Humanitarian Engineering Guest Lecture Series Spring 2013 Presents:

Co-sponsored by Engineering Without Borders

Irresponsible? Apathetic? Caring? How engineering students view their responsibility towards society

Wednesday
February 20,
2013
SC Ballroom C
4 - 5 PM

Abstract

What is the role of the engineer in society? Should engineers be involved in addressing issues of public policy, code development, sustainability, poverty, and social equity? The engineering profession as a whole struggles to define the engineers' role in these issues since their expected role is that of contributing to the bottom line in the corporations for which they work. But do engineers see themselves as having a responsibility towards society regardless of how it might be inscribed in professional codes of ethics?

To see how students view their role in society, issues of personal and professional social responsibility were discussed with 25 senior and graduate engineering students from civil, mechanical and environmental engineering. Students talked about their views of social responsibility and wrestled with ideas of expectations of pro bono work, obligations, and personal preference with respect to service. This talk focuses on ideas of service in engineering, from these students' perspectives. It also draws evidence from a survey of over 1000 students across five institutions, focused on the development of personal and professional social responsibility.

About Nathan

Nathan Canney is currently a doctoral candidate in Civil Engineering at the University of Colorado Boulder, with a research focus on engineering education. Nathan has Bachelor's degrees in civil engineering and mathematics from Seattle University. He worked as a structural engineer for two years with Magnusson Klemencic Associates in Seattle, designing high rise buildings, before returning for his Master's degree in structural engineering at Stanford University. His current research focuses on the development of personal and professional social responsibility in engineering students. Nathan has also been involved with the Engineering for Developing Communities program at CU, helping to facilitate project-based service learning experiences for graduate students.