

Life at a Regional Teaching University: Pitfalls to Avoid

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What I'm going to talk about

- Who am I?
- University of West Georgia
- Getting Tenure at a Teaching-focused Institution
 - Teaching Expectations
 - Research Expectations
 - Service Expectations
- Problems I Encountered
- Mentorship
- Career vs. Personal Life

Who am I?

- Born and raised in suburb of Atlanta, GA
- Married with 2 children
- B.A. in Biology with Chemistry Minor from LaGrange College, LaGrange, GA — 2002
- Ph.D. in Physiology from Medical College of Georgia, Augusta, GA (now Georgia Regents University) — 2007



Who am I?

- Postdoc: Debi Fadool, FSU — 2007-2009
- Associate Professor, UWG Biology Department, August 2009-present



June 2010



June 2015

My Job Search

- My Ideal Job: Biology tenure-track position at smaller institution with focus on teaching, lots of faculty-student interaction, and smaller research component
- 2008-2009 application season — during economic recession period in academia
- Applied for 16 teaching positions (1 non-tenure track; 2 positions at UWG) and 1 science writer position
- Invited to interview at 5 universities — 4 teaching + 1 science writer
 - Non-tenure track search cancelled after interview
 - Science writer position was not what I was looking for
 - Accepted job at UWG before 4th teaching interview took place



- Located in Carrollton, GA (~ 45 minutes west of Atlanta near Alabama state line)
- Public university
- ~ 12,000 students (95+% undergraduate)
- Majority of students are Georgia residents — largest concentration from western region
- Biology is in the College of Science and Mathematics

About UWG

- I have the only current NIH grant on campus (R15 awarded by NIDCD)
- A few NSF grants for research or equipment
- A few independent contracts for research
- Some internal grants for research — most < \$5000 and only cover student stipends
- Most grants (internal and external) are for education/teaching initiatives—the main focus of the institution
- Small start-up package: \$10,000/year for first 3 years

UWG Department of Biology

- Diverse faculty interests across major biology disciplines
- 17 tenure-track/tenured faculty, 3 lecturers, 5 instructors
 - 3 Assistant, 8 Associate (3 new as of Fall 2015), and 6 Full Professors
- My responsibilities:
 - Teaching—primary goal of fall and spring semesters
 - Research—bulk occurs during summer; some during fall/spring
 - Service—expected but other categories hold more weight with teaching being most important

Getting Tenure at UWG

- Excellence in Teaching—Most important
 - Good student and faculty peer evaluations
 - Develop new courses
 - Incorporate innovative teaching techniques
- Research
 - ~3 published papers during review period (not necessarily all first author)—collaborations are encouraged due to limited campus resources
 - Undergraduate students involved in research
 - Grants are positive influence, but not essential

Getting Tenure at UWG

- Service—Least important
 - Usually limited to 1-2 department level committees during review period
 - Although more service can alleviate some slower progress in research area

Teaching

- 9 hour loads (Fall/Spring) with 3 hour research release
- One class prep to start with multiple times to tweak during review period with additional class preps added over time
- Most courses cross-listed with graduate level courses (usually 3-5 graduate seats in addition to undergraduate seats)
- No TAs for upper level courses—Professor design and run labs for majors
 - Graduate TAs reserved for all introductory biology labs
 - Undergraduate TAs teach freshmen biodiversity labs

Teaching



Physiology and Histology
Teaching Lab

- My typical course load
 - Fall: Human Physiology with Lab & Neuroscience
 - Spring: Vertebrate Histology with Lab & Senior Seminar
- Other courses taught on as needed basis
 - Graduate seminars
 - Independent studies
 - Cell and Molecular Biology
 - Research credit

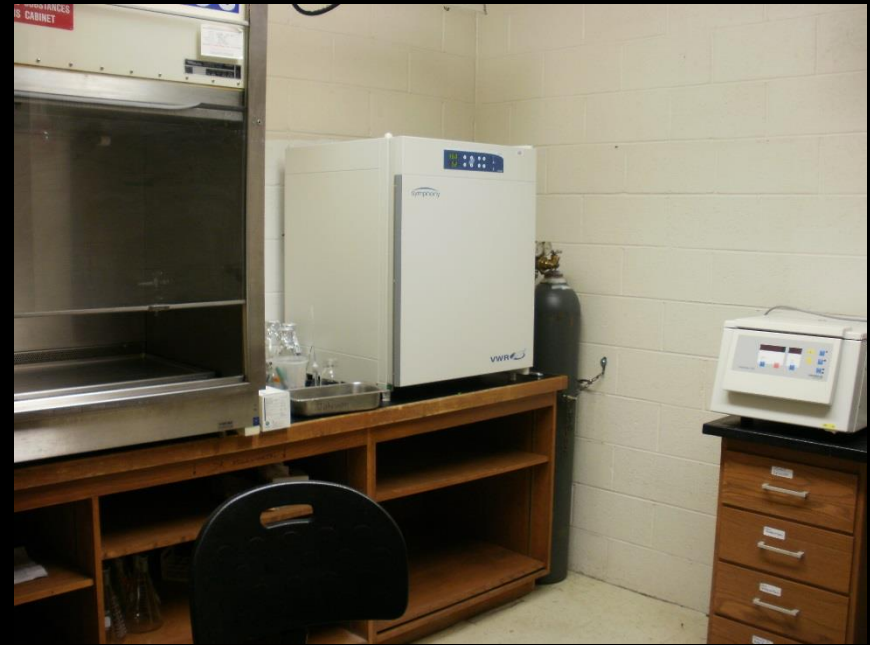
Research

- Most conducted in summers
- Limited time during fall and spring unless you have well-trained students who stay with you for multiple semesters
- Small spaces that often require improvisation
 - Design projects that can be done on minimal budget and with limited equipment
- Share equipment/resources with peers
- Collaboration off campus is essential

