



Winter News from the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence

AAAI-18 Registration Is Open!

AAAI-18 registration information is now available at aaai.org/aaai18, and online registration can be completed at regonline.com/aaai18. The deadline for late registration rates is January 5, 2018. Complete tutorial and workshop information, as well as other special program information is available at these sites.

Make Your Hotel Reservation Now!

AAAI has reserved a block of rooms at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside at reduced conference rates. The cut-off date for conference rate reservations is Wednesday, January 3, 2018 at 5:00pm New Orleans time. Please see aaai.org/Conferences/AAAI-18/hotel-and-travel/ for complete information.

AAAI-18 Invited Speaker Program

In addition to over 950 accepted technical papers, the AAAI-18 technical program will include an outstanding line-up of invited speakers. A preliminary list of invited presentations includes Cynthia Dwork (Harvard / Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study); Zoubin Ghahramani (University of Cambridge / Uber); Joseph Halpern (Cornell University), speaking on Actual Causality: A Survey; Charles Isbell (Georgia Institute of Technology); and Percy Liang (Stanford University), speaking on How Should We Evaluate Machine Learning for AI?.

Student Activities

As part of its outreach to students, AAAI-18 will continue several special programs specifically for students, including the Doctoral Consortium, the Student Abstract Program, Lunch with a Fellow, and the Volunteer Program, in addition to the following:

Student Reception

AAAI will welcome all students to AAAI-18 by hosting an evening student reception on Friday, February 2. Although the reception is especially beneficial to new students at the conference, all are welcome! Please join us and make all the newcomers welcome!

Breakfast with Champions: A Women's Mentoring Event

AAAI will hold its fourth women's mentoring event for students and junior women professionals to meet with senior women in artificial intelligence. Breakfast with Champions will be held Monday morning, February 5.

AAAI/ACM SIGAI Job Fair

The 2018 AAAI/ACM Job Fair will be held Monday, February 5 at 4:00 – 6:00 pm. The formal two-hour event will be preceded by an opportunity for several hours of informal mingling. The Job Fair is open to all AAAI-18 technical registrants. All other participants (employers and job seekers) must register by selecting the appropriate category at the AAAI registration site (see aaai.org/Conferences/AAAI-18/registration).

The 2018 AAAI/ACM Job Fair is a place for students and professionals

looking for internships or jobs to meet with representatives from over 30 companies and academia in an informal "meet-and-greet" atmosphere. If you are representing a company, research organization or university and would like to participate in the job fair, please send an email with your contact information to aaai18jobfair@aaai.org no later than January 5. The organizers of the AAAI/ACM SIGAI Job Fair are John Dickerson (University of Maryland, USA) and Nicholas Mattei (IBM, USA).

The Winograd Schema Challenge

Nuance Communications, Inc. is sponsoring a competition to encourage efforts to develop programs that can solve the Winograd Schema Challenge, an alternative to the Turing Test developed by Hector Levesque, winner of the 2013 IJCAI Award for Research Excellence. The test will be organized, administered, and evaluated by CommonsenseReasoning.org which is dedicated to furthering and promoting research in the field of automated commonsense reasoning. Contestants should email Charles Ortiz charles.ortiz@nuance.com stating their intent to enter the contest no later than January 20, 2018. For complete information, please see aaai.org/Conferences/AAAI-18/aaai18winograd/.

AAAI Executive Council Meeting Minutes

The AAAI Executive Council Meeting took place in San Francisco, California, USA on February 5, 2017.

Second Call for Nominations for 2018 Executive Council Election

The 2018 Nominating Committee is seeking nominations from the AAAI membership for the positions of AAAI President-Elect and Executive Councilor. In 2018, AAAI members will elect one individual to serve a two-year term as president-elect, followed by two years as president, and finally, two years as immediate past president. In addition, members will elect four new councilors to serve three-year terms on the AAAI Executive Council. All elected officers and councilors are expected to attend all council meetings each year (usually 1-2 in person and 1-2 via telecon), and actively participate in AAAI activities. Nominees must be current members of AAAI. The Nominating Committee encourages all regular AAAI members in good standing to place an individual's name before them for consideration. (Student and institutional members are not eligible to submit candidates' names.) The Nominating Committee, in turn, will nominate two candidates for president-elect and eight candidates for councilor in early spring. In addition to members' recommendations, the committee will actively recruit individuals in order to provide a balanced slate of candidates. AAAI regular members will vote in late spring, and the new members of the Executive Council will be installed in the summer of 2018.

