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So You Landed a Job – What’s Next?
Advice for Early Career Psychologists
from Early Career Psychologists

Edited by: Jared Keeley, Stephanie E. Afful, Jennifer J. Stiegler-Balfour, Jessica J. Good, & Sadie Leder
Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction: A Field Guide to This Book

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So you landed a job—what’s next? The question that starts the title of this book is a daunting one. Up until this point in your professional career, you have always been guided by others: an advisor, your major professor, a director of training, a mentor, etc. You have likely had an increasing degree of independence, but now you are starting off on your own like a baby bird jumping from its nest. Not to go too far with the metaphor, but your first academic position likely elicits similar emotions to the bird’s first flight—a blend of exhilaration and fear as you stare at the ground rushing towards you. Will you crash? The bird has eons of genetic instinct preparing it for that moment, and you have the training of the past several years (or for some of us, more than several). However, not all things you will encounter in your first few years will have been directly addressed by your previous training. In fact, academic jobs are one of the few career areas where your training likely only focused on a narrow band of the activities you will now be expected to do. There will be many new challenges that you might not know how to face. The purpose of this book is to provide some practical advice for issues faced by early career psychologists offered by those who have just gone through the process themselves.

First, we should offer a few words about what this book is not. It is intended as a guide for early career psychologists (ECPs)—those within their first seven years of completing their degree or starting an academic position. While individuals at different stages in their career certainly have their own trials and tribulations, the ECP’s challenges have their own flavor. The individual is transitioning from student roles to professional roles and adjusting to a degree of autonomy not previously experienced. At the same time, the person is having to recognize the boundaries of his or her new position and how to interact as a junior colleague with more senior faculty. At this point, many individuals are starting families and so they must learn to balance their professional and home lives. The person is also taking on new tasks, like service work or advising, that he or she likely had not experienced prior to starting this job. Many people have incurred sizable debt during their graduate studies and may not be prepared for managing their new financial challenges (APA CPWAR, 2007). We believe that these and other issues warrant special attention for new faculty.

Additionally, as you might have assumed by now, this book is directed at individuals starting academic positions, such as adjunct, visiting, lecturer or tenure track positions. Many psychologists start their careers in positions outside of academia, and face their own issues. We refer those individuals to Foran-Tuller et al. (2012) and Burney et al. (2009) as a starting place.
This book provides an overview of topics selected by ECP members of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP; APA Division 2) as areas where they most needed advice. In our capacity as the Early Career Psychologist Council of STP, we conducted a survey of early career members of STP in 2011, in part to identify the needs of this particular group. In our nationwide survey of ECPs, 67.1% of respondents indicated that balancing teaching and research was one of their top three concerns, 48.3% of respondents indicated that fulfilling tenure requirements was one of their top three, and 45.9% indicated that balancing work and family was a top concern. The following chapters address the topics that you—early career academic psychologists—identified as challenges or areas where you would like some words of wisdom.

The book begins, fittingly enough, with advice on how to prepare for your first year. Chapter 2 provides a step by step guide to organizing and planning for all of those initial tasks that will happen as you start an academic job. It includes some practical guidelines for decisions you will have to make that you might not have anticipated (e.g., when textbook commitments are due for your bookstore) as well as advice regarding which tasks to prioritize in those precious summer months before you start. The following chapters then go into more detail about each of the areas of your new job.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on teaching related issues. It is beyond the scope of this work to fully outline all the best principles of how to teach at the collegiate level. For in depth advice about teaching in general, we refer you to the iconic *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips* (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2010) as well as more general volumes by Buskist and Benassi (2012), Groccia, Alsudairi, and Buskist (2012), and Gurung and Schwartz (2009). Chapter 3 addresses how to best jump-start your professional growth as a teacher through gathering effective feedback from your students and peers. Likely, you have had some experience teaching before your current position, but no matter what your current skills, you can benefit from improving. This chapter will give you concrete suggestions for how to gather the best data on your teaching, and how to interpret that data to improve your service to your students. Chapter 4 highlights an area that is new for many ECPs: advising. Most ECPs have little experience with advising beyond the advising they received as a student. You might have overseen a research assistant or two, but likely you were never formally trained in any managerial practices. This chapter includes a few words about advising basics, like preparing students for graduate school or managing student “life crises,” but then goes into detail about how to manage research assistants in a productive fashion.

The next two chapters focus on developing your research. Starting resources vary dramatically across institutions, so Chapter 5 starts with some guidance on how to set up your lab in a cost-effective manner. It also provides additional advice about how to structure your lab and coordinate the efforts of both graduate and undergraduate students. Chapter 6 discusses the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the role that you as a psychology teacher can play in
that fruitful and emerging field. One of the simplest ways to balance your research and teaching efforts is to integrate them by researching your teaching. This approach offers the dual benefits of improving your teaching through empirical means while simultaneously bolstering your research portfolio. Chapter 6 provides a strong rationale for why all psychologists might choose to participate in the scholarship of teaching and learning and then provides concrete examples of how you might do that at your current institution.

One of the dangers of transitioning to a full-time academic position is isolation. Thus, the book next offers advice about how to network, both within your home institution and in the field in general. Finding successful mentoring relationships is one of the best predictors of success for early career faculty (Green & Hawley, 2009). Chapters 7 and 8 discuss strategies for building relationships that can benefit you while navigating the minefield of academic politics. Chapter 7 focuses on networking within your own institution, including departmental colleagues and upper level administrators. It offers some concrete ways to establish relationships and defines the benefits you can expect to reap. Chapter 8 turns the discussion of networking outside of the university to colleagues at other places and even in other fields. Networking can occur at conferences, online through listservs, or even social events. However, as this chapter points out, sometimes the interaction can be awkward, especially for ECPs, and so offers some tips on how to grease the social gears.

The crux of the book comes in Chapters 9, 10, and 11. The overwhelming top concern of academic ECPs in our survey regarded balancing the demands of the job, both within itself across the realms of teaching, research, and service and between the job and life outside. Chapter 9 begins by addressing how to balance the demands between teaching, research, and service. The most important thing the chapter stresses is that each individual and each institution will favor different balances of these three activities; finding the right balance for you and your interaction with your school is the key to success. However, recognizing the optimal balance and creating it are two different things, so Chapter 9 offers some specific advice about how to craft your daily activities to best meet your ideal goals. Achieving happiness and balance at work is wonderful, but if that is not also balanced with family, friends, and life outside the university, everything will eventually suffer. Thus, Chapter 10 addresses how to achieve balance between work and the rest of your life. Again the theme of finding ways to integrate these “competing” demands dissolves the illusion that they are competing and serves to increase your overall well-being. Finally, Chapter 11 ties together the points of the preceding chapters by highlighting the goal of achieving tenure. Beginning early and being aware of the criteria at your particular institution are key to succeeding in the process. The good news is that by finding the right balance as described above, you will be automatically heading in the right direction for tenure. Chapter 11 closes by describing how to best document all of your activities to optimize your chances of success.

However, achieving tenure is not the end, but rather the beginning. It is all too easy for early career faculty to forget that tenure is a milestone along the way. Rather, the goal should be to become a “middle” and “late” career psychologist as well. How then do you avoid burning
yourself out in the intense first years of your career? Chapter 12 is advice for maintaining your vitality across your career offered by one of the field’s most vivacious psychologists.

