

Things Students Should be Aware Of

rev. Jan. 22, 2009

Here are some things that I want students in my EE351 and EE431/EE531 classes to understand. I plan to add more to this list so check back often.

- The material that you have to learn today is only a small fraction of what electrical engineering students had to learn many years ago. There is a greater variety of things to know but the solution is longer rather than thinner schooling.
- I am completely convinced that the strive towards uniform nationwide educational standards is really a strive towards managed mediocrity.
- Having a degree or certification in any field only means that you meet the minimum acceptable standards. Keep in mind that the minimum standard is arbitrary and can be lowered so that more people meet the standard.
- If you are to succeed in engineering you must do your own personal study of the many things that are not possible to learn in school. There is no credit or certification for this. But, to the extent that you can accomplish things for your employer that others can not accomplish will enable you to move into the choice positions. With a reputation for making things work you will not have to worry about being unemployed. Companies do hire people in down times - their goal is to take advantage of the situation and acquire the best people that another company had to let go. But, knowing this, the other company strives to keep its best employees however it can. Your best strategy is to be as useful as possible. Then, your chances of losing a job are slim but even if you do, your chances for a new job are high. Those who only meet the minimum standards are the first to lose their jobs and the last to be hired elsewhere.

Observations on students

- Students who are very impatient to find out what grade they made for the course generally put the minimum (or less) effort into the course and are hoping to luck into a passing or favorable grade.
- Students who make good grades do not have excuses. Students who put forth the minimum effort are very good at identifying a multitude of faults in everybody and everything around them as an excuse for a low grade. Perhaps if they put the same effort into learning the material they would not need to point blame.
- It is not unusual for a student who made a low grade on the regular test to make a high grade on the final. These students capitalize on the fact that I count the average of the regular tests much less if the final score is higher. I may be mean-spirited but I am also a very forgiving person. Hard work for these students pays off. I have seen many D to B or even D to A transformations because of hard preparation for the final exam. Other students put as little effort into the final as they did on the regular tests - it is no surprise that they made a D or lower for the course.