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The Role of Personality Factors in Engineering Students Ethical Decisions

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Ethics is a crucial aspect in developing the professional identity of engineers. Most undergraduate engineering curricula offer little opportunity for teaching and learning ethical behaviors, responses and attitudes in a systematic and pedagogically appropriate manner. This paper presents findings from a pilot study conducted in the Spring semester of 2012. Thirty three engineering students evaluated two case studies that present ethical dilemmas in addition to measuring individual personality through Paulhus' Spheres [3] specific measures of perceived control model and Graziano, Habashi,

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and Woodcock's Person and Thing Orientations Scale [4]. The findings of the study expand our knowledge of how students acquire moral reasoning and what can be done to improve learning about ethics in engineering. Having an understanding of students' personalities in the beginning of teaching the engineering ethics course could have the potential benefit of creating the curriculum accommodating these differences. We also hope to bring awareness that different personality factors contribute to the ethical decision making in engineering students and practicing the profession engineers. ■

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