

The Pledge of the Computing Professional
Ohio Northern University Inaugural Induction Ceremony
7 May 2011

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the inaugural induction ceremony at Ohio Northern University for The Pledge of the Computing Professional.

The use of computers is pervasive throughout our society, having expanded into most areas of everyday life. Given the ever-increasing reliance placed upon computer-based and augmented technologies, graduates from computing-related programs need to be more aware than ever of their responsibility toward ensuring that the public is both well-served and protected in the application of these technologies.

Today our graduating seniors will be acknowledging their obligations to society by taking The Pledge of the Computing Professional. However, we first pause to consider the history of, and motivation for, this Pledge Ceremony.

The act of joining a profession is often marked by a rite of passage ceremony signifying one's entry into a position of responsibility. The candidate for initiation takes an oath in the presence of his or her peers to act both ethically and morally as a member of that profession. The candidate is also presented with artifacts featuring symbols associated with that profession, as a visible reminder of the responsibility to uphold the moral tenets and ethical standards of the profession.

In 2007, inspired by both the "Ring Ceremony" of the Order of the Engineer and the Canadian "Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer", individuals at Ohio Northern University and at the University of South Florida created similar rite-of-passage ceremonies for graduates of their respective computing programs.

After interest in such a ceremony grew at other institutions, The Pledge of the Computing Professional was developed by an international team of 17 computing professionals. An organization bearing the same name has been entrusted with the responsibility of administering and maintaining the Pledge Ceremony.

Our purpose is similar to that expressed by the great English novelist and poet Rudyard Kipling regarding the Canadian Ritual that he authored: to direct the young professional

“towards a consciousness of his profession and its significance”
and to remind the older professional of one’s

“responsibilities in receiving, welcoming, and supporting”
young professionals in their beginning endeavors.

The Pledge of the Computing Professional reflects the belief that our work affects people’s lives. Accordingly, as Computing Professionals we bear moral and ethical responsibilities, for we must respond appropriately to any societal concerns regarding the use of computers.

We must practice our profession with the highest level of integrity and competence, for we must protect the privacy and insure the reliability of the data that flow through computers.

We must always use our skills for the public good, for society depends upon our professionalism to prevent harm from occurring.

We must continuously seek to improve our skills through life-long learning, for we must maintain expertise in our areas of specialization.

We must be honest about our limitations, for no one can be an expert in all areas of the computing disciplines.

We must engage only in honorable and upstanding endeavors, for society will judge us – and our profession – by our actions.

The Pledge that the candidates for initiation are about to take was written by computing professionals for computing professionals. To symbolize being received and welcomed into their chosen profession, the candidates for initiation will be led in the recitation of The Pledge of the Computing Professional by Dr. Robert Hovis, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science – and one of the founders of the computer science program here at Ohio Northern University.

[Bob comes to the podium and reads the following:]

The candidates for initiation will now stand. *(Wait for quiet.)*

Please raise your right hand and repeat The Pledge of the Computing Professional after me ... *(pause)*

I am a Computing Professional. *(pause)*

My work as a Computing Professional affects people's lives, *(pause)*

both now and into the future. *(pause)*

As a result, I bear moral and ethical responsibilities to society. *(pause)*

As a Computing Professional, *(pause)*

I pledge to practice my profession *(pause)*

with the highest level of integrity and competence. *(pause)*

I shall always use my skills for the public good. *(pause)*

I shall be honest about my limitations, *(pause)*

continuously seeking to improve my skills through life-long learning.
(pause)

I shall engage only in honorable and upstanding endeavors. *(pause)*

By my actions, *(pause)*

I pledge to honor my chosen profession. *(pause)*

(additional pause for silent reflection)

Congratulations.

[Bob leaves podium area]

The symbol of our Organization is displayed before you. It consists of a matrix of ones and zeros – numbers written in gold upon a black background. Each row consists of eight binary digits – a byte of information, the fundamental unit of computer memory. Each byte contains an encoding of a letter; when read from top to bottom, the word “Honor” appears, to remind us that we have pledged, through our actions, to honor our chosen profession.

As your name is called, please come forward to receive your lapel pin and to sign your Pledge Certificate. Both of these artifacts bear the symbol of The Pledge of the Computing Professional, serving as visible reminders throughout your career of the Pledge you have just taken.

[At this time Dave comes to the podium and introduces the inductees one at a time. Each inductee will receive their lapel pin from John, then their certificate from Dave; a student will then guide the inductee to the signing podium to sign their certificate.]

After today there will be no organizational meetings to attend, nor membership dues to be paid. However, all those who have obligated themselves to The Pledge of the Computing Professional are expected to keep their Pledge to honor and uphold their chosen profession. We now call upon our newest Computing Professionals to go forth in service to society.

This concludes the inaugural ceremony of The Pledge of the Computing Professional at Ohio Northern University.