

CELEBRATE PURDUE WOMEN

# SEETHA RAGHAVAN



**WHAT DOES MENTORSHIP MEAN TO YOU?**

Mentorship has been the key thing for me. There is no such thing as a time when you don't need a mentor...no matter what position you're in, you always need a mentor.

**WHAT ROLE HAS CONNECTION WITH OTHERS PLAYED IN YOUR ACADEMIC JOURNEY?**

It's really powerful that people out there want to work with you and really care about students...and they become mentors to my students, too. Those connections have shaped and forged some of the outcomes for my research and a path for providing opportunities for students. It just comes from making that phone call, even if you don't know the people. I think that's the step you have to not be afraid to take.

**WHAT ROLE HAS COLLABORATION PLAYED IN YOUR ACADEMIC JOURNEY?**

At a conference, I met someone from a large aerospace organization, and I connected with them and we wrote proposals together. Eventually, I had students go out there to do research as well. We successfully forged that connection where students could do research in my lab and go out to industry as well. The funding agencies gave us that opportunity to connect the students that way. That gave them the chance to eventually work in some of these organizations. You have to be passionate about something and you try to make it happen by collaborating with people. It's positive because you know you're going to be able to create an experience that you wish you had as a student.

**WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP MEAN TO YOU?**

I'm always thinking of myself as a partner more so than anything. Even in my lab with my students and as I work with my colleagues, I feel a leader is best if they can bring out the best in the people around them, so that means being a partner. You can't be successful at a venture without a team. As a leader, all you're doing is catalyzing the team and inspiring them on getting started. Without the buy-in from everyone else around you, things are not going to be successful. Leadership is about being authentic, passionate about what you do, and inspiring the people around you.

**WHAT ROLE DID PURDUE PLAY IN YOUR JOURNEY?**

The most I got out of the PhD, maybe not all that technical stuff, but it's the resilience to deal with failure. I think you have to, as a scientist, be able to take failure because you're going to see it come in all directions. And you have to be not so hard on yourself because you're attacking a problem that nobody has an answer to. So clearly, it's not going to take you one shot to get a step closer. If it wasn't that hard, it would have been solved already. My time at Purdue really made me appreciate the environment of learning.

**HOW HAS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS EVOLVED OVER TIME?**

Once you start failing, you start to really think about learning, as opposed to just being perfectly good all the time. You start to focus and ask all the questions and not just be worried about doing well...

Dr. Raghavan serves as a Professor of Aerospace Engineering and Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies at the College of Engineering, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Her research interests are in the areas of Mechanics of aerospace structures and materials. She began her academic career in Fall 2008 after completing her doctoral studies at Purdue University, Indiana, School of Aeronautics and Astronautics in the area of Structures & Materials. She obtained her M.S., Aeronautical Engineering in Structures at ISAE-SUPAERO, Toulouse, France where she also worked with Messier Bugatti in Velizy, Paris (S-92 wheels and brakes testing). Prior to this, she completed her B.Eng in Mechanical Engineering at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She has 7 years of employment experience in the aerospace industry where she was a senior engineer involved in Aircraft Structural Analysis (F-5), Aircraft Maintenance, Repair & Modifications and Non-destructive testing research & development. Dr Raghavan's research has a focus on investigating the mechanics of high temperature coatings for extreme environments in propulsion, hypersonic flight, space exploration and energy applications as well as developing multifunctional sensing materials for wear and impact resistance, structural integrity and damage detection. She is an Associate Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics where she serves as the Editor-in-Chief for the Progress in Astronautics and Aeronautics Book Series. She was honored nationally by Women in Aerospace with the 2019 Aerospace Educator Award and she was recently awarded the Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence Distinguished Purdue Alumni Scholar Award 2023.

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