

Congratulations, you have the  
job!

Now what?

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# My perspective

These thoughts are based on my experiences at research-oriented Universities, where teaching and service are also expected of you. A key feature of such jobs is tenure, and the seeking of it. I got tenure twice (two different institutions), which is really twice as much as advisable.

These thoughts only partially apply to more heavily research-oriented positions, as in some medical schools.

My heavy emphasis on research is certainly not appropriate if you seek a job at the many colleges and universities that see their role as teaching first, and research second or not at all.

# Getting tenure

You must convince your new colleagues that you will have a long productive career from the time that you get tenure forward. There is no precise checklist, but you have to have positive answers to these broad questions:

- Research            Have you established an independent research program?  
                         Will you be funded and publish from this day hence?
- Teaching            Can you mentor graduate students? Is your  
                         teaching bad enough to cause your colleagues trouble?\*
- Good teaching is a plus, and can compensate for some short-comings in research.
- Service              Will you help keeping a graduate program,  
                         department, college and University running?

\*No administrator will admit that teaching is not as important as research, but I think most faculty do not see it this way.

# Research evidence they will want to see

Minimally one peer-reviewed paper from your lab/year, but preferably two.

Funding.

Steady production over time (not 5 papers your last year).

Independence from post-doc mentors and dissertation advisor.

Positive letters from independent experts in your field.

Things that are not so useful:

Papers in which your lab has a minor role, symposium papers, non-selective journals (PLOS ONE, grey market), non-peer reviewed work is greatly downgraded.

Publishing work from your post-doc or dissertation basically does not count towards tenure.

Failure to publish work from dissertation and post-doc can really damage you in other ways.

# Your current post-doc jobs

- Do good research
- Publish
- Publicize your work and your self
- Keep senior colleagues impressed enough to write good letters

# Your new jobs

- Do good research
- Publish
- Publicize your work and your self
- Politicking
- Grant writing
- Teaching
- Recruiting
- Mentoring
- Hiring and firing
- Supervising employees
- Purchasing
- Accounting

GETTING TENURE!

# Which have you been trained for?

- Do good research
- Publish
- Publicize your work and your self
- Politicking
- Grant writing
- Teaching
- Recruiting
- Mentoring
- Hiring and firing
- Supervising employees
- Purchasing
- Accounting

# Which was I trained for?

- Do good research **Yes**
- Publish **Implicitly**
- Publicize your work and your self **No**
- Politicking **No**
- Grant writing **Some implicit**
- Teaching **No**
- Recruiting **No**
- Mentoring **Implicitly**
- Hiring and firing **No**
- Supervising employees **No**
- Purchasing **No**
- Accounting **No**

# How to learn all these new tasks?

Pay attention to them starting now. I will be happy to talk about these when asked, but I rarely get asked.

- Ask your PD advisor if you can help make decisions, or at least observe their decisions.
- Talk to friends and colleagues about how they have done these.
- Help hire. Help supervise employees.
- Take responsibilities if you can find a way to do it.

What you should be most concerned  
about

TIME

MONEY

# TIME

I emphasize time over money because it takes time to do what you need to do to get money.

Doing good research takes time.

Seeking out funding takes lots of time.

You must do all your new jobs.

You must do all of your new jobs **every year**.

You do not have a choice.

Many of them you have to learn, as well as do.

You already don't have enough time to do your current big jobs.

You will be swamped.

You are not different from the 99% of us who have a hard time starting a research I position.

Maybe the most important job is finding a way to not be overwhelmed.

You need a plan.

# The time plan

Manage the time spent on non-essentials to maximize the time for research and grants.

Easy to say, but hard to do.

# Managing necessary time sinks

## Teaching:

- Plan on the first time taking a lot of time.
- Shoot for pretty good, not for brilliant.
- Decide on rules and procedures for running your class ahead of time, write those down for the students and stick to them.
- Use materials prepared by friends and colleagues whenever possible.

## Service:

- Do some.
- Be cooperative with your colleagues, but let others take on the heavy lifting unless you are forced into it.
- Use your junior status to resist bigger service commitments.

# Good uses of your time you may not have thought about

Staff can make your life much easier – or harder.

- Get to know the staff.
- Find out who is useful, and who is incompetent.
- Get competent staff to do anything you can.
- Be very nice to them all. Let them know you really appreciate their efforts.

Help your department look good.

- Very effective way to establish a good reputation is to make time for opportunities to impress your colleagues, such as faculty evaluations, internal seminars, etc.
- Take opportunities to impress higher ups with your accomplishments.

# MONEY

Funding is currently VERY hard to get.

There are considerable uncertainties about future funding opportunities – it could stay really bad, or it could improve somewhat. It is unlikely to ever become easy to get funding.

