

Strengthening Our Community through Mentorship, Service, Leadership, and Inclusiveness

Sven Dickinson

Samsung AI Research, Toronto

Department of Computer Science, University of Toronto

The Stress of Being a Young Researcher

Remember how daunting the research world seemed when we were junior researchers?

- What topic should I work on?
- How can I possibly catch up with everything that's been done on this topic?
- How will I ever succeed if my CVPR paper on this topic was rejected?
- Does that clique of seasoned researchers (on this topic) standing over there really want to hear what I have to say?
- Surely that senior researcher over there has no time to meet and talk to me?

Mentors Made the Difference For Me

- They were encouraging and reassuring – at one time, they felt the same stress that I did.
- They took the time to provide constructive feedback on my work, e.g., at a poster, after a talk, on a draft.
- They did not judge people by their affiliation.
- They did not value people depending on how they valued their work.

These individuals were my role models that continue to set the example for me on how to be a good citizen in our community.

You, too, can be a good mentor to others!

Service & Leadership

CVPR is a largely community of volunteers across a spectrum of service and leadership roles:

- Volunteering at a conference
- Reviewing others' papers
- Serving as an Area Chair
- Overseeing tutorials and workshops, finance, demos, corporate relations, doctoral consortium, publications, or local arrangements.
- Serving as a Program Co-Chair
- Serving as a General Co-Chair

Take a moment to pass on your thanks to these people for the enormous amount of time they've sacrificed on your behalf.

We Need Your Help!

- As our conferences grow at a staggering rate, we need more volunteers. We need your help!
- The success of our conference is largely a function of the degree of commitment of our volunteers.
- Don't overcommit! Better to take on fewer roles and engage more thoroughly in them than spread yourself too thinly across many roles.
- Your mentors can help advise you on how to balance your time between all your activities, including service and leadership.
- Only if everyone "gives back" some of their time to the community will we be able to meet the challenge of our explosive growth.

Inclusiveness

- A strong, healthy community is an inclusive one that welcomes and encourages participation from:
 - less developed computer vision communities
 - less prominent vision groups in academia/industry
 - under-represented groups in our community, including women
- We must reach out to these and other constituents and understand the challenges they face, for we're a much stronger community if we're sensitive to the concerns of others and everyone feels welcome.

Inclusiveness of Research: Interdisciplinarity

- Despite the success of our community, we don't have all the answers!
- We have much to learn from our colleagues in robotics, AI, cognitive science, human vision, physics, psychology, computer science, engineering, mathematics, and statistics.
- Keep an open mind, for many of these communities have been working on the vision problem far longer than we have.
- Interdisciplinary research can strengthen our community and its research. The benefits of diversity are clear – let's not build any walls!
- In turn, interdisciplinary research can help carry our success to other communities!

Inclusiveness of Research: Good Ideas

- Our conferences have become very competitive, leading some reviewers to look for reasons to reject a paper rather than reasons to accept it.
- One easy way to evaluate a paper is to see how it measures up to the competition.
- However, while a paper may not compete in our benchmark “arenas”, it may still offer great value in terms of getting us to think differently about a problem, offering a new idea, or improving our understanding of a problem.
- Encouraging and supporting a diversity of ideas, rather than conforming to norms, yields a healthier community.

Take-Home Messages

- Find a good mentor and follow their example. Then pay it forward as often as you can.
- Give back to your community through volunteer service and leadership; support those whose sacrifice has made it possible for you to be here.
- Find ways of making everyone in our community feel more welcome, and treat them with respect.
- Maintain research humility and listen to what our cognate communities have to say.
- Find reasons to accept each other's papers and celebrate good ideas!