The book closes with some realistic expectations for your first few years. In the whirlwind of keeping up with all of your responsibilities, it is useful to occasionally step back and reflect upon what you have accomplished. By virtue of being where you are now, you are likely an overachiever. In order to stay productive (and keep your sanity), it will benefit you to set some realistic goals for what you can and cannot accomplish. No one can do everything. However, establishing realistic expectations will keep you motivated and on track. The final chapter concludes with some final words of advice from each of the editors.

We hope that the advice offered in this book is useful to you as you embark upon the first few years of your career. The life of an early career academic psychologist can be full of stress and hard work. However, it can also be one of the most satisfying vocations available. We wish you the best of luck on your flight, young bird, and know that you are not alone.

**References**


When I received a tenure-track job offer from my top choice school, I was ecstatic. Without much thought to his opinion on the matter, I immediately texted my husband and wrote, “We are moving to North Carolina!” Being on the academic job market was an exhausting and sometimes demoralizing experience, and I was utterly relieved to have made it through to the other side. Even if individuals have accepted an offer for a temporary position or from an institution other than their top choice, they likely still feel relieved to have some sense of job security and a respite from “being on the market.” In my case, a few days after accepting the position, my elation was replaced with a growing anxiety. Would I be able to “cut it” in my new position? Would the students like me? Would I be able to keep up with publication expectations? How long would I be able to continue convincing my new colleagues that I really was as smart and capable as they seemed to think? What would happen if I failed to perform well as a faculty member? I thought about my family and friends, who had supported me throughout my graduate education, my graduate advisors who had given their time and efforts to help me succeed, and even my students-to-be who would count on me to provide worthwhile experiences of intellectual development. Realizing I was perhaps blowing my concerns out of proportion, and recognizing the classic imposter phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978), I decided to determine how to prepare for my first year so that I could reduce some of the mounting anxiety and prevent myself from being a true imposter.

A Google search for terms like “prepare for first academic job” yielded me very little; the search results page was bursting with sources offering advice on how to land a job, but I found little on how to prepare for the job I had already landed. One notable exception was a helpful article on the differences between graduate student life and assistant professor life (Schwarz, Thatcher, & Grover, 2008). Schwarz and colleagues highlighted five salient differences between the two phases of academic life, including unclear goals and milestones as an assistant professor compared to a graduate student, many more competing demands for attention, a strong pressure to produce (whether through publication or stellar teaching evaluations), and a need to be both self-motivated and politically astute when making career choices. The authors identified helpful strategies for maintaining productivity and managing time effectively, as well as suggested actions graduate students could take to better prepare themselves for a faculty position. While certainly informative, the article still left me wondering what I should do in the few months before my faculty position began to set myself up for success in that role. The purpose of this chapter therefore, is to provide concrete suggestions, based on personal experiences and discussions with other early career faculty, for individuals preparing for their first faculty position.
To put my reflections in context, as I write this chapter I have recently completed my first year as an assistant professor at a small liberal arts college where excellent teaching is heavily emphasized, and excellent research is a close second. Every situation is different and I do not pretend to have the preparation process entirely figured out, but in this chapter I will reflect upon my experiences in the hope of providing some measure of guidance for those who are starting their first academic jobs. The remaining chapters in this book will address the challenges, joys, and best strategies associated with being an early career academic; since I have only been a professor for a short time, I leave those matters to my fellow authors. Instead, I will address how to get the most out of the time period between signing your job offer letter and walking into your first day of class.

The Summer Before

Some new faculty may receive their job offer letter in mid-winter, while others not until early to late spring. Whenever your “summer” starts, be sure to take advantage of it. My suggestion is to use the time before your official start date as an professor to try to accomplish 5 goals: 1) finish your dissertation, 2) develop your courses, 3) map out your research program, 4) establish collaborative relationships, and 5) get to know your new institution. Below, I try to provide some helpful advice on how to accomplish those goals.

Finishing Your Dissertation

If you are still completing your last year of graduate school when you receive your job offer, the first thing you need to do is defend your dissertation. I cannot stress this enough; get that defense out of the way as soon as possible. Once you begin the process of moving to a new town (as most of us do for an academic job), and transitioning into your new life, you will not only have little time to work on your dissertation, but you will also be somewhat divorced from the research resources and support system to which you had grown accustomed in graduate school. Also, if you were hired while ABD, you should recognize that your new colleagues and administrators took a chance by extending the job offer, believing that you had the potential to finish the Ph.D. prior to beginning your new position. Showing your new colleagues that you can, in fact, finish your dissertation should make them feel more confident about their decision to hire you. If for some reason you cannot defend prior to relocating for your new position, try to do all of the tasks that require your physical presence (e.g., data collection, use of particular equipment or software) prior to relocating so that you can minimize the time spent traveling back and forth between your new institution and your graduate institution. Not only will that travel be time consuming, but also disruptive in terms of your ability to acclimate to your new living and working situation.

If you have been out of graduate school for a while and defended your dissertation years ago, is it published yet? Take the time to make any modifications suggested by your committee members, or to edit the full paper down to a publication-length manuscript. If your data were confusing or suggested additional questions, consider using the summer to conduct a quick follow-up study to clarify your findings and make them more suitable for publication. However, during this time “in-between” institutions, it may be particularly difficult to begin collecting
data for a new research study, as you may not yet have access to funding or a participant population. If this is the case, use the time to develop a detailed research plan for what you will need to accomplish in order to publish your dissertation. In my case, I needed to conduct a follow-up study, so I used the summer to create materials and develop my “plan of attack” for accomplishing that data collection once I started my new position. Related to publishing your dissertation, consider whether there are upcoming conferences at which you might present your dissertation data. Often the submission deadlines are several months in advance of the conference, so plan out where you will want to travel over the ensuing year and begin preparing those submissions.

Developing Courses
Once the defense is behind you, it is time to start looking forward and preparing for your new position. Although you will be inundated with personal life chaos (e.g., finding a place to live, finding a job for your spouse/partner, enrolling your kids in a new school), treat this in-between time as a “pre-job.” Commit substantial portions of each day to putting yourself in the best position possible on the first day of classes. If you have taught before and are fortunate enough to be teaching some of the same courses again, brush off your notes from the last time you taught the course and work on any revisions that are necessary. Consider your new students, facilities, and institutional culture. Will your new students be at a similar level of preparedness as the students you previously taught? Will they arrive in your class with any previous knowledge of psychology? Will you be working with a different class size? Are you considering a new textbook? Will your new classrooms have the same technology to which you have become accustomed? Is the teaching philosophy of your new institution different than other places where you have previously taught? Do not make the mistake of thinking that just because you taught a particular course several times before, you can pull out the materials at the last minute and successfully teach it exactly the same way in an entirely new setting. Consult with your new colleagues about how they structure their courses, what the overall learning goals are for the department and for the institution at large, and any challenges they routinely experience. Some departments have specific requirements as to which textbooks are used for certain classes, particularly if multiple sections are offered. Some schools more strongly emphasize writing, or experiential learning, or service learning; use this time to find out all that you can about the institution’s teaching expectations and your upcoming teaching experiences, so that you can minimize the number of surprises you receive in the first few weeks of the semester.

