Example #2: Ethics Report

ENGN 378 – Capstone Design

(Early team writing assignment)

In any engineering problem, solutions have rippling effects on members of the team, clients, and other stakeholders in the community. Before you start implementing your designs, it is prudent to first examine the impact that your project could have on society and strategize methods for ethical engagement.

Your team's task is to formally conduct an investigation and think critically about the work you will do this year by writing a report regarding the ethics of your project. In your report, you should address the following questions:

1. What does your team aim to do at the end of this project? Briefly describe your goals and introduce the message you hope to convey in the report in an introduction.

2. What is the history of your type of project? You can think about this broadly (i.e., about the field itself) or specifically (i.e., about the type of technology you are developing). How long has your technology been developed for? Who has played a major role in the development of your type of project? Perform a case study on a project in your field or project type. What happened? What went well? What went wrong?

3. Who are your stakeholders? What do they want, need, or value surrounding your team's project? Are there any stakeholders that do not have a "seat at the table?" Who are they, and what do they value?

4. What are the potential benefits that your project could have on the community or society? Think about immediate and long-term impact. Could what you discover improve innovation or people's lives?

5. What are the potential harms that your project could have on the community or society? Again, think about immediate and long-term impact. Could what you discover hurt people, places, or innovation?

6. What are some strategies your team could use to mitigate potential harms? Think about strategies discussed in class and in the readings. What challenges do you expect to see when attempting to reduce harm?

7. What is the overall message of this report? Summarize your findings in a conclusion.

Your answers to these questions should be supported with evidence collected from research and analyzed such that the importance of the evidence is clear. Be sure to reference your sources using APA-style citations. Be critical of your project, and show that you have carefully considered the impact your team could have on others.
Your team should deliver:

1. A PDF copy of your report, roughly 1500 words, double-spaced, and clearly structured.

2. Submit a link to your team's website with a new page containing your ethics report (make sure the new page is published to the public).