Calvin and Hobbes

TODAY AT SCHOOL, I TRIED TO DECIDE WHETHER TO CHEAT ON MY TEST OR NOT.

I WONDERED, IS IT BETTER TO DO THE RIGHT THING AND FAIL... OR IS IT BETTER TO DO THE WRONG THING AND SUCCEED?

ON THE ONE HAND, UNDESERVED SUCCESS GIVES NO SATISFACTION... BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, WELL-DESERVED FAILURE GIVES NO SATISFACTION EITHER.

OF COURSE, MOST EVERYBODY CHEATS SOME TIME OR OTHER. PEOPLE ALWAYS BEND THE RULES IF THEY THINK THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IT. THEN AGAIN, THAT DOESN'T JUSTIFY MY CHEATING.

THEN I THOUGHT, LOOK, CHEATING ON ONE LITTLE TEST ISN'T SUCH A BIG DEAL. IT DOESN'T HURT ANYONE.

...BUT THEN I WONDERED IF I WAS JUST RATIONALIZING MY UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCE OF NOT STUDYING.

STILL, IN THE REAL WORLD, PEOPLE CARE ABOUT SUCCESS NOT PRINCIPLES.

...THEN AGAIN, MAYBE THAT'S WHY THE WORLD IS IN SUCH A MESS.

WHAT A DILEMMA!

SO WHAT DID YOU DECIDE?

NOTHING. I RAN OUT OF TIME AND I HAD TO TURN IN A BLANK PAPER.

ANYMORE, SIMPLY ACKNOWLEDGING THE ISSUE IS A MORAL VICTORY.

WELL, IT JUST SEEMED WRONG TO CHEAT ON AN ETHICS TEST.
University Cases…
Engineering Connections

• OSU ECE:
  – Cheating on homework, projects, tests?
  – What is sharing and helping vs. cheating? Is use of “files” acceptable?
  – Professors? Staff?

• Relevance to engineering workplace
  – Give credit where credit is due (IEEE Code), competence
  – Misrepresentation of expertise
  – Setting up a professional environment (management)
Management interference with professional duties…

Student: “As a co-op at an electrical utility company I was involved in inquiries about the effects of EMF. In a lawsuit regarding EMF effects on property values our lawyers were removing "proprietary" information from our files. This information was considered lawyer-client privilege. However, all files that could have been damaging to the company were removed.” Responsibilities of the engineer?

Student: “While on a co-op job I was involved with the production of a product that did not function properly. This product was not capable of performing some of the advertised functions. The product was released to the public because it was considered by the company [management] to be more cost effective to release the faulty product than it was to hold up production.” Responsibilities of the engineer?
Moral autonomy…

Student: “I was trying to get people to buy our software product (a CAD/CAM system). I was told to tell them that our company was stable and we would be there to help them for years in the future. But our company was actually in the process of going out of business. They just wanted to get as much money as they could before we closed our doors. I could not just lie to the customers, so I got a new job.”

Admirable?

Other responsibilities?
Perception of conflict of interest…

Student: "I worked for a government research center and a company brought us out to their place to show us their software. After the morning session we went to lunch and they paid. We are not supposed to allow this, since it was against agency’s "code of ethics". However, we did it anyway because we knew we were already going to buy their product."

Is the perception of conflict of interest a problem? What if the supplier’s competitor ran into you on the way out as the bill was being paid?
Student: “While working in a power company in a construction management department, I was given a small project to get rid of several pieces of obsolete equipment. Although the company executives had enforced a recycling policy, most of my colleagues wanted to trash all the equipment. I found a way to recycle some of the equipment and gave the rest to a business liquidator, but I was distressed at the indifferent attitude most of my working colleagues displayed.”