If you have new courses to prepare, now is a good time to do it. Have pity on your Fall-semester-self and spend time over the summer developing your new syllabi, gathering readings, creating lecture materials, planning exercises and activities, developing assignments and rubrics, etc. Come Fall semester, you will be amazed at how few hours there actually are in a day, so it is best to utilize the ones you have free now. Some new faculty have a clear idea of what courses they will be teaching, how they want to structure them, and what students expect from their teaching. If you are in that position, then all you may need to do is to set aside time to accomplish the work you have laid out. If you are unsure about any of those aspects mentioned above however, begin asking questions. Find out which courses you will be teaching
during your first year and whether you will likely repeat those courses during your second year or be asked to prepare new courses. Ask your new colleagues to share their syllabi with you, and talk to them about how they generally structure their courses. If possible, talk to some students to find out what they expect from the classroom experience, and what they value most in a class. For example, you might reflect on interactions with students that took place during your job interview, or you might ask colleagues for the names of a few senior psychology majors and send them an e-mail with questions about what they value and expect in their psychology classes. Look for resources on the web (see http://teachpsych.org for tools like Project Syllabus, OTRP, and ToPIX) to prevent you from wasting time reinventing the wheel. Understand that you will immensely underestimate the time it takes to prepare your new courses, so do not wait until August to begin. The summer before my first year, I spent an enormous amount of time preparing to teach a new social psychology research methods course and it really paid off. I felt much more confident in the classroom and was able to manage my out-of-class time much more efficiently in the Fall than in the Spring semester (when I had not spent nearly enough time over Winter Break preparing for those new courses).

Mapping Your Research Program
Of course, academic life is not just about teaching. Depending on your institution, you may get a bit of a pass the first year in terms of your research productivity, or you may be expected to hit the ground running with several publications in that first year. Regardless, you will be in a better position if you use the summer to analyze data, write, and submit manuscripts. If you can send a project or two into “the pipeline,” you will have more flexibility during those first few months of your new position, and you will hopefully feel less stress regarding your research progress. Use this time to re-focus on any unfinished projects. Dust off those data sitting on your shelf that are in need of analysis, or drafts in need of revision, and submit them.

If you are beginning a position at a teaching-intensive institution, you will have amazingly little time or energy to write during your first year. Some individuals tend to prefer a more scheduled approach to writing and perhaps designate one day each week (or weekend) to writing or research-related work. During my first year I quickly learned that I needed to allow flexibility in my research schedule. Instead of having a rigid writing schedule, I would reflect upon my work at the end of each week. If I were unsatisfied with what I had accomplished, I would try to plan the following week in such a way as to allow more time for research-related work. Different strategies work for different people, but regardless of how you structure your research time, understand that the first year can be physically and emotionally overwhelming on occasion. Do not beat yourself up if you have to use your research time one week for grading, for meeting with a student, or even just for a nap. Instead, use the summer before you begin your job to set yourself up for success by sending as much work into the pipeline as you can. Remember that the publication process is a lengthy one, so if you want to have publications on your CV dated for your first year, you will likely need to submit them before that year even starts.

Establishing Collaborative Relationships
Related to writing, the summer is also a good time to work on setting up collaborative relationships with others. In transitioning from a graduate student or post-doctoral researcher
to a new faculty member, you will be leaving the familiarity of a graduate lab filled with people off whom you can bounce ideas, critique and edit your work, and generally stop you from making fatal research errors, and moving to an unfamiliar position where you must take the lead in setting up an independent research program. This transition can be a bit scary and at times it may feel like no one is there to catch you if you fall. However, that does not have to be the case. There are plenty of people you have met along the way (at conferences, workshops, classes, committees, etc.) or perhaps even worked with at some point in time, who would be happy to collaborate with you on one project or several. Contact those individuals and solidify your interest in working together in the coming years. Perhaps even plan a project to work on together during your first year. If you are joining a larger psychology department at your new institution, perhaps there are other department members with whom you can collaborate. At a smaller school, you might consider interdisciplinary collaborations with faculty in other departments. Collaborating across disciplines can be incredibly rewarding, but early career faculty should be mindful of the time needed to begin an entirely new line of research. Be selective in your collaborative agreements so that the relationship supports you in your first year rather than drawing you away from your other work. For example, do not overcommit to collaborating on too many new or disparate research projects that will compete for your time. Be wary of taking the lead role on all of your collaborative projects; take the lead on some but take a second author role on others to ease the amount of time or effort you will need to commit to those projects. Regardless of with whom you aim to collaborate, do not wait until the end of August to begin talking. Use the summer to start discussing with collaborators what project you could get off the ground right away.

Establishing collaborative relationships can benefit you greatly during the first year. First, it can provide the security of having someone else evaluate and critique your work. Second, if your collaborator is willing to do some heavy lifting on the project, it can lighten your load during that busy first year. Finally, if you are moving to an institution with less access to your desired participant population or particular equipment (e.g., a small liberal arts college), collaborating with someone at a different institution may provide you with easier access to participants and quicker data collection. Even if your institution has the participants and resources that you need, consider that it will take you a while to set up your lab and learn the ins and outs of conducting research at your new school. Working with someone else can help to lessen the learning curve. For faculty who will need to develop community relationships in order to further their research, the summer is an ideal time to begin contacting schools, daycares, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, or other community organizations. Developing successful partnerships with these organizations may be vital to your research agenda, so begin cultivating these relationships early.

**Getting to Know Your Institution**

Finally, as you prepare to take on your new role as an assistant professor, consider that you are joining an established group of faculty, staff, and students, and there may be somewhat of a cultural transition. Doing some homework can make that transition proceed more smoothly. For example, look up your institution’s mission statement or statement of values. What seems
to be most central to people who identify themselves as members of the college or university community? Once you have access, read the faculty handbook. Understanding which areas of your performance will be most valued and how you will be evaluated can considerably reduce your anxiety going into the first year. Additionally, in joining any team, it helps to smooth the transition if you know something about your other team members. Your departmental colleagues chose you through a formal search process and thus, have recently read your CV, statements of research and teaching philosophy, reprints, and any other materials you submitted. Although you likely met your colleagues during your campus interview, you may be less familiar with their professional work. Spending some time learning about their career accomplishments, their research areas, or their teaching philosophies may serve to ease your transition into the department. Not only will you have topics to talk about with them in initial conversations, but also you will know who to ask when you have questions about a particular issue or topic. Plus, as any social psychologist knows, we tend to like people who like us (Berscheid & Walster, 1978). New colleagues will appreciate that you have made an effort to get to know their backgrounds and interests.

**Issues I Wish I Had Anticipated**

Despite my best efforts at preparing myself to not be an imposter, and making sure that I was ready for my first year as an assistant professor, there were several unexpected challenges that I faced as a new faculty member. Below, I describe a few surprises that I personally experienced, as well as some surprises that other new faculty members have shared with me.

