

MSCS Department Citizenship Statement

Updated August 2024

This document describes our expectations for faculty participation in the daily life of the department. We outline the extent and limits of departmental expectations for faculty at different categories of employment, especially part-time and terminal faculty. We hope this document will be especially helpful to new faculty, and help all of our members continue the traditions and practices that make St. Olaf MSCS an active community where students and faculty are welcomed, grow, and thrive.

This document focuses on expectations for departmental citizenship: it describes how and when we show up for each other and our students. Citizenship goes beyond service; citizenship describes how we participate in the daily life of the department, not just the committees we serve on or the tasks we complete. In addition to the information in this document, all faculty are encouraged and expected to seek and offer mentorship and guidance from/to one another regarding citizenship expectations.

This document does not focus on expectations for service to the college or college citizenship, guiding principles and expectations regarding pedagogy and teaching, or standards/expectations and guidance regarding scholarship.

- College service and citizenship expectations are outlined in the Faculty Handbook and Faculty Manual.
- Guiding principles and expectations regarding pedagogy and teaching are outlined in the MSCS Statement on Teaching (forthcoming).
- Standards/expectations and guidance regarding scholarship are outlined in the MSCS Statement of Significant Scholarly/Artistic Work.

The Big Tent Philosophy

St. Olaf College has a decades-long record of success in attracting students to mathematics, computer science, and statistics and data science. We subscribe, in our own parlance, to a “Big Tent” philosophy: we see our disciplines as useful for and accessible to a large majority of students, not just a small elite. Our quantitative success, moreover, has not come at the expense of quality: our graduates are notably successful in further education and in MSCS-related professions.

The Big Tent philosophy shapes our interactions with students in and out of the classroom, and drives our commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive community. It is reflected in our expectations for daily community life and in the special events we host for students.

Campus Presence

One reason the Big Tent philosophy is successful is that Regents Hall of Mathematical Sciences is a lively place full of interactions among students, faculty, and staff. MSCS Faculty often leave

their doors open when working in their offices. This is an invitation to both students and colleagues to drop in to ask a question, seek advice, or just say hello.

Normally, full-time permanent and visiting faculty are expected to be on campus at least 4 days a week. Part-time faculty are expected to be on campus on the days when they teach and as necessary for other duties including office hours and department meetings. There is not an expectation for campus presence during the summer or January term except to fulfill duties related to teaching, mentoring student research, or other commitments.

Office hours

Each faculty member typically provides 4-5 well-publicized office hours weekly, spread across 3-5 days, which are open to all students. If a faculty member has less than a five or six course annual teaching load, the number of hours may be reduced. When on campus, office hours are expected to be in person. Additional office hours may also be held online when faculty are off campus, so long as some of these meetings are offered in person on a weekly basis.

Focused scholarly activity

At some time each week many faculty members find quiet space and time to focus on individual professional activity. This may occur in offices (with doors closed), in the library, or elsewhere. If this focused time is scheduled during the normal work-week, it is helpful to students and colleagues to have that time publicized just like office hours.

Modifications to class schedule/mode and absences from teaching class

Classes should be held in person, adhering to the college schedule, except in special circumstances and with the permission of the department chair.

Travel to conferences, illnesses (oneself or a family member), personal matters, and more can result in a faculty member being away from a regularly scheduled class meeting. Every effort should be made to obtain class coverage from a department colleague, and, conversely, department members are encouraged to help one another as needed. The instructor may also elect remote instruction but the chair and associate dean should be informed as early as possible.

Travel to professional conferences is encouraged, but faculty members should not miss more than 1-2 days of class per semester. The college also has a policy regarding coverage of courses for long-term illnesses.

For any absence, planned or unplanned, faculty should notify the department chair, their program director, and the AAA.

