

# STILL LEARNING

*Dr. Francine Berman*

*Chair, Research Data Alliance / United States*

*Hamilton Distinguished Professor of Computer Science, RPI*



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# Today's Talk

## Email to Fran for this talk:

*"We hope you would be willing to speak on the topic of "How I Got to Where I Am." It is pretty open how you interpret that, but we are interested in hearing of how, as a leader in the field, you handled the ups and downs that you encountered ... ."*

**Leadership and Approach**

**Jobs and Transitions**

**Lessons Learned**

**Questions**



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# Progress happens in context

How to navigate opportunities and challenges?

Multi-tasking, Prioritization

Opportunities for Promotion  
Pay equity  
Resilience  
Roadblocks  
Mentoring

Organizational culture  
Family responsibilities  
Kids  
Illness

Personal challenges  
Management responsibilities  
Failure  
Politics of recognition  
Leadership opportunities

Only woman in the room / program / panel  
Strategic Thinking



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# Take the long view

Careers are marathons, not sprints

## Good rules of thumb:

- Show up
- Go for a Personal Best
- Spend time on important things
- Focus on the strategic and actionable



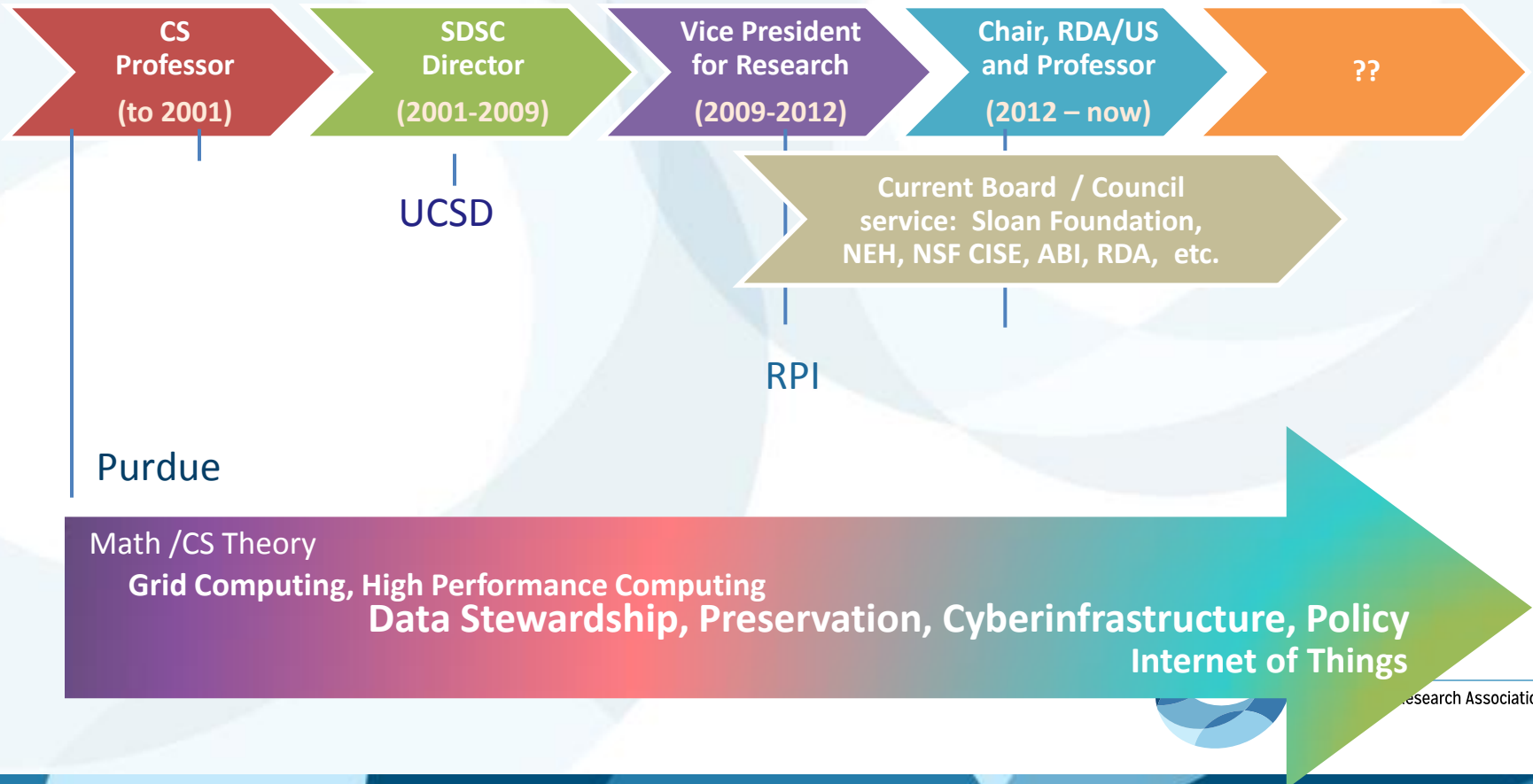
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# Fran's Career Trajectory in One Slide