**Fall Semester Teaching**

One thing I failed to anticipate was the need to make decisions rather quickly after signing my offer letter, some of which involved long-term course planning. At the simplest level, I did not realize how early textbook decisions needed to be made, or how difficult it would be to make those decisions during this in-between stage. Depending on your institution, you may need to submit your Fall semester textbook requests as early as February or March. If you receive your offer letter in late spring, you will need to make those decisions quite quickly. Most of us have picked textbooks before and it is generally not that difficult. But remember that you will spend considerable time prepping a new course using this textbook and if you do not like it, you will waste time in your second year re-prepping because you have switched books. Think about the long-term time commitment and make a wise choice from the beginning. Additionally, during this in-between time, you will likely not have an e-mail address affiliated with your new institution. Requesting textbooks from your school’s local representative can be a bit time consuming, as they must verify your employment, possibly ship the book to campus (where you do not yet have a mailbox) rather than to your home address, etc. Start the textbook search as soon as you know what courses you will be teaching. Institutions and departments vary with regard to their textbook culture; some try to keep costs down by choosing paperback or e-books, others require all instructors of the same course (e.g., Introductory Psychology) to use the same textbook. The best strategy is to discuss textbook choice with your new colleagues prior to making any final decisions. Keep in mind however, that those discussions may need to happen very soon after accepting your new position.
Laboratory Start-Up
Negotiating laboratory start-up funding as part of a psychology faculty member’s initial compensation offer is quite common at some institutions, and unheard of at others. Sometimes availability of this research support is a function of whether the psychology department is housed within the Natural Sciences (more typically receive laboratory start-up) or the Social Sciences (less typically receive laboratory start-up). If you do not have start-up funding, then you will need to be creative in determining how to launch your research program, and potentially will need to apply for research funding right away in order to support your first few years. Many early career faculty without dedicated lab space have found success in sharing space with other colleagues, collecting data in public settings, using online data collection procedures, or collaborating with faculty at other institutions who do have access to laboratory space.

If you do have dedicated lab space and/or start-up funding at your new institution, you are likely breathing a little easier. Keep in mind however, that your institution may expect you to have a concrete long-term plan for utilizing those resources soon after receiving them. In my own experience, I was really excited about my new lab space, but failed to realize that I would need to make decisions about configuration, wiring, supplies, etc. very quickly. On many college campuses, construction is done over the summer to minimize disruption to students, faculty, and staff. You may be asked to make decisions about your lab space with regard to construction or wiring needs (building walls, adding built-in computer desks, wiring for audio/video recording and playback, soundproofing, capabilities for physiological equipment or animal facilities, etc.) before even stepping foot on campus. While the timeline certainly makes sense, I was caught off guard by the need to make long-term decisions about my research space after seeing it only briefly during my interview. From my experience, I suggest that you begin thinking about your long-term research needs early on. What type of lab space do you need? What type of resources do you need (e.g., hardware, software, furniture, security, observational tools)? What changes will need to be made to the current space to adapt it for your research program? From where will you draw your participant sample? Will you need funding to compensate participants or community partners, or is there already a culture of participation on campus (e.g., a participant pool)? In graduate school, many students look ahead toward getting a job. Now it is time to adjust your view and think about your research so far in advance, so my advice is to begin planning as soon as you can.

Financial Considerations
As a graduate student or post-doctoral researcher, you are likely accustomed to living on a tight budget. Upon accepting your new position, you may feel some relief that you will finally be earning a salary that will hopefully allow you to indulge in a few more luxuries, or at least allow you to pay down any debt you may have accrued. One thing new faculty may fail to realize however, is that the first paycheck may not be arriving for a while, and there are considerable expenses associated with a new job that will need to be paid before the official employment start-date. In my case, I did not anticipate that my new employer would pay on a monthly,
rather than a biweekly schedule, and that I therefore would not receive my first paycheck until September. Prior to that paycheck, I needed to make considerable investments in my new life as an assistant professor. For example, if you are relocating, you will need to cover any moving expenses and housing costs prior to beginning your new position. Some institutions offer assistance with moving expenses or provide subsidized housing for new faculty, but others do not. Consider what possessions you have and whether you can move yourself or will need to hire a moving service. Depending on the distance you are moving, the extent of your belongings that will be moved, and the type of moving service (e.g., self-moved vs. full service), out-of-state moving costs can range from about $2,000 to $8,000 (Lewis, n.d.). You may also need to put down a security deposit on a new apartment or house before receiving your first paycheck. Additionally, if your graduate school or post-doctorate position afforded you the ability to dress casually, you may need to invest in a professional wardrobe for your new faculty position. Institutions vary with respect to how formally faculty dress, but it is wise to consider the cost of new clothing as an up-front expense prior to earning your first paycheck.

**Final Advice**

Although challenging and even overwhelming at times, the first year as a professor is an incredibly rewarding experience. Best of all, there is plenty of support along the way to help you succeed, whether from your department, institution, divisional colleagues, early career faculty committees, etc. When you officially start your new job, you may be assigned a faculty mentor. If the relationship is a good fit, this individual can be a great resource for you. A faculty mentor who is not a member of your department can be a particularly helpful resource because you can ask questions that you may be hesitant to ask of those faculty on your tenure committee. Regardless of who your official mentor might be, do not be afraid to seek out additional mentors, possibly even before you have started your new position. If you have a question, ask someone. Otherwise you will waste a lot of time trying to find the answer and perhaps arrive at an incorrect one. Generally, I can be a bit shy about asking questions because I do not want to seem ignorant. However, it is better to seem ignorant than to actually be ignorant, so if you do not know something and cannot figure it out, ask. Who should you ask? Consider contacting members of your new department. Not only will you likely find out the answer, but you will also begin forming collegial relationships with your colleagues. Asking a question is a great way to begin a conversation with the people you will (hopefully) be working with for the next thirty years. If you can, set up a meeting with the chair of your department before the semester begins to talk about what expectations she or he has for your teaching, research, and service activities during the first year. While those expectations might be somewhat vague, it still opens up a dialogue about your performance and provides a relationship in which you can seek guidance and feedback. Another suggestion I have heard from other new faculty is to request a copy of the end-of-semester course evaluations. Knowing how students will be asked to evaluate your performance can help you to understand what aspects of your performance the institution most values.

Also consider contacting your cohort of incoming assistant professors. You may not know their names until you take part in a new employee orientation, but once you do, reach out to them.
Your cohort can be a great source of support as you all go through the same new experiences together. Making friends in other departments will also allow you to learn about the institution more broadly, rather than just seeing it through the eyes of your department members. Although you may feel like you do not have any time to spare, set aside time to have lunch, dinner, or drinks with members of your department, as well as other faculty on campus who may have similar research interests, a similar life situation, etc. This early investment in workplace relationships will pay dividends in the future. In my own experience, after developing some friendships both in and outside of my department, I felt much less alone in my new position and more like a part of the team. You can also look beyond your institution for support. For example, ask questions of members of your graduate school cohort who are at different institutions. Comparing different experiences can shed some light on your own situation. If you are concerned about the culture of academia in general or your institution in particular, perhaps because you are a woman, a person of color, a member of the LGBT community, a person with a disability, etc., use the summer to seek out a mentor, either at your new institution or in the psychological community at large. Remember that others have come before you and they can prevent you from having to figure everything out yourself.

