

Networking and Finding Advocates

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With thanks to prior speakers:
Christine Morin and Lori Pollock



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Soha Hassoun

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Department of Computer Science

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Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering

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BS – South Dakota State

MS – MIT

PhD – UW, Seattle

Research

**Design Automation for
Electronics and Biology**

Industry

**Circuit Designer – Digital
Consultant - Carbon
Design Systems, Mentor
Graphics, IBM research,
etc.**



Sujata Banerjee

Currently at **VMware Research**

Senior Staff Researcher

Research co-Director, External Research and Emerging Technologies

Previous Career

Hewlett-Packard Labs

Distinguished Technologist and Director, Networking Systems Research Group

University of Pittsburgh

Associate Professor, Telecommunications Program

Research

Networking: Software Defined Networking (SDN), Network Functions Virtualization (NFV), Energy Efficient Networking, Measurement

Education

Ph.D., University of Southern California (USC)

M.Tech.: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay



B.Tech. and



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The path to success

It takes a community to help you succeed
and reach your full potential.

It is both **WHAT** you do and know,
and **WHO** you know!

Networking

IS

Interacting with other people to exchange information and develop contacts especially to further your career.

IS NOT

- A substitute for quality work
- Just socializing or idle chit-chat
- Using people, name-dropping



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Why Network?

- Building and publicizing your brand/reputation
- Becoming aware of new opportunities
- Identifying collaborators
- Learning about new ideas and approaches
- Getting invited to program committees, review panels, keynotes, journal editorship, etc.

Networking: How, Where, Who?

Where to Network? (Answer: Everywhere!)

- School
- Work
- Conferences and workshops
- Technical talks/seminars
- Industry Meet-ups
- Summer internships
- Sabbaticals
- Program Committee Meetings
- NSF Panel and other review meetings
- Social settings
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Who: Make a targeted list

Know **why and who** you want to add to your network (e.g., before an event).

And know **what** you want from your network!

And not just people from your own discipline!

- Established Researchers in academia and industry in diverse disciplines
- Contemporaries/peers – both junior and senior
- People who have open job positions or internships
- Industry technologists and leaders
- Technical advisors and experts
- Alumni
- NSF Program managers
- Venture capitalists
- Friends and neighbors
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Networking Opportunities

- **Conferences/Workshops**
 - Volunteer
 - Find someone alone and start a conversation
 - Keep a short introduction/pitch ready – practice!!
- **Talks/Seminars**
 - Ask a question
 - Read the paper beforehand
- **School/work**
 - Informal and formal meetings with your colleagues, students
 - Meet with visitors coming to campus
 - Participate in committees
- **Industry internships/sabbaticals**
 - Get to know interns from other schools/disciplines
 - Get to know folks other than your mentors.
- **Non-professional venues**

Networking: build a plan

Give yourself a goal for an event

- Example: meet 2 new people, talk with 1 research leader, etc.

Find group networking opportunities

- Example: N2Women lunches, dinner, conference outing, reception, student dinners
- Join a group that is casually talking and introduce yourself.
(Don't barge into private conversations)
- Sit down with people you don't know at tables.

Prepare:

- Example: Read papers ahead and write down questions you want to ask.

Some Tips:

- Ask for help – introductions from your advisor, senior colleagues and mentors
- Volunteer: PCs, Panels, Conference organization jobs
- Follow up by email. Send your latest paper.
- Call the NSF/DARPA/other funding program managers.
- Don't be discouraged if people don't remember you. Reintroduce yourself.

At conferences: DO's

- ✓ Be yourself, Be active, Be confident
- ✓ Wear your badge visibly
- ✓ Speak! (don't just stand there)
- ✓ Use the dreaded microphone
- ✓ Talk to speakers after their presentations
- ✓ Talk to the person next to you
- ✓ Look people in the eyes
- ✓ Make lunch/dinner plans
- ✓ Attend social activities
- ✓ Get your friends/advisor to introduce you
- ✓ Make plans for follow up (write it down!)
- ✓ Re-connect with people you've met before

At Conferences, DON'T

DON'T hang around with your friends

DON'T interrupt private conversations

DON'T be overly negative/critical

DON'T hang on to a conversation too long

DON'T put too much stock in a single, short conversation

DON'T get discouraged

DON'T hide in your room



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Activity (10 mins)

Self-Reflection

1. Think about and write down:
 - a. How have I networked so far in my career?
 - b. Who else should I network with?
 - c. What are the benefits of networking to me?
2. Turn to your neighbor and discuss.
3. Share any insights.



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Finding Advocates

Advocates are sometimes called sponsors, so will use that term

What is the difference between a mentor and sponsor?

Mentors ***advise*** you.

Sponsors ***advocate for you.***

Mentor vs Supporter

- Mentors have mentees. **Sponsors have protégés.**
- Mentors participate in forma/informal discussions on building skills, knowledge, and confidence for career advancements. **Sponsors promote protégés directly, connecting them to high-profile assignments, people, pay increase, or promotions**
- Mentors helps mentee craft a career vision. **Sponsors help drive protégé's career vision**



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Mentor vs Supporter, cont.

- Mentors suggest how to expand mentee's network. **Sponsors give protégés their active network connections and makes new connections for them**
- Mentors offer insight into increasing visibility through finding projects/people. **Sponsors champion their protégé's visibility, using their own platforms and reputation as a medium of exposure**
- Mentors shares passively "unwritten rules" for advancement in their organization. **Sponsors actively involve protégés in experiences that enable advancement**



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Mentors are good. Sponsors are different sorts of people

Mentors may be very well intentioned, like you a lot, respect your work and be deeply invested in your success.

But mentors may not speak up on your behalf. It's not from any ill intention

Sponsorship requires proactive energy.

Some mentors will act as sponsors, but **you cannot bank on mentors to sponsor you.**



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My Bestest Sponsor Ever: Steve Levitan (RIP, March 2016)



Steve was the John A. Jurenko Professor of Computer Engineering at Pitt, and ACM SIGDA chair

Took a chance on me to create the PhD Forum at Design Automation Conference (DAC)

Invited me to join the SIGDA Board two years after starting my tenure-track job

Followed up with sponsorship with projects for the community:

- Design Automation Summer School

- The CADathlon at the International Conference on Computer-Aided Design (ICCAD)

Led way to leadership position at DAC and ICCAD (two biggest conference in my research area), where I was Technical Program Chair and General Chair

Why seek a sponsor?

<https://www.ncwit.org/resources/sponsors-vs-mentors-whats-difference-infographic>



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Activity

Think of your mentors and sponsors. How are they different? Do your current mentors act as sponsors?

What evidence do you have that someone is sponsoring you ?

Who are potential sponsors for you?

Share with neighbor



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Choose your potential sponsors wisely

Observe personalities of people in your network

- who speaks up (carefully)
- who has the ability to change the direction of a conversation
- whose opinion matters
- who won't hesitate to interject when need be (and are highly effective when doing so)

Avoid sponsorship from someone whose endorsement creates negative interactions



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Example questions to ask when considering a sponsor

What can they offer you?

- Who makes pay, promotion or project/committee assignments that may affect you?
- Which senior leader has a network or platform most equipped to help you advance in your career?

What can you offer them?

- Which senior leader would benefit from you/your career advancement?

Building sponsor-protégé relationship

Rinse and repeat:

1. Create opportunities for research/education/business-focused conversations
2. Seek advice and take it
3. Follow up

Do not ask directly for a sponsorship. It just does not work that way

Takeaway

Developing powerful relationships through networking and finding advocates is too important to leave it up to chance

It all starts with you taking steps to build your network and to find you sponsors



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Thank you!



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