**Current interests:** Digital data – stewardship, preservation, infrastructure, policy; Internet of Things – governance; Women in tech -- leadership

**Current goals:** move the needle in the national conversation to create positive structural change that better supports the data ecosystem; train new Jedi



# 4 Positions, 3 Transitions



## Job Assessment:

- What I'm proud of
- What I would have liked to do better
- What I learned

## Making a Transition:

- What's next?
- How to transition smoothly?
- How to prepare?



CS  
Professor  
(to 2001)

SDSC  
Director  
(2001-2009)

Vice President  
for Research  
(2009-2012)

Chair, RDA/US  
and Professor  
(2012 – now)

??

## CS Professor

*What I'm proud of*

*What I would have  
liked to have done  
better*

*What I learned*



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# Transition: CS Professor → SDSC Director

Mt. Woodsen, San Diego



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# Director, San Diego Supercomputer Center

*What I'm proud of*

*What I would have  
liked to have done  
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*What I learned*



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# Transition: SDSC Director → RPI VP for Research

- **Leaving SDSC:**
  - Succession Planning
  - Pre-tells, Tells, and Post-tells
  - Thank yous
- **Preparing for VPR:**
  - Due diligence / talked to a lot of VPRs about their jobs
  - Asked for briefing documents from RPI centers, 1-1s with key stakeholders
  - Gave myself time to “on-board” before making any big decisions / changes



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## Vice President for Research, RPI

*What I'm proud of*

*What I would have  
liked to have done  
better*

*What I learned*



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# Transition: VPR → Research Data Alliance



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# Chair, Research Data Alliance / US Co-Chair, Research Data Alliance Council

*What I'm proud of*

*What I'm learning*



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## What's Next?



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# Lessons Learned 1

- **“Work Tools”**
  - Recognition
  - Reputation
  - Credibility
  - Integrity
  - Preparation
  - Skilled self-promotion
  - Your network
- **Attributes worth developing**
  - Resilience
  - Integrity
  - Strategic Approach
  - Effectiveness
  - Thick Skin
  - Generosity
  - Leadership
  - Personal Responsibility
  - Courage



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# Lessons Learned 2

- **It's OK to ask for help.** Learn how to ask so that you maximize your chances for getting help.
- **Show up and try for a personal best.** Keep at it.
- **Don't give up.** If things are not working, try a different approach. Keep trying until some other strategy or some other goal seems more promising. You always have options; you don't always know what all of them are.
- **Develop a thick skin.** Fail and then get over it . Minimize beating yourself up. Don't think that because you don't know something or are not good at something or failed that you don't belong. You belong.

## **Take responsibility.**

“With great power comes great responsibility.” *Spiderman*



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# Lessons Learned 3

- **Accept that everything has a political aspect and get good at it.** Ask for help; use the system; improve the system when you have enough power/influence; Be strategic. Learn when to color outside the lines.
- **Build your own community.** Develop a rich network of stakeholders, colleagues, mentors, mentees, and people that you enjoy. It will be more fun and more will get done. Be part of others' communities.
- **Maintain your integrity.** Nothing beats looking at yourself in the mirror and feeling OK about yourself. Take the high road. Behave so you are proud of yourself.
- **Give back.** Whatever level you are, you can help someone. Do it. Make it a career practice. Mentor new Jedi. Pass it on.



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# Make a difference for Women. Pass it on.

- ***What you can do at work:***

- Foster a recruitment process that seeks out diverse candidate pools
- Monitor and promote pay equity
- Develop organizational mechanisms for mainstreaming and promoting diversity. Make them part of the assessment and reward system.
- Provide leadership opportunities for women and promote their efforts. Help women identify advancement opportunities. Mentor.

- ***What you can do in your professional community:***

- Be strategic about your own recognition. Use your influence to help others. Mentor.
- Suggest / nominate women colleagues for awards and recognitions. Share and cite their work.
- If you are asked to present or be on a panel, ask if there are women participating. If not, suggest names of women to invite.
- Help make professional events more inclusive. Include women at all levels.



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