Overall, do not be afraid of the first year; it will simultaneously be overwhelming and gratifying. If you take the time to prepare for the first year and set yourself up for success, the scales will tip a bit more heavily in the gratifying direction and less heavily in the overwhelming direction. Plus, the first year will fly by faster than you know it. Reflecting back after the close of the Spring semester, you will realize that you are in fact the teacher, researcher, and colleague you presented yourself as during your interview, and those imposter beliefs will be long gone.

References


Footnote

1 The imposter phenomenon is generally defined as feeling that one is not really as smart/skilled/talented as others think, or that one has fooled others into believing that he or she is smarter/more skilled/more talented than he or she is in reality. The imposter phenomenon was identified by Clance and Imes (1978) as particularly prevalent among high achieving women.
Chapter 3

Maximize Student- and Peer Evaluations: Leveraging Feedback to Become a More Effective Teacher and Improve Student Learning

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Teaching offers great potential for growth and satisfaction. However, this does not happen automatically but rather requires enthusiasm for one’s subject of expertise, commitment to teaching and an outgoing personality (e.g., Fisher & Kent, 1998). Although the act of teaching may come easier to some than others, learning new skills and applying new approaches in the classroom are universal requisites for success. An important component for ensuring professional growth is to carefully examine the comments and recommendations garnered through the student and peer evaluation processes.

Performance evaluations can be challenging to process because no matter how constructive, criticism is often difficult to accept and internalize. Gathering feedback about courses, however, is imperative as doing so provides instructors with one measure of their effectiveness in the classroom. Collecting student feedback about course material is becoming increasingly more popular at almost all universities and colleges (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). When combined with peer evaluations, instructors have a tremendous amount of information at their disposal with which to improve their teaching skills and student learning.

Both student- and peer-evaluations are collected for two reasons: to help provide feedback for improving instructional methods in a particular course and to make decisions about overall performance, promotion and tenure. Because course evaluations are used to make decisions about retention or tenure, there is significant pressure on instructors to secure high marks and positive feedback from their students. As a result, most early career academics experience considerable anxiety when it comes to being evaluated by either their students or fellow faculty (Morton, Vesco, Williams, & Awender, 1997). The objective of this chapter is to review how student- and peer-generated evaluations can be gathered, analyzed, and interpreted to gain insight into strengths and weaknesses of one’s teaching. Further, it will provide the reader with an outline of how the obtained feedback can be used to reconsider teaching practices and develop a plan for self-improvement.

Using Student Evaluation Results to Self-assess and Improve Teaching

Course ratings are usually collected, analyzed, and reported to individual faculty, department chairs, university administrators and sometimes students and the general public can access summaries of course ratings as well (Benassi & Seidel, 2006). Course evaluations are typically completed anonymously by the students at the end of a course, which provides students a measure of candor that may not exist early in the courses. Ideally, the course evaluations
provide the instructor with information about what teaching methods students believe they excelled at as well as valuable feedback on how they can improve the course. It is important to note that in order to use this type of feedback to foster professional growth, the instructor must take full advantage of the opportunity to learn from the gathered feedback and implement changes (either to their teaching style or course curriculum) based on the evaluation commentary.

One of the most obvious barriers to effective course evaluations is that most institutions use standardized evaluations across all disciplines and in a variety of types of classes. This approach can result in some of the questions being irrelevant for a particular course or worded in such a way as to limit the opportunity for improvement. Not only is this a missed opportunity to gather invaluable feedback, but also standardized language can often disengage students who, as a result, will complete the form as quickly as possible. Research has shown that when students do not take the evaluations seriously, there is virtually no merit in the responses because they provide few, if any, valuable comments that can be used by the instructor to improve the course (Beyers, 2008). It is thus important to provide students with questions that are specific to the course so they have a voice in how the instructor’s teaching affected their learning (Weimer, 2010).

Another barrier to utilizing teaching evaluations to improve teaching effectiveness is that just as students may blame the instructor for their lack of performance, instructors occasionally blame students for not comprehending course material. Sadly, the value of student evaluations has been put into question by some faculty claiming that students use ratings to gain a measure of revenge with teachers, although this has yet to be verified in research as a serious problem. For example, Boysen (2008) showed that overall, revenge seemed to play a less important role in predicting evaluation outcomes compared to other factors such as poor teaching style, disrespectfulness, and poor communication skills. In fact, only 8% of students admitted on a survey that they gave an instructor poor course evaluations due to low grades (Boysen, 2008). Still, some teachers question whether students are even capable of passing judgment on the quality of a learning environment. A large body of research, however, has shown that students are indeed capable of judging the intrinsic value of a course as well as their instructor’s performance. For example, when instructors were teaching more than one section or course, students’ ratings correlated highly with the instructor’s own judgments of the classes they believed were taught most effectively (Doyle & Crichton, 1978; Fisher & Kent, 1998). Research also suggests that increased student learning is associated with higher ratings on course evaluations (Centra, 1977; Cohen, 1981). Taken together, these research studies show that students are capable of being good judges of whether they have been provided with an environment that facilitated learning.

Sometimes it can be difficult to receive harsh comments from students, especially because most early career professionals work very hard to provide students with a quality education. It is important to remember that most new teachers receive some negative feedback but that does not necessarily equate to being a sub-par instructor. The experience is analogous to submitting a manuscript to a journal and receiving a rejection. Initially, it is natural to feel
defensive; however, once the ill feelings fade, taking a critical look at the comments typically reveals valid recommendations which will significantly improve the quality of the paper. The same could be true about student course evaluations. Thus, it is important to avoid defensive responses such as “Students didn’t like the course because I set high standards.” This type of statement is unproductive and invalid as several studies have shown that students prefer challenging classes to easy classes but if the course is challenging to the extent that success is unattainable they are less satisfied with the course and the instructor (Centra, 2003; Marsh, 2001).

Comments such as “Students rate professors based on their personality not their competence” are at least partially incorrect as well. Though research has shown that students typically prefer a professor who has a warm and enthusiastic personality as opposed to someone who is reserved and distant, these personality characteristics are also related to student learning, which explains why students value them highly (Hermann & Foster, 2008). Similarly, Gurung and Vespi (2007) found that students reported that they had learned more, achieved higher grades, and liked the class better when an instructor was rated as likeable, good-looking, well dressed, and approachable. This does not mean that instructors must alter their personality, but someone who is introverted will likely have to make a more concerted effort to be more outgoing in the classroom. For instance, providing students with examples that are more relatable will likely increase the chances they will retain the information. Research has also shown that instructors who use examples, which reveal personal information, are typically perceived as more likeable and approachable (Hermann & Foster, 2008).

Lastly, one common excuse for negative course feedback is that “Students might not value what I did for them now, but they will in a few years” (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). Let’s face it, we all wish that some of the students that give us negative feedback on the course evaluations (and there are always a few) will eventually appreciate their learning experience. Unfortunately this does not seem to be the case most of the time. Dreucker and Remmers (1951) found that alumni ratings of faculty members correlate highly with those given 10 years earlier, which shows that delayed appreciation is the exception rather than the rule.