To submit a candidate's name for consideration, please send the following information to Carol Hamilton, Executive Director, AAAI, 2275 East Bayshore Road, Suite 160, Palo Alto, CA 94303; by fax to 650/321-4457; or by email to hamilton@aaai.org:

- Name
- Affiliation
- City, State or Province, Country
- Email address
- URL
- Year of membership in AAAI
- Approximate number of AAAI publications
- At least two sentences describing the candidate and why he or she would be a good candidate

Please include any additional information or recommendations that would be helpful to the Nominating Committee. Nominators should contact candidates prior to submitting their names to verify that they are willing to serve, should they be elected. The deadline for nominations is January 15, 2018.

dled requests from participants who could not attend due to immigration issues. Luckily, the number was not large, but a full refund, where indicated and/or publication in the proceedings if an accepted author were both accommodated. In addition, authors were given the option of presenting their work via video or by delegating to a colleague. Shlomo Zilberstein suggested that there may be ways for other conferences, such as IJCAI, to work with AAAI to accommodate author needs should the issue persist or grow in the future. Kambhampati also noted that the first meeting of the trustees for the Partnership in AI was held on the previous Friday. AAAI is a member of this group, as they recently opened up membership to nonprofits and societies in the field. There were 6 companies and 6 nonprofits represented, and Kambhampati reported that the goals of the group are well aligned with AAAI efforts.

Fellows/Awards Committee Report

Tom Dietterich reported that the pool of nominees for Fellow in 2017 contained only one woman and in the end no female honorees. The Fellows Selection Committee is committed to broadening the scope of the nominations to include more deserving senior members of the community and more diversity in 2018. He also reported that the Awards Committee used semantic scholar to get impact of papers for the selection of the Classic Paper Award. Other awards given in 2017 were the Distinguished Service Award (James Hendler), the Feigenbaum Prize (Yoav Shoham), and the AAAI/EAAI Outstanding Educator Award (Sebastian Thrun).

Dietterich also reported that he has been working with ACM SIGAI on the establishment of a joint AI doctoral dissertation award. The working committee is not advocating a cash prize, but would like to offer the winner the opportunity to speak at AAAI and to cover registration and travel costs to do so. A draft proposal was circulated and discussed by the Executive Council. One suggestion was to get a sponsor for a monetary award, or to split a cash prize between the two organizations

Attending: Rao Kambhampati, Yolanda Gil, Tom Dietterich, Ted Senator, David Smith, Boi Faltings (partial), Blai Bonet, Sonia Chernova, Vince Conitzer, Ashok Goel, Charles Isbell, David Leake, Diane Litman (via skype), Mausam (via skype), Jennifer Neville, Francesca Rossi, Steve Smith, Kiri Wagstaff, Qiang Yang, Shlomo Zilberstein, Carol Hamilton

Not Attending: Michela Milano

Kambhampati welcomed the mem-

bers of the Executive Council. The minutes of the November 2016 meeting were approved, pending one modification.

Kambhampati presented some brief remarks on a variety of subjects. He announced that the current registration count was 1,792, and this was expected to increase during the next two days. This is the highest registration since the early 1990s. There was a brief discussion about how AAAI han-

(approximately \$500). The Council also discussed the creation of a named award with an endowment to support future awards. In addition, they recommended the award be listed by department and not just by university. Dietterich noted that the approval by ACM will take a long time, and that they hope to start that process in March or April so that nominations could be submitted for 2018. He noted that this award would be a subgroup award, so would not have the same prestige as the ACM Doctoral Dissertation Award. There was a brief discussion about having an award sponsored by AAAI only, but the group was supportive of the joint venture and noted that it was in line with similar efforts, such as the Doctoral Consortium.

