Engineering Ethics:
A view from ASCE

Melissa Wheeler
Region 5 Director
**Ethics** - The attempt to follow societal or professional norms, about how people should act, based on ideal human character and **morals**. (Bonate 2011)

**Moral** – making right decisions by distinguishing between right or wrong in accordance with the **principles** of right or wrong. (Webster’s Dictionary)
- **Values** - are personal judgments that determine how a person behaves and may have nothing to do with ethics. (Bonate 2011)

  E.g., Honesty is a **value** and not stealing is a **principle** based on that **value**. Not publishing someone else’s research is an **ethical** guideline based on the **principle** of not stealing. (Bonate 2011)

- **Code of Ethics** - A code of conduct to which a person voluntarily adheres because it reflects his or her values and is believed to be beneficial to society. A guide that, with rare exceptions, does not provide specific instruction.

  **You ask...**

  **Is it the right thing to do?**
CANON 1: Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public and shall strive to comply with the principles of sustainable development in the performance of their professional duties.

CANON 2: Engineers shall perform services only in areas of their competence.

CANON 3: Engineers shall issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.

CANON 4: Engineers shall act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees, and shall avoid conflicts of interest.

CANON 5: Engineers shall build their professional reputation on the merit of their services and shall not compete unfairly with others.

CANON 6: Engineers shall act in such a manner as to uphold and enhance the honor, integrity, and dignity of the engineering profession and shall act with zero tolerance for bribery, fraud, and corruption.

CANON 7: Engineers shall continue their professional development throughout their careers, and shall provide opportunities for the professional development of those engineers under their supervision.
CANON 1: Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public and shall strive to comply with the principles of sustainable development in the performance of their professional duties.
CANON 2: Engineers shall perform services only in areas of their competence.
CANON 3: Engineers shall issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.
CANON 4: Engineers shall act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees, and shall avoid conflicts of interest.
CANON 5: Engineers shall build their professional reputation on the **merit** of their services and shall not compete **unfairly** with others.
**CANON 6:** Engineers shall act in such a manner as to uphold and enhance the *honor, integrity, and dignity* of the engineering profession and shall act with zero tolerance for *bribery, fraud, and corruption.*
CANON 7: Engineers shall continue their professional development throughout their careers, and shall provide opportunities for the professional development of those engineers under their supervision.
Engineers shall, in all matters related to their profession, treat all persons fairly and encourage equitable participation without regard to gender or gender identity, race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, political affiliation, or family, material or economic status.
Suggested Tests for Evaluating Actions:

(M. Davis [1997], C. Skooglund, J. Smith, & P. Harper)

**Harms test**  Do the benefits outweigh the harms, both short-term and long-term?

**Reversibility test**  Would I think this was a good choice if I traded places?

**Colleague test**  What would my professional colleague say?

**Legality test**  Would my choice violate a law, or a policy of my employer?

**Publicity test**  How would my choice look on the front page of tomorrow’s newspaper?

**Common practice**  What if everyone behaved this way?

**Wise relative test**  What would my grandmother say? Would I want her to know what I’m doing?

**Hiding test**  Do I want people to know what I’m doing?

**Self-respect test**  How will I feel about myself after I make this choice?
Your Role in Promoting Ethical Behavior

Make good decisions…

- **Policies** = review applicable codes of ethics, policies
- **Law** = understand the law and your legal obligations
- **Universal** = what is generally understood to be the right thing to do; talk to others whose opinions you respect
- **Self** = what do you think; do you feel good about decision you make

…and help others do the same

- Create a **corporate culture** that promotes ethics
- **Define** your organization’s values
- **Communicate** those values
- **Demand** compliance
- **Reward** compliance and penalize noncompliance
1. **Training** (seminars, webinars, video, DVD)

2. **Policies**

3. **Publications** (journals, Question of Ethics)

4. **ASCE Ethics Hotline**: 1-800-548-2723 x 6151
There is no such thing as *business ethics* – there’s only *ethics*. (Maxwell 2003)