Using Student Evaluations to Improve Teaching

Because student evaluations are often used to make decisions about retention, tenure, and promotion, teachers often are required to use the standard form for the end-of-the semester course evaluations so administrators can more easily compare teachers across disciplines, different contexts, and in a variety of courses. The problem with this approach is that many of the course evaluation forms provided by universities are designed to fit a broad range of courses and are not tailored to a specific course. One way to circumnavigate this obstacle is to ask students for feedback on a specific aspect of the course or teaching style. Most online and hard copy course evaluation forms allow students to write general comments at the end. Instead of letting students write whatever they want in these boxes, instructors may decide to pose an open-ended question to their class using the comment box on the standard evaluation form, which will help them obtain more constructive feedback than perhaps through the
standard numeric questions. Alternatively, instructors may provide students with a separate course evaluation to complete in addition to the one required by the university. For example, students could be asked to make specific suggestions for improvement or what could have been done differently to facilitate students’ learning. Open-ended questions such as these provide instructors with specific feedback that they can use to improve the course material and also ensures that students do not blindly check boxes. Last, it is important to consider the amount of time it will take students to provide additional feedback. If the form is already long and time-consuming it might be difficult to ask students to take even more time to provide qualitative feedback.

**Obtaining Mid-term Evaluations Before It’s Too Late**

One of the shortcomings associated with student evaluations is that because they occur at the end of the semester, students are unable to benefit from the vital feedback they are providing. Thus, it might be more effective for new instructors to collect formative feedback earlier in the semester. Formative feedback is information that is gathered through formal or informal evaluations and is intended to modify an instructor’s thinking or behavior to improve students’ learning (Shute, 2008). Gathering feedback earlier in the semester, for example, can elicit the specific comments and constructive criticism required to improve students’ understanding of the course material and positively impact their performance (Davis, 2009). A considerable amount of research has shown that gathering feedback on an ongoing basis throughout the semester provides instructors with the necessary information to improve teaching methods, strengthen student learning, enhance student motivation, and positively alter student attitudes toward the instructor (e.g., Hamilton, Pritchard, Welsh, Potter, & Saccucci, 2002; Hampton and Reiser, 2004, Marincovich, 1999; Svinicki, 2001). Just like students’ performance is improved through frequent assessment feedback from instructors on assignments (e.g., Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2001; Karpicke & Blunt, 2001), formative feedback from students will also help instructors improve their teaching methods. Formative feedback is also more likely to improve learning because it reaffirms students’ input and affirms that students are central players in the process from which they benefit directly (Weimer, 2010).

There are many ways to elicit meaningful feedback early in the semester. It might be advisable to use a variety of techniques during the semester to figure out which approaches fit best with individual teaching styles and philosophies, and which methods work better in particular classes (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Davis, 2009). Davis (2009) suggests instructors must first decide what kind of feedback to gather by focusing mostly on items that can actually be changed within the frame of the semester (e.g., pace of the lecture, deadlines for course assignments or level of difficulty of the material). Thus, it is imperative that feedback is gathered early enough in the semester (as early as 3-4 weeks into the semester) to make sure there is sufficient time to implement any changes or improvement. Obtaining feedback early on will also allow instructors to assess how they are doing in the classroom while they are creating a lot of the course material. Using this approach will save an instructor from having to re-design the entire course based on end-of-the-semester evaluations once they have already invested a significant amount of time into the course preparation. Teachers should also be mindful of the timing of
the formative evaluations. For example, if students are asked for feedback following their first exam, there is a very good chance the feedback will be devoted to students’ impressions of the exam and not the course. Last, encouragement to give thoughtful feedback is often all some students require to prompt them to provide more meaningful responses. This can be accomplished by providing students with specific questions (e.g., What could we be doing as a class to better facilitate your learning?) and perhaps providing them with responses you received in the past that were helpful. That is, give examples of how students’ comments from previous semesters led to changes in the current term. If students believe their instructor values their feedback, they will be more responsive and provide helpful clues. Svinicki (2001) recommended instructors encourage students to adhere to the following:

1) Give specific examples (e.g., “The teacher was nice when answering student questions during class” is more helpful than “The teacher cares about students’ progress.”).

2) Focus on observable behavior (e.g., “This teacher was not available to meet during office hours” is more helpful than “This teacher doesn’t care about students.”).

3) Describe the effect of the instructor’s behavior on learning (“When the teacher gives lots of examples in class it helps me understand the concepts.”).

4) State alternatives and preferences (e.g., “It would be helpful if you posted the lab report questions at least one week prior to the due date.”).

5) Provide both positive and negative feedback about the course.

To obtain the feedback, instructors have several different options of administration. To elicit students’ written opinion about the course, teachers might distribute index cards during the first or last ten minutes of class (recommended for classes in which there are fewer than 100 students). Davis (2009) proposed to instruct students to respond anonymously to two questions, one on the front of the card and the other on the back. Be sure to explain the purpose of the assignment, and that changes to the course will be considered based on student feedback. Questions might be as general as asking students to describe what is going well in the course and what needs to be improved or changed. Consider the following: “Any suggestions for improving the course?”, “What is helping you learn in this course?”, or “What do you want more of and less of?” Once the index cards have been distributed, instructors should leave the room and ask a student volunteer to collect the cards and return them to their office.

Another method to gather formative feedback is to ask students to complete a brief questionnaire. Boice (2000) suggested that questionnaires be kept short – no more than 10 to 12 questions – and be distributed to everyone in the class or a sample of students in a large-enrollment class. Questions can be selected from the end-of-the-semester evaluations from the department/university or an existing instrument. For example, Murray (1987) identified sixty items, each referring to a specific classroom teaching behavior that is significantly correlated with teaching effectiveness. His inventory includes items about the pace of the class, clarity of
explanations, student-faculty interaction, and many more. Another possibility is to ask students what they could do to improve their own learning in the course or what other students in the course could do to improve this course (Davis, 2009; Keeley, Furr, & Buskist, 2010; Keeley, Smith, & Buskist, 2006). Additionally, it can be useful to ask general questions about the level of difficulty of the course content, the quality and quantity of the assignments, and the use of class time. Svinicki (2001) recommended adding a final question such as “What question should I have asked that I didn’t and what would your response have been?” The questions chosen for a formative evaluation should be topics that can be addressed during the semester; otherwise students may have false expectations about the remainder of the semester and feel disappointed.

The type of questionnaire described above could not only be administered in the classroom but online as well. Some learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle) enable instructors to survey students anonymously during the semester and receive a summary of the results quickly. Online surveys can also be created using a college website such as FAST (Free Assessment Summary Tool) developed by Mount Royal College in Canada or commercial websites such as SurveyMonkey or Zoomerang. To increase participation in the survey, instructors might consider offering students extra credit for the completion of the formative feedback assignment or make it part of the course requirements. The advantage of asking students to complete the evaluations online is that many of the websites as well as some learning management systems can report the names of students who complete the survey separately from the actual responses for the assignment of credit.

Other methods to elicit formative feedback from students include asking students to send instructors short messages via email (Rando & Lenz, 1994), or an old-fashioned suggestion box placed outside an office door (Stein, 1997). Other more involved methods to conduct formative evaluations could be to ask either a colleague or staff member from a Teaching Excellence Center (if available) to interview students or to break students into small groups to discuss which teaching methods you use enhance or hinder student learning (George & Cowan, 1999).

