

Meeting Minutes SCEDIT-Senate Copy

Jan. 17, 2025, 2:58-4:00 PM Eastern Time

Zoom's AI Companion provided the meeting summary, which is then edited and anonymized by a SCEDIT chair.

Attendance: Victoria Pilato, Cynthia Davidson, Simeon Ananou, Matt Reuter, Shyam Sharma, Rose Tirotta-Esposito, Diana Voss, Alaa Abd-El-Hafez, Keri Hollander, Will Farr, Moises Eisenberg, Scott Campbell, Yersson Gaona

Quick recap

The meeting covered several key topics, including digital accessibility changes, the formation of an international research coalition on AI and persuasion, and the progress of various subcommittees. Participants discussed the implementation of new accessibility standards, the challenges of making different types of content accessible, and the need for collaboration across departments. The group also addressed concerns about the rollout of new technologies and emphasized the importance of involving faculty and students in the process.

WCAG 2.1 AA standards update

Digital Accessibility Changes, Guidelines, Features, and Limitations

New rules from the Federal Government regarding accessibility, specifically the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standards, which all digital content must adhere to by April 2026, were discussed. It was emphasized that this would impact all digital content, including course materials, and that it was a significant undertaking. The University of Stony Brook has a policy and a course content accessibility specialist to help faculty. A town hall is scheduled for February 7th to discuss the implementation and gather ideas on how to best support individual schools and departments.

The limitations of PDFs and the need for human checks to ensure accessibility. Automatic transcription is available for videos; a human check is necessary to achieve 99% accuracy. Accessibility features in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint were clarified. A member inquired about tools for Apple's Pages, but it was explained that DoIT only supports Microsoft and Google products. The current state of Google's accessibility features was discussed, including a suggestion that Google will likely improve its features by the deadline. A need was also expressed to connect with our new course content accessibility specialist for further discussion.

Accessibility Policy and Faculty Feedback

A committee member expressed his appreciation for the university's approach to the accessibility guidelines, which includes providing support and collaboration rather than simply mandating the use of specific technology. The member emphasized the need for evidence-based practice and gathering feedback from faculty to ensure the policy is implemented effectively. The response explained the current focus on providing background information to faculty on creating accessible materials, with plans to eventually reach out to students and gather more targeted feedback from different departments.

Addressing LaTeX Accessibility Challenges

There was a discussion on the accessibility challenges in LaTeX, a tool widely used in some disciplines. The concern is the university's policy on this issue, suggesting they might need to continue using LaTeX despite its accessibility issues. The new accessibility hire in CELT, who has experience in this area, will be involved in further discussions. They also discussed the need for broader consensus on the issue, suggesting that reaching out to department chairs and deans could be more effective than sending a campus-wide email. The team also discussed the need for collaboration across various departments and the potential for vendors to be flagged for accessibility issues. A member suggested reaching out to Apple for support with their products, and another member mentioned the need for the libraries to work with vendors on accessibility issues.

Addressing Accessibility for the Community

The meeting focused on the accessibility of information for individuals with reading or visual difficulties. A member emphasized the importance of addressing this issue without discriminating against those with severe disabilities. They also highlighted the difficulty of converting pictures into narratives and the need for patience and collaboration in this process. Another member mentioned the team's work on rolling out an accessibility checker for office tools.

International AI Persuasion Research Coalition

The committee was invited to participate in an international research coalition focused on AI and persuasion (RHETAI), which includes Stony Brook, the RHETAI Center at the University of Tuebingen, Auburn University, and the Center for Humane Technology. The coalition aims to help shape the development of a more ethical AI in terms of its persuasive capacities. The co-chair encouraged committee members to express interest in any of the research agendas.

The committee discussed the potential for publication of the research results and the multidisciplinary nature of the project. A member clarified that the focus is on the persuasive capacity of AI and its potential influence on systems. The CIO suggested reaching out to the Technology and Society department for potential participants.

Academic Judiciary and AI Subcommittee Progress

The Academic Judiciary Subcommittee's progress was mentioned, noting that a charge and specific goals for the committee have been drafted, which will be presented to the entire committee for approval. It was mentioned that using generative AI helped articulate the charge.

The AI subcommittee has ideas for a more collaborative approach to introducing new educational technologies, emphasizing the importance of involving faculty and students in the process. There was a motion to discuss this further in the next meeting.

Improving Collaboration for New Launches

The committee discussed the launch of the Notebook LM AI application and its impact on faculty. There are concerns about the lack of consultation with faculty before the launch, whereas past launches, such as Brightspace and Duo, were handled more effectively. Future launches should involve more collaboration with faculty. It was clarified that the Notebook LM was part of their package, not a licensed product like Brightspace. The team agreed on the need for a more collaborative approach to launching new technologies, AI Tool Rollout, and campus impact.

Next steps

- Sub-committees are to present their charge/goals at the next meeting.
- All committee members are to review a committee member's motion regarding the rollout of educational technology for discussion and potential vote at the next meeting.
 - The motion will be added to the agenda for the next meeting.
- Two members will contact Apple representatives regarding accessibility options for Apple products used in the School of Nursing.
- CELT will contact department chairs and deans to promote the upcoming Town Hall on accessibility.
- The new Course Content Accessibility Specialist will be asked to meet with STEM faculty to discuss LaTeX accessibility issues.
- All committee members are to review the RHETAI coalition website and consider participating in the project.
 - CIO to contact the Technology and Society department about potential involvement in the RHETAI coalition project.