

Stephen Seidman (2025)



I was born and raised in New York City. My undergraduate studies were at the City College of New York, where I received the BS in mathematics in 1964. I went on to graduate school at the University of Michigan, where I received the MA in 1965 and the PhD in 1969, specializing in topology. I met my wife Barbara in Ann Arbor. Our wedding in 1969 was the beginning of a long and fulfilling marriage that only ended with Barbara's death in 2024. We had two daughters, Miriam and Naomi. Naomi is Associate Professor of Flute in Penn State's School of Music, and she has two sons, born in 2015 and 2018.

My academic career began at New York University in 1969; it then took me to Northern Virginia in 1972, where I was a faculty member at George Mason University for 18 years. My initial research was in topology, but in the mid-70s I was convinced by an anthropologist close friend to work with him on using mathematics to study social structure problems that involved social networks. Back then, a social network consisted of the links between people in a small community that represented communication and aid of various sorts. I first undertook an intensive, if informal, reading course in social science. After that, I began to work in this area. These efforts occupied me for more than ten years: I defined graph-theoretical structures that corresponded to theoretical constructs in social science, studied their mathematical properties and implications, and wrote software to find these structures in the Thai peasant communities that my collaborator was studying.

Writing the software led me to develop an interest in computer science, and I soon started to teach computer science courses at GMU. In 1984, CS split off from mathematics to form its own department, and I chose to go with it. In the ensuing years, my research and teaching interests moved to computer science, focusing primarily on formal methods in software engineering.

In 1990, I was encouraged by a friend to apply for a department head position at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at Auburn. I got the position, but after six years in Alabama, I moved to Fort Collins, Colorado to be the chair of the Department of Computer Science at Colorado State.

Academia has always found it difficult to find a natural home for computer science, and in the 1990s several universities responded by creating colleges of computing. I thought that such a unit had great promise, so I moved back to the NYC area in 2001 to become the founding dean of the College of Computing at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

For various reasons, NJIT turned out not to be a good match for my interests and academic goals, so I left New Jersey in 2006 to take the position of Dean of the College of Science at the University of Central Arkansas, just 30 miles northwest of Little Rock.

By this time, my daughter Naomi had finished her DMA at the University of Texas, had married, and had taken a faculty position at a university in South Texas. Therefore, when I saw an announcement for the Dean of Science position at Texas State University in San Marcos, it seemed like a good fit, as well as a way to be closer to Naomi. My application for the position was successful, and Barbara, Miriam, and I left Arkansas for Texas in 2009. We decided to live in Austin, which meant a 30-mile commute to San Marcos.

Texas State turned out to be a very good place for me, and during my six years there I was able to increase the college's applied science and STEM education emphases, beginning the process of creating a PhD program in computer science (now up and running), creating a research emphasis in physics education, and changing the name of the college to its current, more accurate name: College of Science and Engineering.

During my career as an academic administrator, my research interests shifted toward computing education and professionalism. I was a long-term volunteer for the IEEE Computer Society, serving on its Board of Governors and as Vice-President for Education. I was also active in computing accreditation; I was an ABET volunteer for 20 years and served two terms on ABET's Computing Accreditation Commission.

After 46 years in academia, I was starting to think of retirement. In 2012, my daughter Naomi had taken a faculty position at Penn State. We'd visited her there and thought that even though we were greatly enjoying our life in Austin, it might be good for us to retire to a place where the family could all be together. We therefore bought a house in State College and moved here in 2015. It proved to be a very good move for us; we were able to experience our grandsons' early childhood, and when Barbara became seriously ill in Fall 2024, having the support of family was critical.

