

ECE Undergraduate Core Courses Committee Meeting

Friday, April 5th, 2024

Attending: Arabshahi, Chen, Hameed, Makhsous, Pippin, Overly, Shepard, Swanson, Van Fossen, Wilson (Chair)

Agenda:

1. Quarterly Course Hand-Off/Sync Meeting Format & Schedule (Makhsous)
2. TA Assignments and Quality for Core Courses (Hameed)
3. Labs Safety: Issues and Discussion of Common Language for MCDs and Posting in Labs

Minutes of March 8th, 2024: Approved

Quarterly Course Hand-Off/Sync Meeting Format & Schedule (Makhsous)

Having led the process for quarterly hand-off meetings for core courses for the past year, Makhsous requested a review of the processes used and asked for discussion on possible changes to implement for future hand-off meetings.

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- Makhsous provided overview of meetings to this point.
 - Of particular note is the complexity at times of getting the course coordinator and both current and future instructors to meet, with at least Makhsous participating from the UCCC. Finding time at the end of the quarter to make this possible can be difficult.
 - Engaging instructors can also be difficult, with varying levels of engagement depending on instructors involved.
- Proposed structure:
 - Frequency:
 - Option 1: Once a year with all instructors for the year, prior to commencement of the year.
 - Option 2: Twice a year
 - Participants:
 - Same as currently:
 - course coordinator
 - current instructor
 - future instructor(s)
 - all members of the UCCC
 - Not all members of UCCC need to be present, but all are invited to attend.
 - Wilson preferred that hand-off meetings occur whenever a new instructor will be leading a course.
 - It is important that instructors have a very solid working understanding of the course when going in to teach it for the first time.
 - Members agreed that fewer participants makes the meetings easier and more efficient, and that the only requirement should be a meeting between the current and subsequent instructors with at least one member of the committee to facilitate the process and make sure everything is covered that is expected.

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- A general meeting of all instructors for the academic year at the beginning of the year might be helpful in guiding the UCCC with its oversight role for the courses.

Approval of guidelines for meetings, and form for use to guide meetings to be addressed at future UCCC meeting.

TA Assignments and Quality for Core Courses (Hameed)

Hameed asked that the committee have a discussion surrounding the quality of TAs assigned to the core course, and possible ways quality can be ensured.

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- Of main concern is that variance in TA quality and engagement.
- Some TAs, especially the undergraduate students instructors can choose, are especially strong, and this is preferable.
- Problems can arise when PhD students are placed into a course, primarily since they need to be assigned somewhere to cover the department's obligation to fund them but are often not as strong as other options.
- Arabshahi noted that Swanson goes through a very complicated process and is dealing with a number of requirements and complexities just to fill all position and ensure all PhD students who need a TA position are placed.
 - Complicating this factor is the desire to increase the number of PhD students in the department, so more will likely take on TA duties in the future.
- Wilson noted that instructors have little power over TAs.
 - Wilson's opinion is that if a TA does a poor job, they would ideally not get assigned in subsequent quarters.
 - Hameed agreed, believing there should be some kind of consequence for a TA not satisfying their job duties.

Discussion tabled and will need further discussion

Lab Safety: Issues and Discussion of Common Language for MCDs and Posting in Labs

Wilson asked the committee to discuss the issue of safety in lab courses, with the aim of agreeing on language to use in the MCDs for all core courses.

- Wilson noted that she will be working on language to present to the committee.
- Pippin provided examples of various safety issues he has seen in the labs, and general concerns based on his experience observing a number of students and lab sections.
- With the ABET review coming next year, the issue will be important to address, with remedies put in place.

Discussion tabled for time. Wilson will draft language for review at the committee's next meeting on April 19th.