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Feedback for M2T2 2013:

Short Summary

At the risk of sounding hyperbolic, I will say that this was the best meeting that I have attended in my entire career (and I have been to probably a hundred or more). My main motivation for co-organizing this meeting with Dr. Krishanu Ray was to expose young Indian students to established, outstanding scientists from abroad. In my own career, such an exposure has taught me what it takes to succeed at the top-level, and I thought it would be beneficial for Indian students to see this. In a nutshell I was absolutely delighted that the way Krishanu organized the meeting, the students got the most out of it. The students were at the center-stage throughout the school and workshop. Throughout the meeting the students were excited, enthusiastic, and asked numerous questions during and after the lectures – even when the talks ran up-to 10 PM! Each speaker (including myself) gave 3-4 lectures of 1-2 hours each, and this allowed extensive exchange of ideas that significantly raised the intellectual level of the meeting. Importantly, the speakers extensively interacted with the students, not only during the talks, but in the tea/coffee sessions and breakfast/lunch/dinners, where most speakers made it a point to sit and eat with the students. I strongly hope that such meetings can be organized in a more regular basis, so Indian students are exposed to top-notch science/scientists.

My role in the School

I was a co-organizer, and as such, my main role was to enlist top researchers/educators from the US to speak at the symposium. This was not so straightforward, as I had to think about people who were not only great scientists, but also were able to interact with students comfortably on a 1:1 basis. Fortunately, I think it worked out quite nicely, at least based on what I saw and the feedback I got from the students. Besides this I gave three lectures, two at the school and one at the workshop, and also ran a journal club type session one afternoon. Each of the three lectures were scheduled for an hour each (but ran well over, mainly due to the students' questions), and the journal club was about two hours. I also interacted with the students extensively, at their posters and in social situations.

Comment on overall organization

As mentioned above, the overall organization was outstanding, by far the best I have ever experienced at a meeting. This was also echoed to me by the various US speakers as well. One thing in particular was the general environment in the lecture hall, where the students (who were the vast majority) occupied the center, while the faculty were scattered in the back/periphery. This arrangement perfectly captured the mood of the meeting, which was all about the students. Krishanu and his team made sure that every single thing was perfect.

Suggestions

In my opinion it is difficult to imagine how this meeting could be improved any further. Perhaps the students should be queried if they felt that something was lacking. Though enjoyable, in a sense the meeting was hard work for the speakers who were engaged from 9 AM to 9 PM almost every day.

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