Networking & Professional Committees

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Importance of Networking

• Validates your work
  – Know who your colleagues are and what they’re doing
• Identify potential collaborators
  – Technical communities are actually very small
• Creates opportunities
  – If people don’t know who you are and what you do, when opportunities arise, they won’t know to call you!
• Provides support network
  – Advocates
  – Friends
Professional Committees

• Important because
  – These are the active/successful people in your community and there are typically a lot of them on the committee!
    • Many times, they’re not just other researchers, but may be people from funding agencies
  – Context enables you to really get to know these people
    • If people don’t know who you are and what you do, when opportunities arise, they won’t know to call you!
  – Keeps you up-to-date in your field
Networking I’ve Done

• Invited talks
  – Doesn’t mean that you have to be invited – invite yourself!
  – Departmental colloquiums (not your department!)
  – Campus research events, student organizations/programs (e.g., YWiC, AMP)
  – National Labs (in your area or when you’re in the area)

• NSF Panels
  – Say “yes” to as many of these as you can in the beginning

• Workshop panels

• Conference committees
  – Probably the best context I’ve had to extend my network and further my career
How I Created a Network

• Mostly by accident!
  – Had no plan
  – Just said “yes” to a lot of different things that I was asked to do
    • Said “yes” even if it wasn’t very convenient

• Kept in touch with people I met at conferences
  – Became familiar with their work
  – Invited myself to give departmental talks when in the area
  – Called when I needed partners on proposals

• Had a solid elevator speech and was always pleasant
  – Even if I was really feeling tired and grumpy!
How Many People Do You Need in Your Network?

• Enough but not too many
  – Number that allows you to build relationships with these people
    • That takes time!
  – Remember that not everyone you meet will remember you. Need to meet enough people that enough remember who you are!
Finding Advocates

• Advocates typically very successful people
  – who faced similar obstacles
    • Women
    • Persons of color
    • Persons with disabilities
    • People from similar institutions
  – who your work matters to

• My best advocates were found
  – Serving on NSF panels/committees together
    • People who face similar obstacles and in similar research areas
  – Doing research with National Laboratories
    • My work mattered to them
  – Being on panels at events like this!
    • People who face similar obstacles
How I Assist Others in Building Network

• Invite young faculty to be on conference committees
  – Ask them to attend meetings instead of me!
• Introduce young faculty to my contacts
• Advocate for them and their work
  – When I see/hear of opportunities, I pass on their name or pass directly to them
• Give advice on building network
Summary Advice

• Say “yes” to as many quality opportunities for networking that you can
  – NSF panels, workshop panels, invited talks...
• Don’t be a pest
  – Know when to ask and when not to
  – Know who likes you and who doesn’t
    • Don’t try to force a relationship
• Be assertive and introduce yourself even if you feel like running the other direction!
• Always do a good job at everything you do
  – Don’t drop the ball on important things