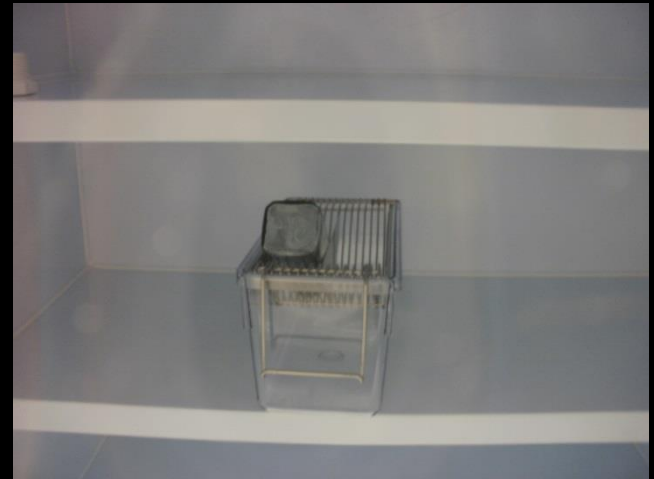
My Research Lab Spaces: Main Lab



My Research Lab Spaces: Tissue Culture (Shared Space)



My Research Lab Spaces: Animal Room



Service

- Advising of biology majors (~30 students per semester)
 - Requires a lot of time
- 2 Department committees per academic year with 3 year memberships (Chair in 3rd year)
 - Graduate Curriculum and Instruction (Chair)
 - Space Allocation (Chair as of August)
- IACUC Chair (2013-present)
- UWG Preview Day Biology Representative

Service

- Advisory committees for MS students (thesis and non-thesis tracks)
- COSM Representative for Faculty Senate and Intercollegiate Athletics Committee
- Volunteer for student organizations and athletic events
- Biology Faculty Search Committees
- Textbook and Journal Reviewer

My Path to Tenure and Beyond

- August 2009
 - Arrived at UWG
 - Taught Human Physiology for first time (every fall)
 - Set up research lab for histology
- January 2010
 - Taught Vertebrate Histology for first time (every spring)
- April 2010
 - Awarded internal grant for undergraduate stipend (received several for period: 2010-2013)
- June-July 2010
 - Collected preliminary data at FSU with MS student
 - Co-author on several abstracts related to postdoc research

My Path to Tenure and Beyond

- August 2010
 - Taught Cell and Molecular Biology for first time (last taught August 2011)
- September 2010
 - Co-authored paper published related to postdoc research (#1)
 - Presented 2 seminars at UWG
- October 2010
 - Submitted R15 grant to NIH
 - First author paper published related to postdoc research (#2)
- April 2011
 - Abstract presented by UWG undergraduate and MS students at campus research day

My Path to Tenure and Beyond

- May 2011
 - Awarded R15 grant (Sept. 2011-August 2015 with 1 yr no-cost extension)
- September 2011
 - Set up lab for electrophysiology and began work establishing animal facility and IACUC
- April 2012
 - Presented work of UWG undergraduate and MS students at international meeting
 - Abstract presented by UWG undergraduate students at campus research day

My Path to Tenure and Beyond

- June-July 2012
 - Training to develop online courses through UWG Faculty Development Office
- April 2013
 - First author paper published related to postdoc research (#3)
- April-July 2013
 - Medical leave of absence—reason for no-cost extension for R15 grant
- August 2013
 - Taught Human Physiology course completely online

My Path to Tenure and Beyond

- November 2013
 - Presented seminar at UWG
- January 2014
 - Taught Senior Seminar for first time (every spring)
- May 2014
 - Co-authored paper published related to postdoc research (#4)

My Path to Tenure and Beyond

- August 2014
 - Taught Neuroscience for first time (every fall; will also teach online version summer 2016)
- November 2014
 - Presented seminar at UWG
- April 2015
 - Awarded internal grant to generate preliminary data for R15 renewal application

Problems I've faced and how I dealt with them

- Teaching
 - Class/Lab prep and grading require big chunks of time
 - Advising requires time at specific points in semester
 - Students don't buy textbooks or prepare ahead of class

Problems I've faced and how I dealt with them

- Research
 - Lack of administrative experience to adequately support federal funding requirements
 - Adapting to limited resources
 - Undergraduate students have very little time to be in lab with class schedules
 - Lack of internal funding for supplies

Importance of Mentorship

- Debi Fadool
 - Research collaborator
 - Sounding board
- Department Chairs
 - Limited new courses and service to start
 - Found resources for equipment purchases
 - Fought administrative hurdles blocking my research
- Department Faculty Peers
 - Shared resources (teaching and research)
- COSM Mentor Program
 - Outside feedback and support

My Role Mentoring Students

- Identify what their goal is after UWG
- Plan courses and other action steps they can take to get there
- Be available for advice, but encourage them to do the footwork themselves
- Provide possible alternate plans when needed

Career vs. Personal Life—Find Balance

- Family time is important
- On campus 4 days a week for classes, research, & service activities
- 1 day a week and weekends I try to dedicate to family



Questions?