Departmental Activities and Business

Maintaining and supporting our department community requires communication and leadership. As a department, we value the unique contributions of each of our members and expect that

each person will share in the work we do. The department and program meetings are invaluable ways to share information, make decisions communally, allocate tasks, and recognize each other's successes and contributions. In addition to meetings, each person contributes to activities and tasks. As a department, we also take great joy in working together and facilitate informal community times in addition to our formal meetings and events.

Department and program meetings

MSCS department meetings are held most weeks on Thursdays, 3:30-4:30pm in RNS 356. All full-time MSCS faculty are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate in these meetings. As valued members of the department, full-time visiting faculty should also attend and fully participate in the meetings. Part-time faculty should consult with the department chair about attendance expectations. The department chair will share the agenda prior to the meeting, usually by Monday afternoon.

Individual programs (i.e., mathematics, statistics and data science, computer science) may also meet weekly; program members are expected to attend those meetings, too. During all meetings, all faculty are expected to be attentive and engaged (e.g., avoid bringing grading or other work) and to contribute respectfully, without talking over or interrupting others.

Faculty are expected to attend department and program meetings in person. If in-person attendance is not possible (due to illness, weather, travel, etc.), faculty should alert the department chair and/or program director and are encouraged to share input on agenda items prior to the meeting. Alternatively, remote attendance may be permitted on rare occasions.

Other departmental needs/roles

MSCS departmental life goes well beyond its classroom offerings, including departmental committees, colloquia, the *MSCS Mess* newsletter, contests, events, peer mentorship, etc. All full-time permanent and visiting faculty are expected to do their share in making these things happen, with some needing to take leadership roles; "volunteer opportunities" are available every semester. Newer faculty are more likely to take on smaller tasks (e.g., edit the *MSCS Mess*), while more seasoned faculty are expected to play bigger roles (e.g., lead a departmental committee). Most departmental roles are assigned at the Fall department retreat or soon thereafter.

Additional service expected during years with tenure-track hiring

Hiring new Tenure-track colleagues is an exciting and important responsibility, and requires extra effort from all permanent faculty (Tenured, Tenure-Track, and Teaching Specialist).

Responsibilities include attending job talks and hiring decision meetings, reading job applications, and meeting one-on-one or in small groups with job candidates.

Visiting and part-time faculty are welcome to attend the talks given by the job candidates, but are not required. If a non-tenure-track faculty member is also in the applicant pool, it is expected that they do not attend the talks given by other candidates.

Informal community events

We host a monthly “Birthday celebration” to share treats, coffee, and well wishes. Department faculty and staff are welcome! The department also hosts a weekly Tea time prior to colloquia, which is attended by both students and faculty. Though there is no formal attendance expectation at these events, we encourage and welcome all who want to participate.

Mentorship

An important part of community building in MSCS is the department’s dedication to fostering an environment of mutual support and collaboration between faculty members. We are invested both in continuing to develop our own pedagogical techniques and teaching styles, and in encouraging our colleagues to do the same. This leads to an open, cooperative atmosphere and overall sense of community that benefits both faculty and students, and upholds the principles of inclusion and welcome that are intrinsic to the Big Tent philosophy.

Mentoring new faculty

New faculty are assigned a department mentor. Experienced faculty should expect to be called upon by the department chair or the college to serve in this capacity as needed. New faculty are encouraged to seek advice from their mentors, but will find that any of their colleagues are open to giving informal guidance and support.

Class Observations

The MSCS Department actively encourages regular, informal peer observation of teaching, accompanied by a follow-up conversation about the class. This is a good way to learn from our colleagues and expand our pedagogical repertoire.

Course Evaluations

MSCS faculty members are expected to administer end-of-course student feedback surveys in all of their classes to promote their continued development as teachers and mentors, and share the results with the department chair and program director. The department also recommends eliciting mid-semester feedback from students for course planning purposes, but these evaluations do not need to be shared.

These department expectations go a bit beyond the college requirements for course evaluations (see Faculty Personnel Policies and Procedures sections of the *Faculty Manual*, 4.III.G.7, 4.VI.C.1.a., and 4.VI.C.2.a.).

