

# Building a Successful Teaching-Track Faculty Career

SIGCSE 2020

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Portland, Oregon

# Introductions

# Phillip Conrad, UCSB

- Teaching Professor

(formally: "Senior Lecturer with Security of Employment")

went through ranks from Assistant to Associate to Full over 12 years.

- PhD in CS (U. Delaware),

previously tenure-track at Temple University, teaching track at U. Delaware

- Key Responsibilities:

- **Teaching:** two courses per quarter (three quarters/year)
- Coordinate one of two "early research" programs
- Recruiting of teaching track faculty
- Lead development of instructional tools  
(autograders, curriculum, GitHub signup)
- Service: advising, committees,
- NSF grants: Broadening Participation, Soft Eng Education

# Susan Rodger, Duke University

- Professor of the Practice
- PhD in CS
- Key Responsibilities:
  - Director of Undergraduate Studies
  - Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
  - Teach Courses - Intro, upper-level
  - Advisor to many student groups (ACM, ACM-W)
  - CSED Research - Visualization, Tools

# Steve Wolfman, University British Columbia

- Professor of Teaching
- PhD in CS
- Key Responsibilities:
  - Teaching: All over, but especially intro + algorithms
  - Post-baccalaureate program (BCS) Director
  - Teaching and Peer Evaluations Chair
  - Managing two of our capstone-like courses
  - SoTL research/practice

# Being Teaching Faculty in a Research-Focused Unit

# Effective Interactions with Research-Track Colleagues

- Collaborations
  - Grants: Undergrad research (REU), Grad (GAAN)
  - Co-Teaching OR Reviewing teaching/materials
  - Curriculum Re-design
- Ways to integrate into unit activities.
  - Faculty meetings
  - Office location
  - Service committees (dept vs university)

# Effective Interactions (cont)

- Who can be my advocate?
  - More senior teaching focused faculty (in dept or other)
  - Research faculty, someone you click with
  - More than one mentor, one in your dept
  - What are bylaws/guidelines in your dept
- Do's and don'ts? Most common challenges.
  - Service burn out
  - Learn to say no, no buddy?
  - Quantify activities + accomplishments



Scholarship, Service, and Leadership

# Scholarship, Service, and Leadership (1)

- What are the expectations and opportunities?
  - Important to understand & balance this both for (annual) performance evaluation and promotion
  - As applicable, think unit/institution/profession (particularly for higher ranks)
  - Most common service opportunity is committee membership, but not the only one; find those that connect with your passions and make a difference (possibly via leadership; quantity vs quality)

# Scholarship, Service, and Leadership (2)

- How to build/maintain a research program
  - Look into: course release/buyout, PI status, funding for students
  - If possible, request a teaching schedule that allows for dedicated time (e.g., 1-day/week)
  - Seek out collaborators to keep you honest and/or complement your schedule
  - Consider ways to connect teaching/research (e.g., CS-E)

# Scholarship, Service, and Leadership (3)

- Do administrative career options exist?
  - Look into unit bylaws, institution faculty handbook
    - Requirements, expectations, how does it “count”?
    - Course release, pay
  - Be wary of overcommitment/unbalancing other job requirements
  - But, if you have the opportunity and it relates to your passions/professional development, a great opportunity to learn, grow, and build

Teaching

# Teaching (1)

- Teaching career: **marathon not a sprint**
  - Get comfortable with imperfection
  - Focus on continuous improvement over many iterations
  - One thing per term. Don't change everything at once.
  - Set boundaries. Cut yourself a break; don't burn out.
  - Your standards likely (and should be) much higher than "the bar" for "excellent"
  - Especially in times of enrollment pressures, instantaneous f2f-> online instruction
- Seek synergy for expectations beyond teaching
  - Scholarship within your course
  - Service that impact students in your courses

# Teaching (2)

- Teaching assignments

- Help department understand disparate impact on teaching vs. tenure track faculty
- Ask for repeats so that you can focus on improvement
- Balance departmental needs with career development, growth, work-life balance
- Breadth/depth considerations for evaluation/promotion.

- Getting resources

- unit (e.g., professional-development fund/grant,
- institutional (e.g., collaboration fund)
- industry opportunities (e.g., AWS/NVIDIA grant).

# Teaching (3)

- Take leadership in curriculum and teaching strategies.
  - Ideas: curriculum, evaluation, mentorship committee
  - Find (or if necessary create) a way to flexibly pilot teaching ideas (e.g., directed studies, topics courses)
  - Find your institution's center for teaching research
  - **Visibility is key** for impact on evaluation
- Other
  - Go to colleague's classes, invite them to yours
  - Go to research/recruiting talks and adapt content to examples and assignments in your courses



# Final Recommendations

# Recommendations (1)

- How to build a positive and valued presence and visibility in your unit
  - Make sure your good work is seen and recognized across boundaries (e.g., Teaching vs Research, local unit vs broader College/University). This builds good will and may contribute to recommendations for resources, awards, promotion, etc., as well as unexpected opportunities :)

## Recommendations (2)

- How to build a positive and valued presence and visibility in your unit
  - Generally be a good citizen (e.g., share materials, volunteer generously, live up to your promises/commitments).

# Questions and Discussion