Conference Committee Report

Shlomo Zilberstein reported that he has program chairs in place for the next two years. Sheila McIlraith and Kilian Weinberger will serve in 2018, and Pascal Van Hentenryck and Zhi-Hua Zhou in 2019. Future chairs will have the opportunity to observe in 2017 and 2018. He also noted that the program for the current 2017 conference was very rich and exciting. Technical submissions, including main and special track submissions, rose by over 20% to 2,595, excluding senior member papers, demos, doctoral consortium, and student poster abstracts. Thirty percent of submissions came from China, with acceptance rates for these papers and US-based papers similar to overall acceptance rates. Machine learning and natural language processing, were the leading subject areas, with strong representation from applications, search, vision, knowledge representation and reasoning, game theory and economic paradigms, and multiagent systems. The Council discussed the issue of authors submitting multiple papers, and whether a cap should be instituted. In some cases, this practice has become quite significant, with one author submitting more than 40 papers in 2017. The Conference Committee expressed concerns about load balancing and fairness to all authors. There has been some backlash from the community when strict limits have been imposed. Shlomo noted

that the double-blind review helps mitigate the problem of multiple submissions, so should be continued. The overall consensus was that no formal policy will be instituted, but program chairs may wish to examine things more closely at the time that the CFP is written.

Zilberstein also examined the changing character of the conference with its significant growth in recent years. He solicited ideas for ways to address this change. Several suggestions were made, including organizing “birds of a feather” meetings, expanding the number of parallel sessions, expanding the focus of the conference beyond the traditional academic one, expanding our outreach efforts, holding sessions devoted to policy issues, and increasing opportunities for socializing. The group discussed the current scheduling app and web program, Guidebook, and agreed that it lacked good search tools. Blai Bonet agreed to help determine if its usability could be improved for 2018, as this will become even more important as the conference continues to grow. The Council generally agreed that they want to retain the current model, but explore ways to change and grow with coexisting new programs, such as AI in Practice.

Zilberstein noted that the AI in History program will continue in 2017 with a panel chaired by Ed Feigenbaum on Expert Systems. The original plan was to have something every two years, starting with the Shakey celebration in 2015. In order to sustain this activity, Shlomo suggested that a committee be formed to select the next focus. The Council suggested that the program chairs for 2019 put a subcommittee together to address this issue.

Zilberstein discussed the current travel restrictions put in place by the US government, and the resulting uncertainty for the future. Shlomo encouraged the Council to adopt a policy that would help affected researchers, such as allowing remote attendance, or in-person presentation at a related conference such as IJCAI. While the Council is generally in favor of finding reciprocal solutions, they agreed that further study and evaluation was required to make an informed decision about future procedures.

Finally, the Council discussed the ongoing issue of finding a good algorithm for assigning papers, especially in light of the dramatically increasing number of submissions and the growing program committee. Zilberstein noted that Shaul Markovitch had created software to help with the assignment algorithm. In conjunction with this, the group discussed whether it made sense to change submission systems. Zilberstein suggested that another comprehensive conference survey might be useful.

Finance

Ted Senator announced that David Smith will be taking over for him as Secretary-Treasurer in early 2018. They have entered a transition period whereby Smith will be involved in all financial discussions to allow him time to become familiar with AAAI's finances and financial policies. Senator reviewed the general financial principles of AAAI, including its policy of spending up to 3-5 percent of the operating reserve on an annual basis. He noted that the investments have continued to grow over time, and that AAAI is now enjoying a surplus after several years of effort to reduce an annual budget deficit. There are specific targets in place for the various funds in the investment portfolio, and the general practice is to not shift funds frequently but to maintain targets by withdrawing from funds that have become out of line. In response to concerns about the annual circulation of the tax return to members of the Council, Senator explained that the main purpose of this exercise is to maintain transparency. It is understood that Council members cannot be expected to verify all the information.

International

Qiang Yang asked the Council for input on effective ways to promote AI worldwide. While there has been some success in China and India, European efforts have been less organized, and AI work in that area has not been well promoted. The Council agreed that the make-up of the committee should be as international as possible. Several suggestions were made, including jointly sponsoring meetings in Europe,

or jointly developing online materials for promoting and explaining AI.

With regard to China, Yang suggested that we can collaborate with more than one group there. He also made several suggestions about ways to reach out to China in the future, including sponsoring a recent AAAI conference keynote in China, sending a Fellows delegation to China, or holding a future AAAI conference in China. AI Magazine could also serve as a point of collaboration, by allowing excerpts in Chinese publications. Yang suggested that AAAI consider a city in southern China for its conference in 2020. Access is very convenient from Hong Kong. Returning to the issue of a Chinese chapter, Yang encouraged the Council to better clarify the decision process for chapter application acceptance.

