

# Networking and Finding Advocates

Sujata Banerjee  
VMware

Trilce Estrada  
Univ. of New Mexico

With many thanks to prior speakers on this topic



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# Introductions



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# Trilce Estrada

## Research:

In-situ analysis,  
distributed and  
scalable learning,  
applications in  
medicine and  
science

- Originally from Mexico
- BS, Universidad de Guadalajara and MS, INAOE
- PhD, University of Delaware
- Associate Professor, University of New Mexico
- 2015 NSF Career Award
- 2019 ACM-SIGHPC Emerging Woman Leader in Technical Computing
- 2022 Woman in Technology Award by NMTC
- Graduated 4 PhD, 9 MS, 2 undergrads
- Mom to 1 kid and 1 dog



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# Sujata Banerjee - My Career Journey



**USC**

**Univ. of Southern California**  
Ph.D.



**Indian Institute of Technology**  
IIT Bombay  
B.Tech. and M.Tech.



**Univ. of Pittsburgh**  
Associate Professor  
Assistant Professor



**Hewlett Packard  
Enterprise**

**HP Labs**

Sr. Researcher  
Sr. Manager

Distinguished Technologist  
and Director

**vmware®**

**VMware Research**  
**Vice President, Research**  
Sr. Director of Research  
Sr. Staff Researcher

<https://research.vmware.com>

Research – Enterprise and Datacenter networks, Software Defined Networking,  
Network Functions Virtualization, Systems for ML, Energy Efficient Networking

Communities – ACM SIGCOMM, IEEE Communications Soc., CRA CCC, NSF



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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!



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# 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.



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# Networking: How, Where, Who?



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# 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
- **HERE**



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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**



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# 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.



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# 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



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# 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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# Finding Advocates

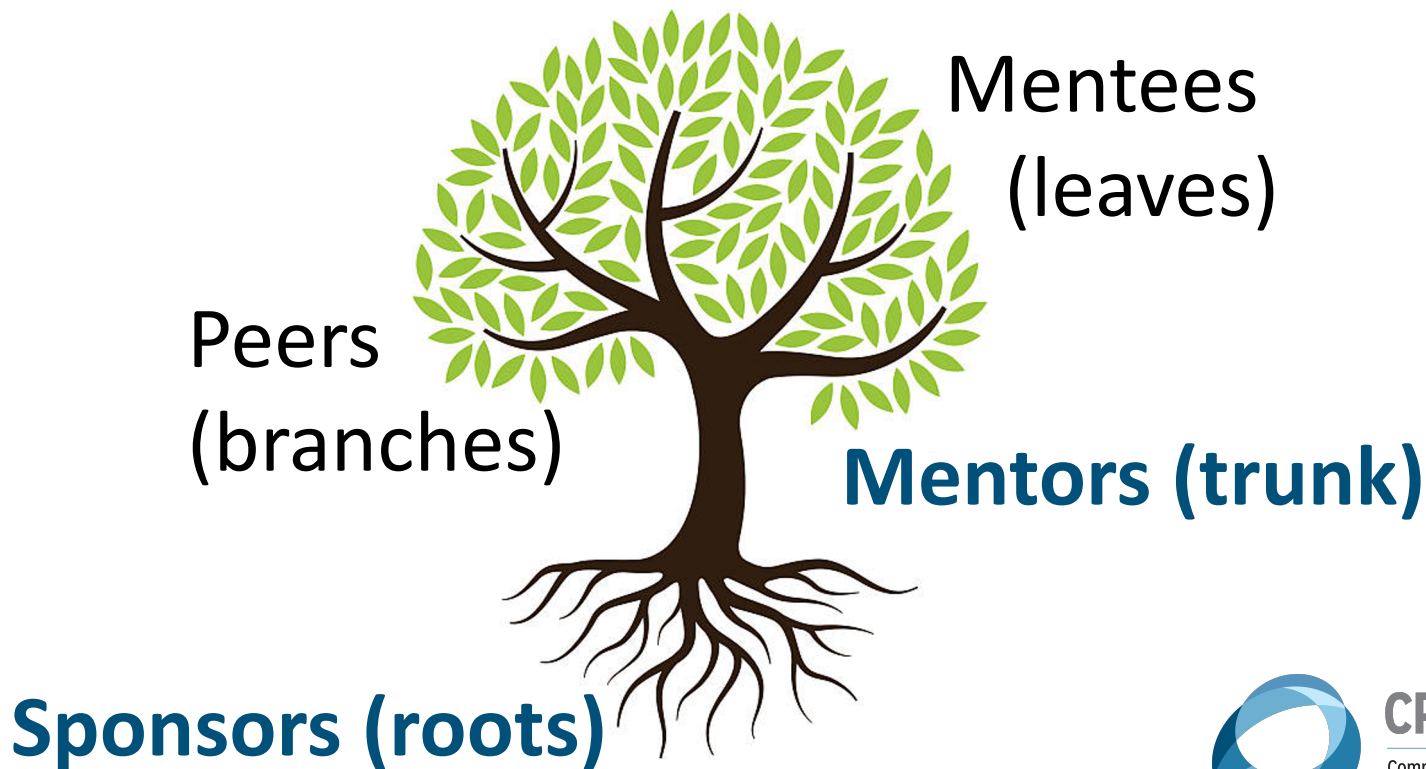
**Advocates are sometimes  
called sponsors, so we will use that term too**