What to do? Talk about it over coffee/lunch with colleagues? Find out why the equipment would pollute (get hard facts)? Give them reading material?
• Student: An intern pursued a manager within the company. Not her direct manager but an elder influential person. Ended up engaged and then married…”

Is it a good idea to date persons in the workplace?
Women’s issues…

Harris, Pritchard, Rabins’ book...
- On a business trip three engineers Jane, Joe, and Jim (the engineer at the site being visited) and others go out after work for a social-type dinner. The site engineer Jim sits between Jane and Joe and other business types sit across the table. During dinner Jim mostly talks to Jane - mostly shop. Dinner is over and Jim gets up and says to Joe: “Sorry that we did not have more time to talk but Jane is a lot better looking”
Women’s issues…

Student: When I worked at company XYZ a supervisor and I were discussing some of my colleagues. We had just begun to discuss the only two female engineers who worked at XYZ and I asked why one of them had not been promoted. She had been doing good work for the company for years, and still was working on CAD, a job usually reserved for technicians and/or new engineers. His reply was (paraphrasing):

“Its just as well, women are much better at tedious tasks than men.”

What should the engineer do?
Women’s issues...

• Student: “My supervisor didn’t like women and wouldn’t assign me work. I had to go find it on my own.”

• Student: “I worked for a company where my boss did not ask questions to the most qualified person simply because she was a woman and his background was such that he thought women were inferior.”

What to do?
Witnessing sexual harassment…

Student: “The only real ethical problem that I have encountered in industry involved a co-worker who was sexually harassing secretaries and other female co-workers. I didn’t say anything because the women in question didn’t seem to mind it (some even liked it). Maybe I should have.”

Should they tell someone? Who?
Subjected to sexual harassment…

Student: "I have experienced sexual harassment by a peer intern student. It did not affect my job, but it was uncomfortable. My dilemma was whom (if at all) should I tell about it."

Who should she tell? Anyone?
Another perspective…

Student: “As a woman I am tired of all the restrictions they put on male engineers on a government job I have been on; it seems to make them feel too constrained around me.”

Have the rules gone too far?

Just what are the rules?
Derek Evans used to work for a small computer firm that specializes in developing software for management tasks. Derek was a primary contributor in designing an innovative software system for customer services. This software system is essentially the "lifeblood" of the firm. The small computer firm never asked Derek to sign an agreement that software designed during his employment there becomes the property of the company. However, his new employer did.

Derek is now working for a much larger computer firm. His job is in the customer service area, and he spends most of his time on the telephone talking with customers having systems problems. This requires him to cross-reference large amounts of information. It now occurs to him that by making a few minor alterations in the
innovative software system he helped design at the small computer firm, cross-referencing can be greatly simplified.

On Friday Derek decides he will come in early next Monday morning to make the adaptation. However, on Saturday evening he attends a party with two of his old friends, you and Horace Jones. Not having seen each other for some time, you talk about what you have been doing recently. Derek mentions his plan to adapt the software system on Monday. Horace asks, "Isn't that unethical? That system is really the property of your previous employer." "But," Derek replies, "I'm just trying to make my work more efficient. I'm not selling the system to anyone, or anything like that. It's just for my use--and, after all, I did help design it. Besides, it's not exactly the same system--I've made a few changes."

This leads to a discussion among the three of you. **What is your contribution?**
Derek installs the software on Monday morning. Soon everyone is impressed with his efficiency; they ask about the "secret" of his success. Derek begins to realize that the software system might well have company-wide adaptability. This does not go unnoticed by his superiors either, so he is offered an opportunity to introduce the system in other parts of the company.

Now Derek recalls the conversation at the party, and he begins to wonder if Horace was right after all. He suggests that his previous employer be contacted and that the more extended use of the software system be negotiated with the small firm. His superiors firmly resist this suggestion. They insist that the software system is now the property of the larger firm. Derek balks at the idea of going ahead without talking with the smaller firm. If Derek does not want the new job, his superiors reply, someone else can be invited to do it; in any case, the adaptation will be made.
What should Derek do now?

Does Horace have any responsibility to alert the smaller firm about Derek's plans?

Do you?

What if Horace is friends with people who work at the smaller firm?

What if you are?
Attendance Question

• Will someone who regularly cheats in classes at the university be likely to engage in a long-term pattern of unprofessional behavior in the engineering workplace?

• Please answer “yes” or “no”

Please: Put your name on the sheet of paper and turn it in...