Membership

Blai Bonet initiated a discussion of the Distinguished Speakers Program, which had been launched in 2016 and for which several applications had been received. AAAI will act as the liaison between interested speakers and groups requesting speakers. He suggested that AAAI post a list of potential speakers, and an online application form. One possible model would be that AAAI would cover the cost of the travel for the speaker, and the host would cover the accommodation cost. The program could be extended to include tutorial speakers. Another suggestion was to launch a joint program with another group, such as ICAPS or ACM. Several issues were discussed, including whether the requesting group should be required to guarantee an audience size or whether the funding should be extended to speakers already scheduled to speak at a meeting. The criteria to approve speakers and requests need to be developed more fully, but the goal is to start the program as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Council voted on and approved \$10,000 in funds for the Distinguished Speakers Program, contingent on the clarification of the approval process.

The Council then brainstormed a few ways to perhaps increase membership in the Association, including a more streamlined renewal process, a

more targeted campaign to individuals eligible for senior member status, and an effort to increase nominations for Fellows.

Ethics

Sonia Chernova distributed a preliminary draft of a AAAI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct Statement, and solicited feedback from the Executive Council. This statement would apply to all members of the Association. The committee reviewed similar statements by ACM and IEEE in writing the statement. In addition, Mike Hamilton directed the Council's attention to the AAAI Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement, which addresses some similar issues, specifically related to publication ethics. The Council raised concerns about some possible controversial issues, such as weaponized systems research and human research subject rights. The goal of the committee with the proposed statement, which is closely modeled after the ACM statement, was to make it specific to AI. The purpose of the statement is to publish a fundamental value statement, outlining acceptable professional behavior for all AAAI members and conference attendees, thereby ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all. A few specific recommendations were made, including the following: (1) change "computing" to "AI" in the final clause, (2) remove the reference to voluntary compliance, (3) point to the AAAI bylaws, as they already cover the membership termination process, (4) remove the implied requirement to "do good" in items clauses 1 and 9, and (5) refer people to the Publications statement mentioned earlier. Chernova asked the Council for recommendations on next steps for the committee. The Council noted that a working group of the Strategic Planning Board created a statement (vision, mission, values, goals) about AAAI, which addresses several ethical issues and may be of some help in further refining the statement. However, the Council did caution the committee not to confuse the goals of the association with expectations for member behavior. After some discussion about publishing a statement of values instead of a code of conduct, the

Council agreed to stick with the Code of Conduct.

Kambhampati also announced that he is in the early stages of talks with SIGAI to co-organize a conference in ethics within the next year, and asked for Council feedback on this idea. Kambhampati explained that there would be no published proceedings. Because the hope is to reach out to a variety of research areas, publication needs of various communities need to be addressed. The suggestion was made to make journal dissemination an option, perhaps through JAIR. Kambhampati noted that while there has been a lot of activity lately in the ethics area, there is currently no peer-reviewed conference. The Council was generally enthusiastic, suggesting the inclusion of bioethics, human-connected systems, and social science. There was one concern raised about not including this as a track in AAAI, and the Council agreed that the publication issue needs to be addressed.

Publications

David Leake reported that the current AAAI-17 proceedings is 20 percent larger than that for AAAI-16, and eight times the size of the first AAAI-80 proceedings. It contains 765 papers, including those for IAAI-17 and EAAI-17, and will likely be six volumes. The IJCAI-16 proceedings was five volumes. AAAI continues to produce technical reports for all AAAI conference workshops and symposia, and has added over 3000 pages to the AAAI Digital Library in the last year. A new version of OJS has been installed, and Leake thanked Mike Hamilton for his efforts on this as well as all publications and the transfer of the AAAI server in recent months. Leake further reported that the publications committee will be looking at new directions for the press in the coming year, and solicited feedback from the Council. Of particular interest was the issue of open science and the growing number of institutions that require open access, including US government-funded research. AAAI's technical publications are currently in open access.

Ashok Goel thanked Leake and Hamilton for their mentoring has he has gradually taken over the reins of

the magazine editorship. His goal is to broaden participation among authors in *AI Magazine*, and to make articles more accessible to all readers. He has asked authors to reduce formalism, making the articles more accessible to students in cross-disciplinary areas. He plans to introduce additional columns, including ones by past presidents and fellows, and hopes to address AI topics related to history, education, ethics, the future, and society. He hopes that every issue will have at least one item of interest for every member. He is also planning interactive components of the magazine once a new infrastructure has been developed, including news, ads, social media, and member comments. At the upcoming editorial board meeting, he plans to recruit additional associate editors to help expand the magazine, and to commit to edit a special issue during their 3-year term. He is also planning to expand the editorial board, and asked the Council for nominations of suitable candidates. He also asked the Council for suggestions on topics for special issues. Leake thanked Ashok for all his efforts.

