blue pages, breaking them down, very straightforward, pretty much how they're laid out in eng'g dimensions.

4. Evaluation

i) Conference Organizers

This was a fantastically organized conference, and ran almost completely on time. Truly commendable.

ii) Delegate

I felt that I participated to the full extent of my abilities. I achieved the goals I set out with, and I felt that I've brought back useful information for the student body. As always, any questions with regard to the content of this report can be sent to akristof@uoguelph.ca and I will do my best to answer them.