It may become routine to reach a tenure decision without having a major grant. What will institutions do then?

PROBABLY they will still support faculty who can do good research on a small amount of money.

# The money plan

- Get as much start up funding as possible.
- Try to make spending it as flexible as possible.
- Always seek funding.
- Let others know that you always seek funding.
- Develop more than one fundable research idea.
- Get as much advice on your grants as you can:
  - Have grant-savvy colleagues read your grants well before submission!
  - Read grants by successful colleagues.

# Establishing your lab starts now

Before you interview for jobs:

- Publish your dissertation and your post-doc work NOW.
- Plan fundable projects for the future.
  - Get preliminary data for those projects whenever possible.
- Plan and save bridge projects, short-term, low investment projects that you do NOT start during your post-doc.
- Think about what you will need to start up your lab. Keep a list starting way before you ever interview for a job. Have at least a tentative, large \$ figure for start up in mind when you go to an interview.

# Establishing your lab as you negotiate with your employer

When you negotiate your starting package:

- Negotiate for a later start date in order to publish your dissertation and your post-doc work if you still need to do that.
- Negotiate for the best start-up package that you can.
  - Have an extensive and well-justified list of items you can say you need. The secret of this is that you don't need to really need this stuff, you need to be able to make the case that you need it.
  - Whenever possible get money to spend on labor: Graduate support, technicians, post-docs.

# Establishing your lab before arriving on campus

Between getting hired and moving:

- Publish your dissertation and your post-doc work NOW. If you do it after arriving on campus, you are wasting time.
- The pressure is off for the moment, so take the time to learn all the aspects of success that you don't know enough about. Ask your PD advisor if you can help or just observe decisions get made.
- Help hire. Help supervise employees. Take responsibilities if you can find a way to do it.
- Start preparing courses, if you can bear it.

# People

You need them, because who else is going to do all the work you don't have time to do anymore?

Ideal: they are multipliers of your efforts

Reality: they are often nearer to neutral with respect to your time. You need to train, supervise, hold hands with, redirect, retrain and support them. Takes time.

Worst case: they may be non-productive, despite your efforts, taking both your time and your money and giving little in return.

# Hiring

The most important thing you will do is hire people.

Take lots of time.

Get recommendations, preferably from a face-to-face or phone conversation. Ask specific questions.

Where did Joe rank in your class?

Who actually designed the experiments you published with  
Fiona?

What was Sarah's role in writing the papers?

Even the best executed hires can go badly, so leave your self a  
planned out, like probationary periods

# Post-doc, grad student or technician?

- Post-doc \$45000 (Tallahassee prices)
  - Has very similar interests to yours – publish.
  - Has own ideas – maybe good, maybe not so good.
  - Most expensive, so highest risk, highest payoff
- Grad student \$30000
  - At best can do your research.
  - Typically works only part-time for you
  - Heavy time investment extending over years before results can be expected.
- Technician \$30000-\$50000.
  - Works at your direction, full time.
  - Skill levels, work ethic (and so salary) vary a lot, so be careful.
  - Maybe best choice on balance as a starting Assistant Professor.

# Supervising your people

Gotta do it. Takes time, but people are not fire-and-forget.

Challenge with a range of tasks right off. You don't want to find out after two years that someone cannot write to save their life.

Collaborate with your people to write down specific tasks and expectations. They are more invested if they help develop the goals and expectations.

Keep checking that they are still on that path. Redirect often.

Give feedback early and often. Give your people lots of chances to improve, and help in making the attempt.

Balance your hovering with respect and sympathy. Never insult or belittle the person. Be open to the possibility that you have made mistakes too.

# When do you fire someone?

Working out when to give up on someone is the hardest task, and there is no formula. Some of my best techs, post-docs and grad students started R-E-A-L S-L-O-W. Some of my worst seemed wonderful the first few months.

This is really hard, but remember . . .

- You are not their friends, you are the boss. Your career is at risk, as well as theirs.
- You cannot save everyone. There are many others out there, waiting for their chance.

On the other hand if, say, all your graduate students are failing, the problem is you, not them.

# Repeat after me . . .

My people are not me.

My people are not necessarily similar to me.

I cannot assume that they will do what I would do.

I cannot assume that they would be capable of doing what I do,  
even if they wanted to do what I do.

In other words, you, having gotten a research faculty position,  
are probably more talented, more motivated, and better  
educated than say . . .

99% of all undergraduates

95% of all graduate students

75% of all post-doctoral fellows

# I was an arrogant fool! Don't you be

I was too proud, and too convinced of my own path to let others help me. This was a mistake. I made the first two times I got tenure harder than they had to be.

## GET HELP

If someone offers to help you, say yes.

If you are floundering or overwhelmed, ask for advice from colleagues you respect, and take it.

If someone can save you time, cultivate them.