

Meeting Minutes
Executive Committee of the AFSE
January 19, 2024

Present: Xiao Wang (chair), Dianne Hansford (secretary),
Brian Atkinson, Treavor Boyer, Nancy Cooke, Xiangyang Dong, Heather Emady, Vikram
Kodibagkar, Hyunglae Lee, Pitu Mirchandani, Guoliang Xue, Yong-Hang Zhang

Absent: Shenghan Guo, Anthony Lamanna, Yanchao Zhang

Guest: Kyle Squires, Kelli Haren

1. Approval of minutes

Motion: Approve minutes from November 3, 2023. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Dean's Dissertation Award

January's announcement was sent to school directors earlier this week. In November, some members expressed concern about the number of applications in the Fall nomination period. It could be that schools were waiting for Spring nomination period. However, if the number of applications is low this semester, the EC could consider changes to the application process. For example, it was suggested that the number of recommendation letters could be reduced to one letter. Not all members were in favor of this idea because of the importance of this award. This topic will be reconsidered after this award period.

3. Dean' Distinguished Lecture

An invitation has been extended.

4. OpenAI And ASU partnership

ASU has entered into a partnership with OpenAI. ASU is considering opportunities for faculty and staff to use this tool. Individuals and colleges can submit ideas to the Knowledge Enterprise. What if there was an enterprise ChatGPT license just for ASU using ASU data? (This data will not go out of ASU and any student data would have identities masked.) We should consider applications involving teaching and research. As a first partner with OpenAI, how can we innovate with this tool? What would you use it for?

Xiao: Hallucinations are a problem. On flip-side the power is incredible. A good example was in the news today: DeepMind solved math Olympiad problems.

Kyle: Could faculty use this tool to craft proposals?

Faculty could ask it to write homework problems based on materials covered.

Pitu: Use of these tools at the student level has gotten out of hand; it is dangerous if students are not reading but using ChatGPT. There is a concern that it reduces critical thinking ability.

What have we committed to sharing with OpenAI?

Could this tool help us improve evaluations?

Brian is meeting with ASU Libraries to discuss using ChatGPT, and he will report back to the EC.

5. Teaching Professor Promotion Criteria

(In December, Treavor, Brian, and Dianne examined the faculty feedback on the criteria and provided a report to Kyle.)

This process is moving forward. There were two kinds of feedback: ideas for the promotion criteria document and ideas for development. Clear expectations are important. Other than just counting (hours, number of students), how can we make expectations clear?

Brian: Definitions could be improved. For example, what is a course? Is it an on-ground or also the online version? Our contracts do not clearly define load. In a semester, we might be asked to teach the same course multiple times in different formats, but only get credit for one course. Should different types of course count differently towards load? Examples include undergraduate, graduate, capstone, class size, labs. Or should we treat all courses the same?

New course preparation might need special (additional) credit. Is one's teaching approach part of the evaluation? How do you impact students, involve students, and address important problems? Or is the instructor just presenting just a slideshow.

Treavor: We proposed a guidance document for applicants, one for reviewers, and we presented a few unaddressed issues. We need to address those items.

Brian: We proposed a "container" idea, where each faculty can define their contributions in their own way rather than the usual teaching and service model.

Unit level decision-making might be important because of differences in disciplines. (An example of this on research-side is how different units weigh conference proceedings as research publications.)

Required courses tend to get lower evaluations than elective courses. This is known. Should one get more credit for 1x course? We do not have good uptake on student evaluations. We don't have any ideas for improving this.

Next Meeting

Friday, February 2, 2024

12:00 - 1:00pm in Zoom