

## **Dr. Bhavani's Diary (Working from Home during COVID-19) – Part 10**

**October 1, 2021**

This is my final post about working from home during COVID-19. We are now back to work for in-person teaching. However, much of our work such as meetings, student supervision, office hours, and conference is being carried out virtually. So we are sort of working in hybrid mode its likely this will continue for the next year or two although I believe more and more events will be held in-person. For example, my PhD students graduation ceremony was held in-person on August 9, 2021 (and the last in-person graduation I attended was in December 2019).

My first post was on April 24, 2020 which was followed by six weekly posts and then went to quarterly on January 1, 2021. My last post (Part 9) was made on July 1. So for the past three months we worked just under two months virtually and just over a month in-person. My first in-person class since the pandemic was on August 27, 2021 (and my last in-person class before the pandemic (although the pandemic was announced to the world on December 31, 2019) was on March 6, 2020. This means we had been working from home for almost 18 months. In this post first I will discuss what I have been doing for the past 3 months and will then analyze the progress and challenges the past 18 months.

During this past quarter I completed my summer course (Analyzing and Securing Social Media), started the Fall course (Big Data Security and Privacy) as well as the INSuRE course I teach, and also completed my work mentoring nine high school students, became the faculty advisor for a group of students participating in ACM student competition, gave a few keynote addresses (Women in Services Computing, SecureComm), made some videos of talks, traveling to the NYC area, and many more activities. I also finished the book #16 and sent it to the publisher during the past quarter. I am planning to sign another book contract. Also, I was invited by two magazines for feature articles on my work –one is Cover Story article by Insights Success and the other a regular article by WorldsLeaders magazine. Both will appear between October and December, but lot of the work was done during this past quarter. In addition, I was invited to be considered for the 500 most influential business leaders in North Texas and will know the results soon. The results will be known by November. I also made it to the list in 2020. So, I am very honored. However, one of the biggest honors in my career is to get invited to give the Inspirational Address at the Maryam Mirzakhani Celebrations for Women in Mathematics and participate in the Girls in Math Prize event in October 2021. Also, a significant milestone in September 2021 was to transition the Cyber Security Institute (CSI) that I founded in October 2004 to a colleague whom I was responsible for hiring and mentoring. So CSI is in good hand. In addition to all this, continuing with the regular bread and butter work like teaching and research. I am expecting my 20<sup>th</sup> student to complete her PhD thesis defense in October. This will be my 20<sup>th</sup> student since joining academia and the 10<sup>th</sup> woman. I have 3 more students in the pipeline two of whom are women. Among the PhD students whom I have graduated since 2008, some of them are from the African American, Hispanic American and the LGBTQ communities. Its going to be quite busy until the end of the year with two more keynote addresses, participating in panels, giving interviews to the media about cyber security and traveling to NYC and of course continuing with my regular work.

Analyzing the progress I have made while working from home, on the whole I have been productive. In addition to teaching several classes and carrying out research and supervising students, I have given over 20 keynote addresses, participated in several panels, gave several media interviews and selected to appear in D CEO Magazine as well as other prominent magazines, completed the certificate course on Public Policy Analysis at the London School of Economics and also reviewed several books in Mathematics, Statistics, Machine Learning and Cyber Security. Some of these opportunities would not have been possible if we did not work from home. However, there have been challenges and that is not following a strict routine. I have tried my best and I would make progress for 3 days and slip for the next 3 days. Still work has to get done and so one thing that has gotten affected is my sleep. I thought that with no travel I would be able to sleep by 12 midnight and wake up by 8am. I have been successful some of the time but not many other times. Although since we started teaching in-person I have done better. So, I am hoping that I can get a handle on this. However, I have done better with my diet as there are less opportunities to eat huge meals since I am not traveling on business. So I am pleased about this. But, I have not been working out regularly. I don't go to the gym anymore in our condo due to fear of COVID. I do have an exercise bike that I use off and on, and take some walks in the neighborhood around a few times a week – although our neighborhood is a mini-city center and so not many places to work. But there are some nice shops two blocks away and so the walks can be pleasant, but the problem is I wear the masks and goggles and so walking can be strenuous.

So, what have I learned? Health and Family come first and then Career. Because of the pandemic my husband of 46+ years and I have been together in Dallas. We have not been together 24x7 since late 1984. After that due to our travels and sabbaticals in the UK and assignments in DC, we have been apart around 4-6 months of the year. And my husband is based in Boston and me in Dallas and so we have been commuting back and forth between October 2004 and February 2020. I am very grateful to the close to 20 months we have had together 24x7. Sometimes it has been trying, but we have learnt to appreciate each other. And I am very grateful my son and his family have been coping well in NYC – I think of them every day. They send photos of the family almost daily and we FaceTime twice a week. We don't know what is in store for us in the future as we have no idea how the pandemic will end or become an endemic. But one thing for sure, we have to take it a day at a time and be thankful for what we have.

Another point I would like to mention is that my father passed away 50 years ago (1971) unexpectedly and his death anniversary will be on October 30, 2021. He was just 58 and I was 16. I am writing a post on how I reacted to his death and how I have coped especially in the early years. These life experiences have definitely made me a stronger person and every day has been a learning experience.