

May 18-19, 2022

ITEM 200-1501-R0522

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Computer Science on Dr. Cecilia Schahczenski – Montana Technological University

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Professor Cecilia M. Schahczenski from the faculty of Montana Tech, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for her years of dedicated and valued service to the institution, the Department of Computer Science and the state of Montana by recommending the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of Higher Education.

EXPLANATION

Celia Schahczenski grew up in California and studied Mathematics at the University of California in Santa Barbara. She graduated, with honors, earning a Bachelor's Degree in 1978. For the next two years she was a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer and high school teacher in Belize, Central America. While there she met her husband and continued to teach high school for another year and a half. The couple returned to the U.S. to continue their education, and Celia earned her Master's Degree in Computer Science at the University of Missouri in 1984. While there she earned an "Outstanding Graduate Student" award. Celia spent the next semester in Shanghai, People's Republic of China, at prestigious Fudan University, helping 5 other faculty members to prepare 50 budding computer scientists to establish and maintain a Shanghai-based "software factory". Celia won a Bell Communications Research Graduate Fellowship for Women, covering all school and living expenses, to pursue a Ph.D. in computer science. In 1990 she earned her Ph.D. from the University of Florida, developing a mathematically verifiable programming language.

Celia spent the next 4 years at Bell Communications Research formally specifying telephony software systems and promoting formal method specification. While at Bell Communications Research she founded a formal methods interest group of 80 employees within Bell Communications Research and the regional telephone companies.

In 1993 Celia joined the Computer Science Department, at Montana Tech, being the first computer science Ph.D. hired at the school. Celia helped to establish computer science as its own department, rather than an emphasis within the Mathematic Department. She developed several new courses including Database Management Systems, Programming Languages, Requirement and Specifications and Software Architecture.

Celia's research interests include formal methods, object-oriented databases, service learning and computer ethics. In 2001, she received a service-learning grant and began teaching project-based, service learning courses which she continued to do throughout her time at Montanan Tech. Celia has worked with students specifying or developing numerous software system, for clients on campus and off. Three of these projects are highlighted:

Beginning in 2008, working with farmers and ranchers, Celia and 6 undergraduate students created the AGR-Lite Wizard, a decision support tool to help farmers decide if the AGR-Lite insurance product was right for them. This work was funded by two grants of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency. The wizard was widely used and distributed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology and the USDA sponsored ATTRA National Sustainable Agriculture Program for 4 years.

Beginning in 2011, working with computer science students, Celia created software to facilitate and standardize how members of the Computer Science Department assess courses for ABET accreditation. Still being used today, this software has evolved through the years, with over 50 undergraduate students contributing to it.

In 2016, as a follow on to an earlier project, Celia worked with students to develop software to facilitate and track non-financial operations of the Butte Emergency Food Bank; enabling the in-take of clients and food donations, the distribution of boxes of food to clients, and the distribution of food to receiving organizations. This system has been in use at the foodbank since 2017. Celia continues to engage students on this project, and is currently enhancing the software with the help of a computer science junior.

Celia took over as Department Head of the Computer Science Department in the fall 2002, and served in that capacity until the fall of 2007. During her time as department head she engaged department faculty in creating expectations and outcomes for each course, focusing on the flow of knowledge units through the curricula. Celia instituted weekly departmental meetings and yearly Industry Advisory Board meetings; practices that have continued to this day.

Throughout her time at Montana Tech Celia has served on many committees, at one time being secretary of both the Faculty Senate and the Montana Tech Union. She was the first chair of the Merit Committee and served in that capacity for four years.

Celia enjoys living in Montana because of its scenic beauty, open spaces, low population, resilient people and opportunities to hike, ski, backpack, kayak, be near her grandkids, and pursue her latest interest, teaching yoga.

For these and other contributions, the Board of Regents of Higher Education is pleased to confer upon Cecilia Schahczenski the rank of Professor Emeritus of Computer Science at Montana Tech together with all the rights, privileges, and honors thereto appertaining.

ATTACHMENTS

None