TEAMS OF CI PROFESSIONALS: RECRUITMENT & RETENTION, MANAGEMENT, BUILDING, AND MOTIVATION

Preston Smith
Executive Director, Research Computing, Purdue University
Virtual Residency Workshop 2020
MYPATH

MIS Degree

Sysadmin job (libraries)

“Beowulf” looks interesting (Physics)

Help support Purdue’s Teragrid resources

Maybe management? (Custom solutions team)

“User services Needs a manager, you should try it”

Me today
Our Organization

CIO

Exec Director - Research Computing

HPC Operations (10)
Scientific Applications, support (11)
Visualization Center (5)
Science Gateways (12)

Plus:
Architect
Training
Communications
PMs
Building a Team

What has been a success?

- Develop undergrad interns into RC practitioners
  - In 14 years, approximately 70 students have gone through the program.
    - 9 became full-time staff at Purdue
    - 4 are research computing practitioners elsewhere
  - 20% conversion rate entering our community
  - Several of our senior people grew from this path

- Dual career staff (for science/application track)
Building a Team

What has NOT been a success?

- Recruiting seasoned people from outside

- Sometimes early career PhDs have struggled moving from graduate student to self-directed, independent role
What are our Staff like?

- Hire for mindset, more than having 100% of skills
  - Creative, initiative, problem solvers
  - Not punchlists
  - People skills

- Money is always nice for motivation and reward—but...
  - Interesting work
  - Making an impact
  - Working with top minds
  - Flexible work
  - Opportunities for travel and networking
Coordinating and Uniting on Purpose

How to keep a large team on task?

- Annual all-hands meeting
- Management team keeps “top 5” org priorities

Now in our remote world, it’s been an evolution
  - Daily standups
  - More regular all-staff discussions from sr mgmt