Interactions and Events with Students

The Big Tent philosophy is successfully supported by the intentional work of faculty and staff to create a vibrant, active community in and outside of the classroom. Simply put, we enjoy interacting with our students. We see value in encouraging them to engage with us through office hours and advising and to take part in department academic and social events. This gives

everyone the opportunity to form deeper and more meaningful relationships throughout their time at St. Olaf, and results in students seeing mathematics, statistics and data science, and computer science as valuable disciplines worth pursuing.

Expectations for communications with students

Faculty are expected to be available to students via office hours and engage in timely communication with students via email (or another form of communication elected by the faculty member). We recommend including email expectations for instructors and students on syllabi, and discussing it in class at the beginning of the semester. The department does not expect that faculty respond to student emails in evenings or on weekends.

In accordance with college policy, in-person class attendance is the expectation for students. There is no expectation for faculty to provide a remote attendance option for students who are unable to attend class.

Student advising

St. Olaf has formal procedures for which faculty serve as academic advisors and how many advisees a faculty member has. A description of the process and expectations can be found on the Academic Success Center's website.

A large part of the success of the Big Tent philosophy comes in the form of informal advising. All MSCS faculty should engage our students in meaningful conversations about their courses, their lives on campus, and their career/vocational goals. We regularly encourage students to consider taking more courses in MSCS and to get involved in department activities, regardless of intent to major in one of our disciplines. Many of us have good strategies for accomplishing this, so speaking with colleagues about best practices is highly encouraged.

Department events

Weekly Colloquium Series and Special Lecture Series

Most Mondays, 3:30-4:30 pm, the department hosts a colloquium series with talks (often given by guest speakers) intended to engage students and faculty alike. Faculty are encouraged to keep this time free in their calendars, attend these events, and advertise them to their classes. Faculty who attend are encouraged to set a positive example for students through active listening.

The department also hosts several special colloquia each year supported by endowed or special funds that allow us to bring more well-known speakers to campus (e.g. Kleber-Gery and Math Across Cannon). For special lectures during the day, all full-time permanent and visiting faculty are expected to attend, and part-time faculty are welcome. Attendance at evening lectures is encouraged.

Fall Welcome Event/Tailgate (late September or early-mid October)

This event is usually an information session followed by a dinner. All full-time permanent and visiting faculty are expected to attend, and part-time faculty are very much welcome.

MSCS Recital (early April)

This is a social event at which all MSCS students and faculty are encouraged to share their talents. All full-time permanent and visiting faculty are encouraged to attend, and part-time faculty are welcome.

Senior Banquet (early May)

This is a dinner event (usually 5:30-7:00 pm), where we socialize with and celebrate the accomplishments of MSCS seniors. All full-time permanent and visiting faculty are expected to attend, and part-time faculty are welcome.

Commencement Reception (typically Saturday of Memorial Day weekend)

This event is hosted typically in the late morning on the day of Commencement. All full-time permanent and visiting faculty are expected to attend, and part-time faculty are welcome/encouraged. Faculty do not typically wear academic regalia at the department reception. In accordance with college policy, all full-time faculty are also expected to participate in the commencement ceremony, and regalia is required (see college resources for more details).

Important Program Events

There are several events in which students of specific programs are highly involved. The programs strongly encourage faculty to support their students by attending. These include the Northfield Undergraduate Mathematics Symposium (NUMS) and Konhauser problem-solving competition (especially for Math), the Honors Day Poster Session (especially for SDS), and the Hackathon (especially for CS).

Other Department Events

There are a number of other events hosted by the department or student clubs throughout the year which faculty may choose to attend.

College Events

As noted in the [Faculty Handbook](#), faculty are expected to appear in cap and gown to form an academic procession at Opening Convocation (first day of classes), Honors Day Convocation (May), and the Commencement ceremony.