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# Engineering for a Cause

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## Engineering for a Cause

11.17.2011 | Engineering, Students, Culture and Society, Faculty, Catholic

A book set for release Nov. 23 challenges the nation's engineering schools to broaden undergraduate engineering education to explore how engineering can better respect the environment and service the poor.

Many engineering programs at American universities focus solely on developing technological sophistication without promoting ethical and humanitarian priorities, according to the editors of *Engineering Education and Practice: Embracing a Catholic Vision*.

The book is a compilation of papers presented at "The Role of Engineering in a Catholic University" conference at the University of Dayton in 2005.

The conference showed Dayton is not alone, according to book contributor David O'Brien, University Professor of Faith and Culture. A number of Catholic universities have taken steps to help engineering faculty encounter mission-related questions.

"Evident in these papers is the tremendous resource of Catholic social teaching. Issues of poverty, gender, race, environmental justice, all relate to research agendas and public and corporate priorities, and Catholic social teaching provides rich resources for assessing these questions," he said.

The Rev. James Heft, S.M., Alton Brooks Professor of Religion and president of the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at the University of Southern California, and University of Dayton professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering Kevin Hallinan edited the papers for the book, in addition to being contributors.

"*Engineering Education and Practice* is a superb introduction to how engineering education and research should take place in Catholic or, more generally, in Christian universities," said David Solomon, W.P. and H.B. White director of the University of Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture. "(The book contributors') efforts are sure to play a role in the very rich discussion currently ongoing at every level of Christian higher education about how to retain what is distinctive about Christian higher education while making necessary reforms."

The authors of the papers, many of them engineers, also show how the education of engineers can be enriched by ethical and religious themes, which are typically isolated in humanities curricula, as well as special fieldwork courses that offer hands-on service-learning opportunities, according to Hallinan.

"Engineering has great social impact," said book contributor Margie Pinnell, University of Dayton associate mechanical and aerospace engineering professor. "Engineers have to ask themselves whether they're creating jobs, protecting the environment or uplifting the human condition. At a Catholic university, situations like Hurricane Katrina or the tsunamis in Thailand and Japan bring engineering's social impact to the forefront."

The book, published by University of Notre Dame Press, is available for purchase through the related link.

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