CS305 Topic – Professional Ethics

- What is a Profession?
- Professional Ethical Guidelines

Sources: Baase: A Gift of Fire and Quinn: Ethics for the Information Age
What is a Profession?

- High level of education
  - Initial and continuing professional education
- Apprenticeship
  - e.g., Internship/fellowship for doctors
- Accreditation/Certification/Licensing
  - Not everyone can practice
  - Professional society
- Code of ethics
  - Decisions have impact
  - Society expects professionals to act for public good
Computer/Software Engineers

- Certification and licensing not needed
- Consequently,
  - No college education required
  - No apprenticeship required
  - No membership in professional society required
  - No continuing education required
- Most c/s engineers are part of a team; they don’t work directly with clients
- Yet, c/s engineers have ability to harm public
Ethical Guidelines for Computer Professionals

- ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
  - Adopted in October 1992
  - Consists of 24 imperatives formulated as statements of personal responsibility

- IEEE/ACM Software Engineering Code of Ethics and Professional Practice
  - Adopted by IEEE-CS and ACM joint task force in 1999
ACM Code Highlights

- 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 patent
- Give proper credit for intellectual property
- Respect the privacy of others
- Honor confidentiality
IEEE/ACM SE Code

Preamble:

- Software engineers have opportunities to do good or do harm
- Software engineers ought to be committed to doing good
- Eight principles identify key ethical relationships and obligations within these relationships:
  - Public, Client and employer, Product, Judgment, Management, Profession, Colleagues, Self
- Code should be seen as a whole, not a collection of parts
- Concern for the public interest is paramount
SE Code Highlights

- Be impartial
- Disclose information that others ought to know
- Respect the rights of others
- Treat others justly
- Take responsibility for your actions and inactions
- Take responsibility for the actions of those you supervise
- Maintain your integrity
- Continually improve your abilities
- Share your knowledge, expertise, and values
Discussion Questions

- Your company has 25 licenses for a computer program, but you discover that it has been copied onto 80 computers. You informed your supervisor, but he/she is not willing to take any action. What would you do next?
  - Give up; you did your best to correct the problem
  - Call the software vendor and report the offense
  - Quit your job

- Are “whistleblowers” heroes or traitors?