Professional Ethics

Professional Communications
Professional Ethics

“Professional ethics concerns the moral issues that arise because of the specialist knowledge that professionals attain, and how the use of this knowledge should be governed when providing a service to the public.”

Characteristics of a Profession

1. Education – formal course work completed by candidates
2. Accreditation – assures the formal course work meets standards of the profession
3. Skills development – candidates have an opportunity to develop skills
4. Certification – candidates are evaluated to determine their readiness to enter the profession
5. Licensing – gives candidates the legal right to practice
6. Professional development – formal course work to maintain and develop new skills
7. Professional society – organization promoting the welfare, consisting of members of the profession
8. Code of Ethics – mechanism by which a profession ensures that its members will use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of society
ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

• Preamble
• General Moral Imperatives
• More Specific Professional Responsibilities
• Organizational Leadership Imperatives
• Compliance With The Code
ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

• Not a mechanical process for determining if an action is right or wrong

• You should not take an overly legalistic view of the Code
  – If Code doesn’t forbid something, that doesn’t mean it is morally acceptable
  – Judgment required

• Code reflects principles drawn from multiple ethical theories
General Moral Imperatives

• Who is affected?
• Am I treating other human beings with respect?
• Would my decision hold up to public scrutiny?
• How will those who are least empowered be affected?
• Are my acts worthy of the ideal professional?
General Moral Imperatives

• Contribute to society and human well-being
• Avoid harm to others
• Be honest and trustworthy
• Be fair and take action not to discriminate
• Honor property rights including copyrights and patents
• Give proper credit for intellectual property
• Respect the privacy of others
• Honor confidentiality
Ethical Dilemma?

Your team is working on a computer-controlled laser device for treating cancerous tumors. The software controls direction, intensity, and timing of the beam that destroys the tumor. Various delays have put the project behind schedule, and the deadline is approaching. There will not be time to complete all of the planned testing. The CFO of your company has notified you that the financial penalties in the case of a delay might cause your company to go under. The system has been functioning properly in the routine treatment scenarios that have been tested so far. You are the project manager, and you are considering whether to deliver the system on time while continuing testing and make patches if bugs are found, or delay delivery of the system until all bugs have been found and fixed.