

Promoting Professionalism in Traditional and Nontraditional Ways

William Jordan and Melvin Corley
College of Engineering and Science
Louisiana Tech University
Ruston, LA 71272

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Abstract

For a long time our Mechanical Engineering program has had a one semester hour senior seminar. The purpose of the class was to promote professionalism and ethical behavior among our senior students. For a number of years the course had not really been fulfilling its stated purpose. The authors took over the course in 2000 and have made a number of major changes.

The first change was in bringing in a number of outside speakers who could relate their real world life experiences to those of the students. On a regular basis, we now bring into our class speakers who present on the following topics:

- Experiences the engineer will face early in his career (by a recent graduate).
- Experiences the engineer will face by the time he reaches mid career (by someone who has graduated 10-15 years ago).
- Financial planning by a certified financial planner.
- Intellectual property presentation by the university's director of intellectual property.

We also had a desire to present a number of other professional topics. We chose to use the small ASME book: *The Unwritten Laws of Engineering*. This book has excellent content. The first year we had students make presentations from the book. Most did traditional Power Point presentations which were adequate in terms of material content but rather dull for the student listeners. The last two years we had the students continue to present these topics, but stated they could not just make a traditional presentation, they had to do something creative.

We received some creative presentations the first year. As students got more experienced with this approach, their creativity has really increased the second year. For example, one group presented how to relate to co-workers by making a contest patterned after the game "Family Feud". Some members on each team presented good answers, while others presented questionable or obviously false ones. One group this year taught management principles by playing the "Managing Game", patterned after the Dating Game television show. One young lady represented someone who has just inherited a family business and she questioned three potential managers as to how they would handle certain problems. To keep it entertaining, only one of the potential managers had good answers, while the other two gave incorrect and often hilarious responses.

This method of teaching serious relational and management issues through group presentations that are often based on games has proven to be very useful. The students have a great time (both

performing and listening). Serious content is communicated in a way that the students will long remember.