Leake gave a brief report on AI Topics, an effort started many years ago to educate and inspire the broader community, including researchers, students of all ages, the media, and the general public. It currently has 6000 pages, and garners a lot of international interest. In addition, the AI Topics team publishes the AI Alert each week, which goes to all AAAI members and affiliates. Bruce Buchanan and Reid Smith are anxious to maintain this service in the future, and welcome feedback from the Council.

Government Relations

Steve Smith reported on recent activity in this area, including an upcoming Spring Symposium on AI and Social Good, stemming from the flurry of activity at the end of the Obama administration. He also reported that the OSTP is currently nonexistent, due to turmoil in the current administration. People are anxious to keep the strategic plan in place for the future. He also reported that AAAI-17 will have a couple of interesting events related to government with a talk by

Lynne Parker of the University of Tennessee and the National Science Foundation on the Creation of the US National Artificial Intelligence Research and Development Strategic Plan, as well as a Federal Funding Agency Information Panel / Meet and Greet with participants from NSF, DARPA, and NASA. On an international level, Tom Dietterich noted that the EU will pass a directive by 2018 requiring explanations from AI systems that make decisions. Otherwise, they cannot be used in the EU. Smith suggested that the committee could be more proactive in addressing current issues.

Education

Kiri Wagstaff distributed a handout detailing the establishment and recent activities of the Education Committee. The current goal of the committee is to prioritize and select two ideas to implement during the coming year. Possible projects include the following: (1) improve public perception of AI through placement of columns, editorials for news venues, AI books, or blogs, or establishing a youtube channel; (2) improve AI student intake by incorporating motivating AI methods/applications into CS1 / CS2, increasing interdisciplinary contact, working with K-12 teachers to create mini-lessons involving AI, organizing HS/university student competitions, or creating online resources, including an AI Topics for grades 6-12, and (3) professional development for the AI community through special conference tracks (especially on ethics), special issues of the *AI Magazine*, contributions of teacher lessons via NSF Bits and Bytes, education-related videos for the AI Video Competition. Blai Bonet suggested having an ex-officio student representative on the Executive Council, who could be present for relevant discussions. Yolanda Gil also reported on the AAAI Connections event held the previous day. The program did not get off the ground until December, and then encountered several logistical issues because of the K-12 participants. For 2017, participating researchers went to an off-site location to record their presentations, which will be available to schools, reaching 99 countries and 6,000 girls. They also plan a spring Facebook event. Gil would like

to try again in 2018 in New Orleans, but will require local support. Kambhampati noted that even if the event does not gel onsite, it is great to have the resources available online. Following up on the handout, Wagstaff asked the Council to submit their feedback on priorities to her by email.

AI Hub Update/Proposal

Tom Dietterich, who has been developing AI Hub with Sabine Hauert, gave an update on its current status and proposed that AAAI support the project at \$20,000 a year for three years. The funding would be contingent on obtaining a total of \$80,000 in support commitments from other organizations for at least the first year. They are also seeking support from organizations such as ICML, NIPS, ICAPS, etc. Prior to this request, AAAI approved a one-time grant of \$5000 to register the domain name, pay hosting fees, copy the RoboHub software, and customize it for AI Hub. As part of the full funding model, organizations will have two representatives on the AI Hub management board. The AI Hub director will report directly to the AAAI Council, and as AI Topics does, make selected AI Magazine articles available in open access. Dietterich agreed to talk with the AI Topics editors to see where collaborative efforts might make sense. Although the Council was not prepared to fund the project for three years, a motion was made to fund the project for one year, based on commitments from the necessary other organizations. The motion carried and the funding of \$20,000 was approved for this project.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Ted Senator reported that he currently has several drafts of the proposed conflict of interest statement, which he will consolidate and circulate to the Council. All members of the Council will be required to sign the final document, as is recommended by the AAAI auditor.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM, and Kambhampati convened a 30-minute executive session for elected members only.