

# Don't Put Me (or Yourself) in a Box

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UC Merced  
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# Introduction

- Why am I here?



Me, playing Luciana in Comedy of Errors (2010).

# Introduction

- Graduated from UC Merced in 2014
- Professor at MSU Denver
- Officer for SIAM ED/AME
- ... and beyond



# Introduction

I was a *weird* kid...



Me, pretending I was NOT stealing cookies from the cabinet.

# Introduction

So, how did I get here?



Me, after hiking the Manitou Incline (2744 stair steps that climb 2000ft in elevation) in 2024.

# Beginning

- I was an artsy kid
- I dove into STEM after attending *Expanding Your Horizons*
- I kept *doing* art
- Art taught me to bear “failure”
- I didn’t fit into any STEM group
- I found my motto became “I don’t fit in a box”
- Takeaways:
  - Embrace your “weird”
  - Don’t limit yourself; keep trying things until you find what fits



# UC Merced

- I knew I wanted to teach
- UC Merced gave me the opportunity
- I followed the things that fit
- I met people who aligned with my goals
- I chose to embrace what followed
- Takeaway: When you get the opportunity, seize it



# MSU Denver

- I knew the kind of job I was seeking
- I met reps from MSU Denver at a conference
- I had goals for my career already
- Advising...
- Takeaway: Do the work to know what you want and what you bring to the table



# SIAM

- Designed Mathematical Modeling course for MSU Denver
- SIAM AME 2016 conference
- SIAM AME 2018 conference
- Began publishing in education
- Became an officer of the SIAG in 2021
- Takeaway: Find “your people”



# Beyond

- Dance Collaborations
- PRIMUS
- Consortium
- Book
- Parenthood
- Kings College
- Takeaway: Believe in yourself; go for the things you want to do



# Beyond

- It's easy to create limits on ourselves; don't put yourself in a box
- Keep working and you will keep moving forward



# Summary

- Embrace your “weird”
- Don’t limit yourself;  
keep trying things until you find what fits
- Do the work to know what you want and what you bring to the table
- Believe in yourself; go for the things you want to do
- Find “your people”
- When you get the opportunity, seize it
- Keep working and you will keep moving forward

# Questions for You

- What makes you stand out?
- What do you want to do?
- What are you passionate about?
- What drives you in your work?
- What do you want to create in this world?

Make it happen



Thank you!

Thank you to faculty who were here when I started:

François Blanchette

Boaz Ilan

Mayya Tokman

Special thanks to Arnold Kim; without his support I would not be where I am today.



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Please contact me if you are interested in discussion and/or sharing ideas, or if you have any questions!

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