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# Your network is like a tree



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## Mentors advice

- Reduce isolation and stress
- Help navigate unwritten rules
- Build confidence
- Provide tips and strategies
- Promote inclusion

## Sponsors act

- Connect you to career opportunities
- Advocate for your advancement
- Support risk-taking
- Publicly endorse you
- Help you confront bias
- Expect high performance in return

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



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# How to identify a potential mentor/sponsor

Do your research: develop specific questions about your wants/needs

Identify what you want to achieve in this relationship

- Base mentorship around solving specific issues/questions
- Base sponsorships by offering specific strengths

Determine what are essential qualities you want in a mentor/sponsor

- Influence, personality, availability



# How to approach a sponsor/mentor for the first time

- Get introduced by someone in common
  - Another mentor/peer/mentee
- Find them at conferences and introduce yourself
  - Elevator pitch: you get in a elevator with your professional idol, you have 30 seconds to introduce yourself and make an impression
- Volunteer and then you have an excuse to talk to them
- Read their work and send an email



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# And they may still forget you (85% of the time)



- Do not take it personally, reintroduce yourself
- Find a way to stay under their radar
  - do: specific conference, common activity, linkedin, twitter
  - do not: stalk them in their personal social media



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# Cultivating a sponsor/mentor-protégé relationship

1. Create opportunities for research/education/business-focused conversations
2. Ask for specific advice and take it, provide updates
3. Follow up: “is it okay if I follow up with you in X time?”
4. This is a relationship: give and take
5. Practice excellence

>> 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

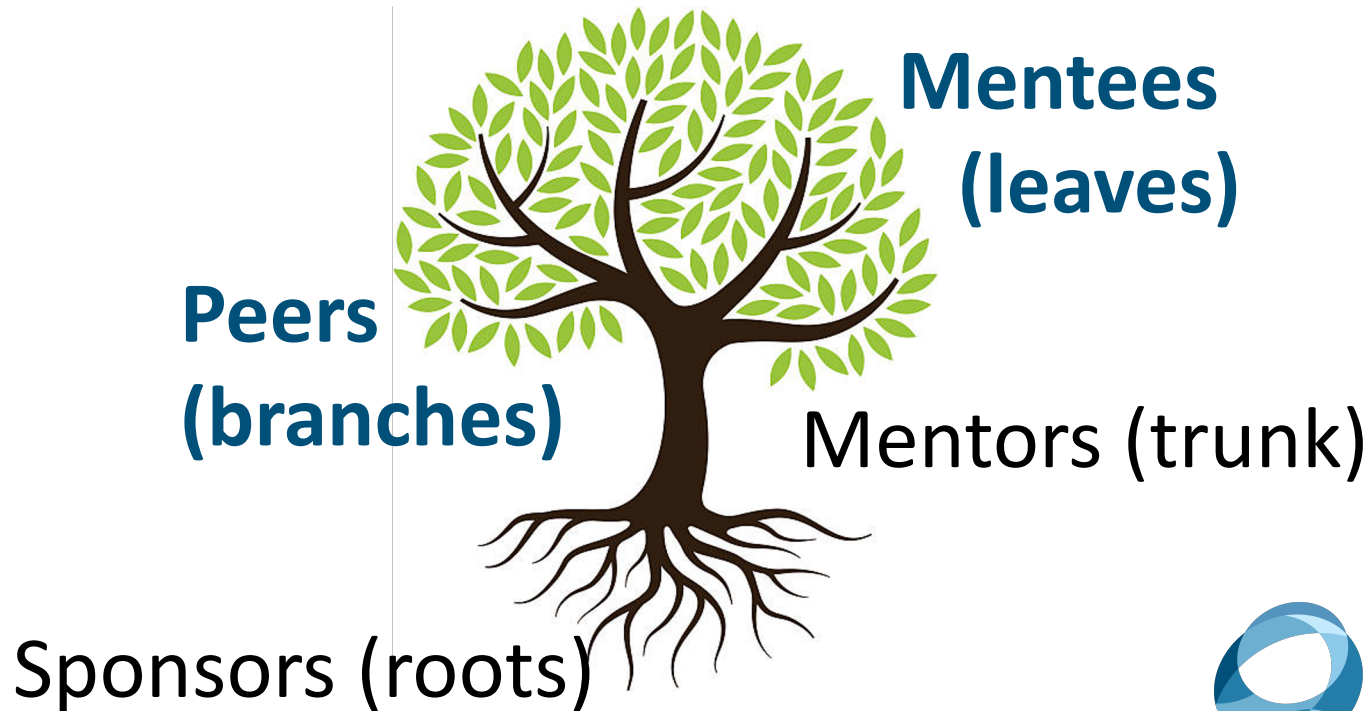
It all starts with you taking steps to build your network and to find sponsors



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# Your network is like a tree, and like a tree, it needs work to keep alive



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# Activity

Think of your mentors and sponsors. How are they different? Do you 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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# Thank you!



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