

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING CODE OF ETHICS

Preamble

This document contains a mixture of standards and guidelines to promote the overall success and well-being of Notre Dame students who are committed to the studies of Computer Science and Engineering. Many of the themes that run throughout this code of ethics inherit from the overarching goals of the University of Notre Dame. Descriptions detailing the unique challenges faced by students of the Computer Science and Engineering Department are also provided. The purpose of this code of ethics is two-fold: explicitly outline unethical behavior and provide pillars to lean on for success in the disciplines.

In this manner, this document serves as a foundation to help students build their personal vision for their academic path. We trust that students will employ a thoughtful lens that is indicative of a Notre Dame student when reading the document.

Building upon each guideline is an explanation of its application to student life in order to provide an extra layer of clarity. These explanations are not meant to cover all possible scenarios, however. If a student is confused about the application of any of the 14 guidelines, the student has the responsibility to pursue further clarification from a faculty or advisor of the Computer Science and Engineering Department. It is important to note that modifications can occur to the code to either improve its clarity or to better adhere to the changing academic environment.

The document below is divided into four sections. Section 1 discusses general guidelines for Notre Dame Computer Science and Engineering students. Section 2 includes the academic-specific responsibilities for students of this department. Section 3 focuses on the leadership aspect of student work. Lastly, Section 4 addresses the importance of adhering to the code.

SECTION 1 - GENERAL GUIDELINES

As a Notre Dame computer scientist/engineer I will...

1.1 Be a force for good in the world.

This foundational element of the code of ethics derives from the mission that Father Sorin, C.S.C. set out for the University of Notre Dame: students should be “powerful forces for good in the world.” This challenge should act as the students’ drive to succeed, that they might gain the strength necessary to push positive change into the world. It does not presuppose that students have an unblemished understanding of what the right path for society is, but that they trust in their convictions and in the Notre Dame community to act in favor of what they discern is a good pursuit.

1.2 Develop my mind, body, and spirit.

With the clear association between the study of computer science and the growth of the mind, Notre Dame Computer Science/Engineering students should also take time to intentionally recognize and nourish growth of the body and spirit. This discipline allows students to prepare themselves for the challenges they will encounter outside of writing code. Working to understand the different aspects of their character will prepare students to succeed when making ethical or otherwise important decisions (e.g., discerning what the “good” for the world is discussed in guideline 1.1 based on their principles and morals). With the increasing amount of power placed in the hands of those who understand technology, it is critical that those with the knowledge to understand it have the strength of character to steer technology in the right direction.

1.3 Cultivate a disciplined sensibility to the marginalized.

Notre Dame Computer Science and Engineering students should maintain an open disposition to help those in need. Using your talents in this field to improve the plight of people in need should be thought of as an honor. Notre Dame’s Catholic identity is one that holds students to a commitment to service.

1.4 Promote diversity in opinions and backgrounds.

Following the University of Notre Dame’s commitment to diversity, every student of this department will be accepting of, and cherish people with different backgrounds and opinions. It is through this spirit of inclusion that Notre Dame computer scientists/engineers will build a respectful environment that allows every member to flourish in his/her own way. This guideline is designed to help the department bring different opinions together to find new and exciting solutions to existing problems.

1.5 Engage in a genuine pursuit of truth.

The field of computer science and engineering has a natural tendency to challenge and mold different facets of society by reimagining the power of technology. It is important to remember that every computer scientist and engineer must strive to discover the truth in society and thus contribute positively to society and human well-being. Students must be unafraid to stand by the harsh facts that can be revealed in their experiences. This pursuit must be characterized by honesty and integrity.

SECTION 2 - ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES

As a Notre Dame computer scientist/engineer I will...

2.1 Engage in my courses.

Capitalizing on the academic opportunities available to students at this University is a key component of being an upstanding member of the community. Students must apply themselves to succeed to the best of their abilities in class, as well as engage with the material to enrich and progress the educational experiences of all students. This means actively speaking with professors/administrators about challenges or points of oversimplicity in the curriculum.

2.2 Not plagiarize.

In the field of Computer Science/Engineering there can exist an especially ambiguous divide with regard to what is plagiarized or not. Students should always hold themselves to a high standard and seek the advice of professors when faced with uncertainty in this category. Copying code – whether from classmates, online resources, or other materials – is never acceptable without explicit consent of the teacher and the citing of the resource used. Considering the ease with which information can be exchanged using technology (e.g., email, text, shared documents), Notre Dame Computer Science/Engineering students must diligently commit to this principle.

2.3 Seek academic help when needed.

Notre Dame's Computer Science and Engineering Department views challenging students as fundamental growth opportunities. It is natural for students to find themselves having different levels of comfort with, or mastery in each part of the curriculum. It is the responsibility of each student, then, to seek academic help when needed, such that the resources allocated by the department do not go unused and the growth desired for each member of the community is not stifled.

2.4 Be an upstanding group member.

An increasingly large portion of problems computer science and engineering professionals set out to solve are complex and multifaceted, requiring individuals with different backgrounds and skills to work together. Understanding this reality, the Computer Science and Engineering Department offers its students opportunities to work in teams to create unique projects and solutions. It is essential that every student contributes equally and fairly to their group, challenges or helps group members as appropriate, and strives to uphold positive team dynamics at all times. It is important to note that being an upstanding group member also means not partaking in groups that are unsanctioned for any in-class or extracurricular activity.

SECTION 3 - LEADERSHIP GUIDELINES

As a Notre Dame computer scientist/engineer I will...

3.1 Engage your talents outside of the classroom.

Students should look to use their skills in computer science to engage with communities outside of the classroom. This can be done in a variety of ways such as taking time to invest in younger members of the Notre Dame Computer Science/Engineering communities, looking into opportunities in the South Bend community (volunteer or professional), as well as participate in events such as on-campus lectures and “hackathons.” This higher level of engagement is important considering Notre Dame’s mission of empowering students to influence the communities they are a part of in their own ways.

3.2 Understand the implications of my projects.

Notre Dame students should develop a habit of thinking about the big-picture impact their code can have rather than simply burying their thoughts in the technical challenges of a project. Although not every class assignment is designed to impact, positively or negatively, those around you, projects in the business world will have that potential. Hence, it is imperative that all students exercise this approach in school such that it becomes natural to think about the code beyond what is printed on the screen.

3.3 Be informed.

It is important that Notre Dame Computer Science/Engineering students do their best to stay informed on at least the trends and political issues surrounding these fields. This knowledge would empower students to both make more informed decisions consistent with their principles and beliefs (e.g., choosing a career to follow or an open source project to contribute to) and enrich the dialogue amongst their peers in complex topics. Having a strong technical knowledge base allows students to understand contemporary issues such as data security and artificial intelligence on a deeper level. With this knowledge comes the responsibility to educate and inform those members of the community with limited technical backgrounds, and redefine the path of society for the better.

SECTION 4 - COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE

As a Notre Dame computer scientist/engineer I will...

4.1 Follow and uphold the principles of the code.

Every Notre Dame Computer Science and Engineering student represents the department and the university through their actions and decisions. As a result, they must aim to represent these groups well and contribute to the overall progress of the computer science community at large.

4.2 Recognize the consequences of violating the code.

This code outlines the standards every Notre Dame Computer Science/Engineering student is held to. Not all guidelines require the same degree of commitment, or carry the same weight and importance. For example, violating the guideline that stipulates students should stay informed on current topics is not as severe as the responsibility to not plagiarize. While it is important to abide more strictly to certain components of the code, complete disregard for any of the standards would at the very least be a disservice to oneself and the community at large.