

# Working With Colleagues

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# Me

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- Professor and Associate Chair for Education in Computer Science department at Stanford University
  - Previously at Google Research
- Organizing stuff
  - Co-Chair, ACM/IEEE-CS CS2013 guidelines
    - Had the honor and privilege of working with Andrea and Zach
  - Co-Chair, ACM Education Board
  - Co-Founder & General Chair, Learning at Scale, 2014
  - Co-Founder & General Chair, Educational Advances in AI, 2010
- Note all the “Co’s” – really enjoy collaborating with colleagues

# Themes

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- Golden rule
- Being visible
- Being a good citizen
- Working with colleagues
- Forming teams
- Dealing with difficult situations

# Golden Rule

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*Be the colleague you would  
want to work with*

# Being Visible

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- Be visible in your department
  - Get to know colleagues
    - Go to lunch (potentially have a topic to discuss)
    - Speed talks or other ways to know what others are doing
  - Get help and advice
    - Share teaching materials (within and across institutions)
    - Understand history and culture of department/institution
- Be aware of departmental issues
  - Attend departmental meetings
- Take your service duties seriously
  - But don't “overdo it” on service (recurring theme here)

# Being a Good Citizen

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- Be respectful of others time
  - Meetings  $\neq$  productivity
  - If you call a meeting, have clear agenda and goals
- Time is everyone's most precious commodity
  - Don't ask for documentation no one wants/plans to read
  - Don't call a meeting if it can be dealt with in an email
  - Don't ask colleagues to do work you wouldn't want to do
- Address potential problems early and directly
  - Ignoring a problem won't make it go away
  - A little unpleasantness now avoids lots of it later

# Working with Colleagues

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- Always be professional and respectful
  - A reputation takes years to build and minutes to destroy (paraphrasing Warren Buffet)
  - Your adversaries today can be your allies tomorrow
    - You are building a career, not trying to win a game
- Choose your battles
  - Don't feel compelled to get involved in every situation
    - Don't get pulled into situations you don't care about
  - Take time to understand different viewpoints
  - Take a stand for things you really believe in
  - Justify your position: data always beats anecdotes/conjecture

# Forming Teams (Part I)

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“There are no losers on a winning team and no winners on a losing team”

-- David Patterson (UC Berkeley/Google)

- Forming a team is the most critical aspect of a project
  - Be deliberate in the team you form
    - Consider who will bring something to the table
    - Ask colleagues for suggestions on people to work with
    - Actively seek diversity to get broader viewpoints
  - Working >> talking
    - It's about execution, execution, execution
  - Don't be afraid to say “no” to someone who wants to join

# Forming Teams (Part II)

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- The Golden Rule still applies
  - Don't ask team members to do things you wouldn't do
  - Be protective of everyone's time
  - Lead by example
- Set expectations appropriately
  - Create a culture of accountability
- Make sure everyone on the team gets credit
  - Allow team members to lead
    - And then “follow by example”
  - Story time: a tale of two companies...
- Reciprocate when (past) team members ask for your time

# Dealing with Difficult Situations (Part I)

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- Be honest, but polite
  - Skirting around a problem won't resolve it
    - Not responding allows issue to fester
  - Take time to understand others viewpoints
  - Be direct and forthright about the real problem
- Don't be confrontational (unless its really necessary)
  - Create a dialogue
  - Look for solutions where everyone gets some benefit
- Don't lose your temper
  - Makes you look bad
  - Doesn't improve situation (and potentially makes it worse)

# Dealing with Difficult Situations (Part II)

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- Be a gracious “loser”
  - Things won’t always go the way you want
    - Don’t waste time dwelling on it
  - Determine how to best move forward
- Avoid working with people you don’t want to work with
  - If you don’t want to do it, say “no”
    - But, everyone has to sometimes do things they don’t want to do
  - Not responding ≠ “no”
- Be realistic about what you can do

# A Message I've Found Very Useful

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*Thank you for the opportunity to <<do something>>. I appreciate your consideration. Unfortunately, I must respectfully decline as I am already committed to a number of other concurrent activities and would not have the time to take on this additional commitment.*

*[Optional: If a similar opportunity comes up in the future, please keep me in mind. I would be happy to be involved if I have more time in the future.]*

Let Me Reiterate...

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*Be the colleague you would  
want to work with*

Thank you for your attention

Questions/Discussion