Analyzing and Interpreting the Results
Just as there are many ways to solicit feedback from students, there are many ways to interpret the results and decide what to do next. In some cases the results are easy to analyze, but if no clear pattern emerges, interpreting results can be more difficult. Before beginning to analyze and interpret feedback, it is a good idea for instructors to complete the evaluation form on the basis of their perception of their behavior and write down what they believe students wrote about the course. This will help identify any discrepancies between a teacher’s self-evaluation and students’ responses (Davis, 2009).

Next, carefully consider what students said on the evaluations. Begin by looking at the positive comments and then read their statements about behavior or teaching methods that hinder student learning. Look for patterns and do not be swayed by negative comments made by a handful of students. What are the most common problems? Are there broad agreements or disagreements? Do their comments verify your own hunches? For example, if a pattern
emerges such that many students comment that the assigned primary articles were difficult to understand and only few students even bothered to read them before coming to class, then something needs to be done about the reading assignments. Perhaps the instructor needs to point out the value of reading primary literature in a field or they need to teach students how they should approach reading such difficult texts. There are many potential solutions to help students understand the value of an assignment and to provide them with the tools to succeed at the assignment.

If formative feedback is gathered during the semester, Davis (2009) suggested to group student comments into three categories:

1) Items that can be changed this semester (e.g., due dates for assignments),
2) Changes that must wait until the next time the course is taught (e.g., the textbook),
3) Items which either cannot – or will not – be changed (e.g., requiring the reading of primary literature).

Once the feedback analysis is complete, instructors should make a concerted effort to review the results with students in class. Reporting back to the students lets them know that their concerns are valued and allows them to understand and experience the diversity of opinion among their classmates. In some cases simply acknowledging an annoyance (i.e., the classroom is overcrowded) can lower frustration and boost morale (Davis, 2009). When findings are presented to students, the teacher should share responses from all three categories and clearly outline to students which of the changes will be made, which ones will have to wait until next semester, and which ones you will not change. As these matters are discussed, try to avoid being defensive about criticism that was raised while also not sounding overly apologetic (Kreutzer, 1993). In some cases instructors might also decide to respond to each evaluation individually by writing comments on the evaluation or prepare a graph or chart of responses, which can be posted online (e.g., Blackboard). Whichever method is selected for reporting back to students, always remember that responses should be given in a thoughtful and timely manner. Because ECPs have many responsibilities it is also important to weigh the pros and cons of conducting extensive evaluations versus selecting an effective but less time-consuming approach to assess teaching effectiveness (e.g., online surveys).

If analyzing end-of-the-semester evaluations, start out by examining the descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequency distributions) for each of the quantitative evaluation questions. If available, compare descriptive statistics to means and standard deviations for the most important items to the university standards (most universities publish these results annually and include summaries for different departments, programs or colleges within the university). Benassi and Seidel (2006) proposed that faculty compare their specific scores on various questions with a logical comparator group and to record their observations. For example, instructors may decide to determine how many items scored above or below the comparator mean. Benassi and Seidel (2006) also suggested to rank order the items on the course evaluations from highest to lowest, and to identify the three highest and lowest items and their associated comments. Faculty will often find that the three highest and lowest items will be similar across different courses they teach, which confirms their validity. Another
possibility is to sort students’ ratings by demographic information and descriptive variables. For example, it can be assessed whether ratings differ for students based on their expected grade in the course, by class level, or by how many classes they missed (Benassi & Seidel, 2006). Once teaching strengths and weaknesses have been determined based on the numeric items, these data can be used to alter teaching practices.

Regardless of whether the results were obtained early on in the semester or at the end, simply gathering, organizing and evaluating the results are not sufficient if an instructor is committed to professional growth. The next step must be to develop a viable intervention plan and to put it into action. In some cases, a course will only require minor tweaking whereas in other cases it will be necessary to devote a significant amount of time and energy into making changes. Especially if a significant amount of change is in order, it might be helpful to consult with a colleague or staff member from a teaching and learning center to discuss possible interventions (for more information about the effective use of student course evaluations also see Mary Kite’s E-book entitled “Effective Evaluation of Teaching”).

Using Peer-assessment for Improvement of Teaching

Using a peer to evaluate teaching performance is another useful method to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and is often required for the tenure and promotion process. Colleagues and peers can help instructors put ratings into perspective, pointing out the positive and preventing only negative feedback from coming to the surface. A peer can suggest strategies to try to deal with problem areas rather than ponder over the negative feedback. Poor student evaluations often lead to defensiveness and dislike of students, which results in even lower teaching effectiveness rather than improvement (Braunstein, Klein, & Pachla, 1973; McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006).

Because having a mentor that can lend support and encouragement offers many benefits, many universities or colleges assign a mentor to early career academics or, in some cases, new faculty choose a mentor either in their department or at the university who will guide them during the first few years at the institution. This mentor should be someone an instructor can trust and confide in about professional issues such as classroom related problems. It is important to note, however, that a mentor who is also a peer will most likely evaluate you once you come up for tenure and promotion. Especially early on in one’s career, it might be advisable to invite an observer who will not directly be involved in high-level career decisions. For example, it has been found that retired faculty were particularly helpful as classroom observers not only because of their wealth of experience in the classroom but also because they were perceived as less threatening to the teacher because they were not involved in personnel decisions (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). Having an observer who is impartial can be helpful because it will allow both parties to be open about strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Whomever one decides to invite into the classroom, inviting an observer (e.g., mentor, a colleague, or a staff member of a Teaching Excellence Center) can be a valuable way to grow and improve as a teacher.
Before the class observation, provide the observer with the course syllabus and brief them on the specific goals for the session or on a particular technique in need of perfection. Meet with the observer soon after class. Meeting with the observer to discuss goals beforehand is important because it enables instructors to focus on specific questions about teaching style and presentation while they are observing you. For example, if a common theme emerged through written course evaluations, ask the observer if they agree with the students’ assessment. If the peer evaluator’s comments match students’ comments, instructors can be reassured that student comments were correct.

Because most faculty do not have a lot of room in their already busy schedules, consider pairing up with another peer to observe each other’s classes and to meet regularly to discuss teaching practices (e.g., Braskamp & Ory, 1994; Katz & Henry, 1988). If conflicting schedules do not allow for in-person observation, consider videotaping lectures and asking the mentor to watch the video and provide feedback. (A staff member of a teaching and learning center might also provide this service.) Some teachers may also find it helpful to watch the videotaped lecture themselves. Doing so will allow them to determine whether they explained the material in an effective manner and how they could alter their teaching methods to enhance student learning. It is important to note that watching a videotaped lecture of oneself is only effective when focusing on the actual teaching as the most critical aspects rather than appearance or mannerisms (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006).

Another effective method to evaluate teaching performance is to ask a colleague to assess course material such as syllabi, assignments, exams or other course material. Ask someone who teaches a comparable course or who is knowledgeable about the subject matter to assess the course material and make suggestions about the amount of assigned readings, whether the exams adequately cover the subject matter, or whether the homework assignments give students the opportunity to apply concepts and demonstrate their knowledge (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). This feedback will be invaluable and will help instructors gauge whether their course has similar expectations as other courses of the same level.

