Who is James Mickens?

- Poet, scientist, philosopher, foosball expert
- BS in Computer Science: Georgia Tech
- PhD in Computer Science: Michigan
- @MSR: 2008—2015
- @MIT: Fall 2014
- @Harvard: 2015—now
Nancy in Brief

• PhD @ UIUC; MS @ Berkeley; BS applied math & econ @ Stanford

• Prof @ Texas A&M: 1995-2018

• Prof & Dept Head (back at) @ UIUC: since Jan

• Research – Applied Algorithms
  — robotics, computational biology & geometry, parallel algorithms
  — Graduated 3 PhDs (10 profs, 9 research labs, 2 postdocs, 3 startups)

• Other stuff
  — Bernese Mountain Dogs (currently Fred & Wilma)
  — Husband Lawrence – grad school, A&M & UIUC
  — Recent highlights: bucket trip to Machu Picchu, Diving!
What Is Networking?

The deliberate act of creating and maintaining professional relationships with people in your field.
Why Network?

• High-level goal: Building a supportive community

• Professional benefits:
  – Discover opportunities for scientific collaboration
  – Identify internships and full-time jobs
  – Enable access to helpful service roles (e.g., program committees, invited talks)
  – Find letter writers (and general advocates for you)

• Emotional benefits:
  – Receive congratulations when things are good
  – Get consolation when things are bad
  – Enjoy a sense of belonging
Building a Personal Brand

• Appearance: Body language, attire
• Communication skills: Clarity, confidence, ability to listen and to read other people
• Technical competencies: A particular set of scientific skills and insights

• Differentiation: How do you stand out from everyone else?
“Luck favors the prepared mind.”
Building a Personal Brand

• Online:
  – Web pages
  – Social media

• In-person:
  – Conferences
  – Workshops
  – Poster sessions
  – The hallway track
Online Persona: Social Media

- YouTube
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Medium
- LinkedIn
- WordPress
Online Persona: Social Media

• Social media moves faster than traditional academic publishing channels

• Ideas can be quickly publicized through
  – Blog posts
  – Tweets
  – Facebook updates

• Social media also useful for building a sense of community with other professionals in your field

• But . . .
The Internet Never Forgets
Online Persona: Your Professional Webpage

- Should list your:
  - Research interests
  - Publications + posters + talks
  - Code artifacts
  - Media coverage
  - Contact info
  - Link to your CV

- Update incrementally and often!
In-person networking
Learn About Body Language

- Learning to read people will help you to detect when you’re saying the right/wrong thing.
- Learning how to project confidence can make you feel more confident.
Learn About Vocal Tone

• Watch your favorite comedians, politicians, and scientists on YouTube
  – What do they do well?
  – What do they do poorly?
• Watch recordings of yourself presenting
  – This is brutal . . .
  – . . . but invaluable!
Prepare and Practice

- Preparation can remove the fear of game-time spontaneity or creativity
  - Ex: For a conference, read papers ahead of time and generate potential questions before meeting speakers
  - Ex: Before going to a professional event, prepare a list of who you want to meet, and how you’ll introduce yourself

- Most people who seem “naturally” good at something have practiced a lot, and are not improvising as much as you might think
Elevator Pitches

- Should be a space-filling curve
  - 5 second version: Your basic area (e.g., systems, HCI, ML)
  - 10 second version: +Your specialization (e.g., “In particular, I study X and Y, with a focus on Z”)
  - 30 second version: +An insight from your research (e.g., “My work exploits the fact that a foo might be a baz on Wednesday”)
- Practice it!
Networking at Conferences
What To Do

• Wear your badge visibly
• If you hear a talk and think of a good question, ask it during Q&A
  – Use the microphone
  – Preface question with your name and affiliation
• Talk to speakers after their presentations
• Talk to other grad students
• Ask advisor to introduce you to people
• Attend social events
What To Do

• Re-connect with people that you’ve met in the past
• For new connections, add calendar events to remind yourself to follow-up
What *Not* To Do

- Don’t only talk to your friends
- Don’t interrupt heavy and/or private conversations
- Don’t be overly negative
- Don’t linger in a conversation for too long
- Don’t get discouraged