

A Peace Paradigm for Engineering Education: A Dissenter's View

*George D. Catalano, Professor of Mechanical Engineering
Director, Division of Engineering Discovery and Design
Watson School of Engineering and Applied Science
State University of New York @Binghamton
Binghamton, New York 13902-6000*

Former Massachusetts's congressional representative and Jesuit priest, Robert F. Drinan, offered that to serve as a university faculty member is, in his words, "to be a member of the priesthood of the intellect." At its best, what values can we ascribe to such a community of scholars? Some that come immediately to mind are: selfless service to the greater community and contemplative action in pursuit of peace and justice and. Yet today, in my view, such ideals are sadly lacking from engineering education. Rather there is an ever-tightening knot linking the university to corporate interests and an ever-increasing emphasis on developing "exit-skills" in our students that will help propel them to make even greater profits for their employers. Yes, there is a reference to the value laden dimension of the engineering profession, its effects on the environment, society and the globe but these are relegated to a mysterious entity known as Criterion IV in the most recent Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology guidelines. Too often this seems as an afterthought for many faculty members and is derisively lumped into a most squishy category—"soft skills". Even more troubling is the almost enthusiastic tone that many general engineering publications (i.e. *Prism*) have taken in description of the advanced weaponry and technological wizardry manifest by the United States and its coalition forces in the ongoing war in Iraq. Over the course of the last several decades, there has been much discussion of the need to move engineering education from a teacher-centered model of learning to a student-centered model. I would argue that equally as important is a movement towards a paradigm of peace. A paradigm of peace would consist assisting in the development three main components in our students: (1) peace with oneself; (2) peace with others; and (3) peace with the planet. It is a movement metaphorically described by the French philosopher Michel Serres, as being away from the *Physics of Mars* and towards the *Physics of Venus*. In the present work a model for an engineering education based upon the paradigm of peace is explored.