BEING AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

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Marie desJardins
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Mid-Career E,R, and L
Career Mentoring Workshop, Washington DC, November 2016

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Session Outline

- Leader journeys (~ 30 minutes)

- Break-out activity – choose a scenario (15 minutes)

- Reports from break-out activity (20 minutes)

- Discussion of questions posed by attendees earlier and new questions (25 minutes)

Renée McCauley
College of Charleston

Leadership roles

- Vice Chair of Operations & At large member, ACM SIG Governing Board, 2013-Present

- Director of graduate program

- Chair, Treasurer, At-large board member, Special Interest Group for Computer Science Education. 2004-2016

- Co-chair, IEEE/ACM 2008 CS Curriculum Revision Committee

- Co-Editor, *Computer Science Education Journal*, 2000-2007

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Renée McCauley
College of Charleston

Skills that work for me

- Listen more, talk less
- Be prepared
- Be cooperative and supportive
- Recognize the accomplishments of others
- Collaborate, don't compete
- Assume that the motives of others are honorable
- Ignore gossip

Take-aways

- Seek out meaningful (to you) leadership
- Support faculty colleagues offline - make office visits or send private emails to discuss issues of concern (don't blast on department email list)
- Don't join the "ain't it awful" club or attend any of their meetings
- If you discover that your path is no longer meaningful, forge (do not fork) a new one.

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Marie desJardins
University of Maryland Baltimore County

Leadership roles

- PI or co-PI on $11M of externally funded research
- Mentored 28 MS students, 13 PhD students, and 80+ undergraduate researchers
- AAAI Councillor, SIGART Vice Chair. CRA Board Member
- Computer Science Undergraduate Program Director
- Program Co-Chair of AAAI-13
- Chair of Honors College Advisory Board,
- PI and leader of "CS Matters in Maryland"
- K-12 CS education initiative
- American Council on Education Fellow, 2015-2016
- Professor of Computer Science (since 2011)
- Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (since 2015)

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Marie desJardins
University of Maryland Baltimore County

Skills that work for me

- Reading other people
- Strategic thinking
- Attention to detail / time management
- Ability to multitask / keep track of multiple competing demands
- Self-awareness
- Still working on:
  - Dealing with difficult people (especially narcissists and highly self-interested people)
  - Political "gamesmanship" / diplomacy
  - Conscious relationship building

Take-aways

- Manage your time effectively, say no wisely, and delegate appropriately
- Postponing difficult conversations makes them harder
- Lessons from parenting and management: Stay calm, be consistent, be fair, let people experience logical/ natural consequences of their actions. (Great resource: "Crucial Conversations" by Switzler et al.)
- Challenge of moving from "grassroots activist with a bullhorn" to "leader with a platform to bring people together" without losing sight of your core values
- Equally important to know your personality and leadership type, and to work effectively with people with *other* personality and leadership types

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Deb Agarwal
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Leadership roles

- PI or Team Lead on many large and moderate scale cross-institution projects - over 20 years experience
- Group Lead - ~ 7 people for ~7 years
- Department Head - 11 years 30-40 people
- Founder and Leader of the CS Diversity Working Group
- Executive Committees and Review Committees for projects
- BIDS Senior Fellow
- Chair of CS Staffing Committee (also member of lab staffing committee)
- UN CTBT Cost-Free Expert
- Inria International Chair

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Deb Agarwal
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Skills that work for me

- Be approachable
- Maintain healthy level of humility
- Strategic planning skills
- Good listening skills
- Negotiation skills

Take-aways

- Don't let imposter syndrome get in the way
- Vision and strategy are valuable tools to help everyone pull   together
- Communication is key
- Understand what everyone needs/wants (want win/win)
- Leadership is not always being out front but instead enabling   the team
- If you look behind you and everyone is following you, you are   leading

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Leadership Steps to Create an Institutional Change

- Do your homework
  - Find out why things are the way they are
  - Build the case for why the change is needed (facts help)
  - Identify potential methods for implementing the change
    - Define the relationship of the change to the institutional mission
    - Identify the benefit of the change (long and short term)
    - Identify the key personnel you need on board
  - Figure out who in senior management is willing to help
- Plan a communication strategy
  - Design a pitch laying out why needed and high-level strategy for the change
  - Meet one-on-one with key personnel to understand resistance points, practice pitch, and build support
  - Meet with larger team (1st time)
    - Make pitch
    - Leave lots of time for questions/discussion
  - Meet with the larger team (2nd time)
    - Revise and refine strategy for change
    - Try to let everyone have input and be able to see their potential future role in the strategy
    - Visibly post the final strategy once agreed
- Execute the strategy

This scenario is not hypothetical and the steps above worked

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Group Exercise:
Leadership Challenges/Opportunities: Scenarios

- Choose one scenario of interest
    - Group with others also interested in this scenario
- Answer the question:
    - How should this scenario be handled?
- Time permitting, choose a second scenario and go to second point

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Leadership Challenges/Opportunities: Scenarios

- **General Questions for All Scenarios:**
    - Who are the stakeholders (individuals and groups) in this scenario?
    - How and in what order do you approach those stakeholders?
    - How should you frame your message for each stakeholder?
    - What are the desired outcomes (for you and for each stakeholder)?
    - What are the undesired outcomes / pitfalls, and how can you reduce their probability, or mitigate the fallout if they do occur?

Scenario #1: Mentoring and Support. One of the software engineers working with your research group comes to you and explains that they are considering leaving, because they do not see any way to advance within your organization. They say that researchers treat them like they are second-class citizens in the organization. You do some checking and you find out that most software engineers in your organization feel the same way. What would you do?

Scenario #2: Navigating Disagreement. There is a new program being promoted in your department/division and there have been a few meetings to discuss the program. The person promoting the idea is quite senior to you. You are strongly against the program and are convinced it is a bad idea. How would you go about expressing your dissent to the program and trying to change their minds?

Scenario #3: Controversial Topics. An external event (such as a presidential election) has stirred up strong feelings on both sides. You are a chair, dean, or president, and you have strong personal feelings on one side of the issue. How should you communicate with your constituencies about the issue?

Scenario #4: Responding to Negative Behaviors. You are a department chair or dean. There is a faculty search in your department/college, and a candidate is on campus today interviewing for the position. A colleague has just called your office to say that the candidate is very upset, because one of the more outspoken faculty members spent much of their interview slot berating the candidate about their work, telling them bluntly that their research is "unimpressive," "irrelevant," and "lame." How do you respond? Does your response differ if the candidate is your own top choice, or if they are a member of an underrepresented group in your discipline?

Scenario #5: Ethics. Someone in a faculty meeting, possibly an administrator, suggests an activity or process that you believe to be unethical. How do you respond? Does your response differ if the person is senior to you? The department chair? Someone you get along well with? Someone you have been in conflict with?

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Discussion of Scenarios

Results

- Each team shared the key strategies they discussed for handling their chosen scenario

Recommended books

- How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk [and faculty too…]
- Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done
- Getting to Yes
- Crucial Conversations
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
- The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense

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