SCOPE Policy of Confidentiality

Each SCOPE project is assigned to a team of approximately five students, under the guidance of a faculty advisor and with the support of the sponsor liaison. The relationship between the student team and the liaison is meant to be similar to that of a “real-world” engineering team consulting to a client. The primary purpose of the Senior Capstone Program in Engineering (SCOPE) program is to provide a powerful educational experience to Olin engineering students, with an important secondary goal of providing value to the SCOPE sponsor.

It is important that the sponsors, students and faculty come to an understanding about specific confidentialities at the outset of project work. This should be discussed at SCOPE Kick-Off Day, which represents the first meeting between the team and the sponsor at the beginning of the program in September. Strict confidentiality in the industrial sense is not feasible within the college environment, where the learning process involves open interchange of ideas and criticism. We recognize a hierarchy of company confidences ranging from proprietary formulations, product performance, research and design data, manufacturing costs, sales figures, etc. Also, we note that such confidences may be revealed incidentally or accidentally in an otherwise relatively open project.

Sponsors should be aware of several components of the SCOPE program:

- Throughout the academic year, SCOPE project teams participate in design reviews, describing the progress of their work and requesting feedback. These sessions are attended by another SCOPE team that has been paired for the academic year, as well as several faculty members and sometimes an “angel advisor” with industry experience. These individuals will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement if one is in place for the project.
- At the end of the academic year, each team presents its results on SCOPE Expo Day, an open-house celebration of student work. These presentations are open to the public. Sponsors will have an opportunity to approve the material included in the presentations and posters for Expo.

As a center of learning, Olin College must bear in mind that the educational value of the SCOPE experience is paramount. This need not be inconsistent with a reasonable policy of confidentiality. Indeed, the educational value of the SCOPE experience is enhanced by the overtones of confidentiality because all professional practice requires judgment in dealing with customer confidences. The SCOPE program can provide a safe and supportive climate for teaching students how to make these judgments. The faculty can extend these student opportunities to include developing professional attitudes on the rights of the respective parties.