Teaching, Advising & Service

Margaret Martonosi
Dept of Electrical Engineering
Princeton University
Balancing Act

- Variety is a great part of the job...
- …But attending to different “sub-jobs” is a balancing act

- Pre-tenure: Know your school’s expectations (research, teaching, service) for tenure.
  - Try to choose a school with a balance that matches what you want to be doing…
  - …and with resources to help you get there
  - Use school’s tenure expectations as part of how you decide to allocate your efforts
Teaching

- Unbelievably different from putting together powerpoint slides & giving a conference talk
- Hard, but hugely rewarding when it works
- **For your sake:**
  - Be excited about what you teach, or at least about the students learning it
  - Amortize: Teach a class at least three times if possible
  - Teach a grad class once per year & use it to gauge and recruit grad students
- **For students’ sake:**
  - Include interactivity: “powerpoint = boring”
  - Stay organized: Not just in lectures, but in keeping homework in synch with labs, answering email, …
  - Minimize mystery
  - Fair, uniform rules
Advising

- My focus here: Grad & undergrad research advising
- Fun!
  - collaborate with energetic, inquisitive, smart, interesting people
  - See them become independent, opinionated researchers
- Advice
  - Give them enough of your time
  - Keep your door open
  - Get them to view lots of people as info sources, not just you
  - Start out with concrete steps & goals: milestones, conference deadlines…
  - We all have lowpoints in research. Motivate them and help keep the long-term view
  - Get them to conferences early (workshop paper => trip)
  - Stay positive. If you don’t enjoy the work, why should they?
  - Ask about their career hopes early and often
  - Cultivate the full professional: writing, speaking, job advice…
Students → your research group

- Get them to apply to your program
  - If giving a seminar elsewhere, ask to also have an hour slot with the undergrads. Buy pizza & inform/recruit them.
  - Remind your colleagues elsewhere you’re looking for good students; ask them to mention your school to good seniors

- Get them to your office
  - The students you already have can be your most effective publicists
  - Give a seminar/class to the first-years once a year before they pick advisers
  - Show your excitement for what you’re doing

- Once they’re there at your door
  - Choose students you enjoy talking to
  - Show your excitement for what you’re doing
  - Give them what they need to excel: equipment, time, …
Undergrads & Research

- A positive experience is more important than the volume of research results…
- Exploratory projects can get you reading papers & thinking about new areas
- Concrete system-building to demo a concept
- Give them plenty of contacts to work with (grad students)
- Meet (at least) weekly
- Full citizenship: Include them in group meetings, etc.
Pre-tenure Service…
Job One: Get tenure.

- The biggest service you can do for yourself, your department, and all of us is:
  - Get tenure and still be in research 10 years from now

- So, avoid pressure to do short-term service
  - If it will take time & prevent you from being around long-term

- But….
  - many departments do expect at least a bit of pre-tenure service
  - And often best way to improve something in your dept, is to do it yourself
Win-Win Service

● Service that helps you too. Examples:
  – Graduate admissions committee. Help ensure that some incoming students will be a good match for your research
  – Seminar organizer. Sometimes a great way to make contact with main researchers in your field and get to talk with them
  – Generals/qualifying exam: If you arrive in a (eg) very theory-oriented department and the qualifying process doesn’t suit your students, then being a part of the committee

● University committees: nice way to work with people in many departments
Big finish

- **Teaching:**
  - Interactivity is hard, but worth it
  - Grad classes are small, fun, let you talk with 1st years

- **Advising:**
  - Be the kind of adviser you would have wanted
  - Time spent on it pays off in many ways

- **Service:**
  - First three years: Just say no unless there’s an issue (eg grad admissions) to address
  - Next three years: 1 piece of service to appease the tenure folks