AI Skunks

Mission

The AI Skunks Institute is a research center dedicated research and developing technology to further innovative, creative, and critical thinking skills.

Our work focuses on three core domains: experiential learning, conceptual learning, and computational learning technology.

Experiential Learning

The mentorship model of a traditional university PhD has dominated scientific training and has been shown to produce exceptional thinkers. However, the economics of the model has dissuaded many underrepresented groups from entering the process. From 2002 to 2017, of the roughly 50,000 people who earned Ph.D.s each year, only 5% were black. This is particularly true in STEM fields. According to the National Science Foundation, in there were more than a dozen fields—largely subfields within science, technology, engineering, and math—in which not a single doctoral degree was awarded to a black person anywhere in the United States.

Our research focus is on developing experiential learning models that replicate the PhD mentorship relationship outside of a traditional PhD. According to the NSF, fewer than 20% of PhD graduates take academic jobs. Of those who enter academia, most are not research mentors. The number of potential mentors is vast. Our mission is to use technology and the Internet to include the millions of underrepresented talented people opportunities to learn to think like a scientist but have been clearly left out due to a broken pipeline.

Conceptual Learning

The state of the art in AI moves very quickly. Lifelong learning is a critical aspect for any practicing data scientist. Online learning has very effectively taught technical skills such as programming, math and theory. A critical part of AI Skunks mission is to contribute to the body of open source technical learning, particularly to assist practitioners to keep up with the state of the art in AI, and courses that help existing PhD become effective mentors.

Computational Learning Technology

Artificial Intelligence itself can help people learn AI. The third major focus of AI Skunks is the development of computational tools and algorithms that help people learn AI. From internship recommender systems, to counterfactual skills analysis, to automated learning assessment, the potential for AI to help teach AI is boundless. Using AI to build learning tools is a critical aspect of AI Skunks mission.

Organizational Structure

Board of Directors

There will be an odd number of directors, initially three. The BoD has all voting rights in the organization. The BoD will make any by-law changes by majority vote.

Executive Branch

The executive branch runs the day to day of the organization. Minimally there will be three executive members, 1) an executive director 2) a treasurer and 3) a clerk. An individual can serve in more than one executive role. Executive roles beyond the core three must be approved by the BoD.

Advisory Members

Advisory members are experienced researchers, and managers in academia, think tanks and business. The role of advisory members are to give AI Skunks critical feedback. As experienced mentors and managers they experience gaps in the educational process in the real-world and in research institutions. The point of the non-profit is to fill those gaps. Advisory members are essential to keep AI Skunks on point. They make sure the non-profit is not filling gaps that don't need to be filled and is focused on those that need be filled.

Advisory members meet once every six months and are given updates about what is going on monthly but are not expected to give more than advice.

Fellows (known as “skunks”)

Fellows are people carrying out the research mission of the AI Skunks organization. Fellows can be paid or unpaid. Fellows can be full time or part-time. Fellows are a critical aspect of AI Skunks mission as they carry out its research.

Interns (known as “skunks”)

Like fellows, interns are typically people carrying out the research, but can also be people carrying out professional development. AI Skunks supports interns with its technology. Interns are a critical aspect of AI Skunks mission as they provide feedback on the effectiveness of its methodology. Interns can be paid or unpaid.

Branding

Mascot

The primary mascot of AI Skunks is Remy the Skunk. Remy is short for Rembrandt X Einstein. The X standing for the random variable X.

A skunk represents a member of a "skunkworks". The designation "skunk works" or "skunkworks" is widely used in business, engineering, and technical fields to describe a group within an organization given a high degree of autonomy and unhampered by bureaucracy, with the task of working on advanced or secret projects. Its name was taken from the moonshine factory in the comic strip Li'l Abner where there was reference to a place called "Skonk Works" where a strong beverage was brewed from skunks, old shoes and other ingredients.

A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated

Colors

# Skunk White ##ffffff

# A screenshot of a cell phone Description automatically generated

Skunk Black #000000

A picture containing drawing

Description automatically generated

Skunk Grey #596363

A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated

Skunk Blood Crimson # 9B1E33

A close up of a sign

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Social Media

Website skunks.ai

Will add LinkedIn, Twitter, FB, IG, others???