**Using Self-Evaluation in Continued Professional Growth**

Thus far, the focus has been on gathering data from students and peers about teaching; however, self-evaluation is also a powerful resource for continued growth. Some institutions require faculty to develop teaching portfolios as part of the tenure and promotion process. A teaching portfolio is an accounting of a professor’s teaching strengths and weaknesses and includes documents and materials that collectively define the scope and quality of a professor’s teaching performance. The teaching portfolio is similar to listing all scholarly publications, grants, and honors on your curriculum vitae. Not only does the teaching portfolio provide a platform for faculty to display their teaching accomplishments, but it also helps administrators to make sound tenure and promotion decisions and contributes to the professional development of individual faculty members. The teaching portfolio is not an exhaustive compilation of all the documents and materials that determine teaching performance, but rather it is a selection of teaching activities and evidence of their effectiveness.
Preparing a teaching portfolio can be a powerful tool that promotes improvement because it requires instructors to think about their teaching and to set teaching goals for the future. Developing a teaching portfolio early on in a career can be useful because it helps to focus attention on whether teaching practices meet teaching goals and learning goals for students. It allows for the documentation of specific changes that can be made to a class based on formative feedback gathered throughout the semester to improve teaching effectiveness. Preparing a teaching portfolio takes time, but if done correctly, will contribute to continued efforts towards achieving and maintaining teaching effectiveness. Peter Seldin’s book *The Teaching Portfolio* (Seldin, Miller, & Seldin, 2010) is a concise, straightforward resource that offers a number of examples to help new (and seasoned) faculty members to develop a teaching portfolio and to improve their teaching through self-reflection. The book contains detailed instructions on preparing a portfolio (including advice on how to create an E-Portfolio), strategies for getting started with a portfolio and suggestions on how to find a mentor who can help in developing the portfolio.

**Caveat**

As teachers analyze and interpret the results of student- and peer-based evaluations, they should take student feedback seriously but they should not react irrationally. The goal should be to extract helpful clues about what is working with one’s teaching and what is getting in the way of student learning (Gibson, 1992). One challenge many early career academics face is to find a healthy balance between teaching to improve student learning outcomes and teaching for high marks on course evaluations. This is not to say that the two are mutually exclusive but they are sometimes at odds because today’s students have high expectations of their professors, sometimes resisting professors’ efforts to turn them into independent learners who take charge of their own education. Many early career academics enter the world of academia believing that better teaching promotes better learning and thus good teaching will result in high marks on student evaluations. However, sometime along the way, many instructors will realize that students do not always enjoy and value what is good for them. That is, students sometimes prefer to be passive consumers rather than active participants in the classroom (McKeachie, 1997). As a result, comments should always be considered carefully to determine whether they are valid by looking for trends in the evaluations or asking a mentor to specifically observe a class to determine whether a criticism voiced by students has merit.

**Summary**

Teaching can give one a great sense of satisfaction. Achieving teaching excellence is a long-term process and very few professors begin their careers as expert teachers. Everyone experiences setbacks throughout their teaching career but hopefully there are enough positive experiences to help fuel enthusiasm for an academic career. One way to accomplish career longevity is to gather feedback from students and peers to become a more effective teacher and improve student learning. This is not only important for the students’ development but also contributes to one’s continuing vitality as a teacher. The truth is that teaching approaches and techniques change over time so it is imperative to continue to evolve as an educator. As instructors commit
to continued performance improvement, students will respond more positively, and their increased interest and enthusiasm will spark even more effort and enjoyment. Every beginning is difficult but with a strong support system from mentors and students, teachers can use constructive criticism to turn failures into successes.

References


Chapter 4

Engaging Students in Collaborative Psychological Research at Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities

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Upon earning your first academic position, after counting your blessings, you’ll be anxious to begin preparing for that first academic year. In addition to relocating, becoming acclimated to your new institution, and preparing course materials, you will also need to think about your program of scholarship. It is becoming more common for faculty at bachelors and masters-level colleges and universities to involve undergraduate students in their scholarship. At my institution, The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), faculty members are expected to engage students in their scholarship. Four years into my academic position, mentoring undergraduate students in faculty-student collaborative research has consistently been the most rewarding experience of my academic career. However, it also presents some unique challenges that I was not prepared for when I started my academic career.

In this chapter, I will not focus on strategies for establishing your research program (see Chapter 5 for such a discussion). Instead, my goal is to offer advice for mentoring lab students in the first years of your academic career. As a graduate student, you were unlikely concerned with developing a managerial style; however, faculty members are expected to not only oversee the students who will help implement their research program, but also to help them develop into young scholars. In this chapter, I will review student recruitment, lab structuring, student intellectual development, independent projects and student writing management, establishing and maintaining an enriching lab culture, and mentoring students (both lab students and assigned mentees) throughout their undergraduate careers and beyond.

Before I begin, I want to offer two important caveats to the advice that follows. First, my advice is based on my own experiences, which are unique to my own academic position, research program, and personality. I am one of twenty full-time faculty members (30:1 student-faculty ratio) in the Psychology Department of TCNJ, a small public liberal arts college with an enrollment of just over 6,000 students. TCNJ faculty members are guided by the teacher-scholar model, which involves integrating scholarship into course delivery. Thus, in addition to teaching responsibilities, we are expected to make impactful scholarly contributions to our respective fields, and involve students in that process. In my department, our lab students are enrolled in a collaborative learning course. This course is included in the students’ course load; in an academic year, faculty members typically teach this course in their normal teaching load one semester, and outside their teaching load another semester. Much of my research on political attitudes involves embedding experimental manipulations within surveys distributed to online adult samples, which means I can collect data relatively quickly and cheaply, and without
relying on student participants from our departmental participant pool. Therefore, the advice I offer will not be relevant to everyone’s experiences, and I encourage the reader to modify the following advice to fit his or her own unique circumstances. Second, by no means do I wish to imply that I had this all figured out when I began my position. I most certainly did not. This advice is based on both my successes and failures along the way.

**Recruiting Undergraduate Students into Your Research Lab**

If you are expected to conduct research at an undergraduate-level college or university, you will undoubtedly involve student collaborators in your research program. As a new faculty member, where do you find these students? Your first semester is a whirlwind, and it is unlikely you will be able to collect any data at that time. However, you will at least want to set up your laboratory space and begin recruiting interested students (see Chapter 5). At this point, you won’t have the luxury of reputation and experience, so you should utilize both your colleagues and your courses as student recruitment resources. If you were hired to fill a hole in your department’s curricular offerings, there will certainly be some students whose research interests were not being met before your arrival. Some of these students will take the initiative to approach you. Your colleagues, who have engaged with the student body for years, may know students interested in your area of expertise. Ask your colleagues for help identifying these motivated and interested students. They will appreciate your willingness to seek advice and your conscientious approach to lab student recruitment. Of course, another excellent recruitment source is the students enrolled in your classes. From methodology courses, you can identify students with a general interest in and aptitude for psychological research. From survey or upper-level courses directly related to your area of expertise, you can identify students who share your intellectual interests.

Regardless of your recruitment source, there are a few considerations to keep in mind as you select your students. First, recruitment is about quality not quantity, so avoid the temptation to stock your lab full of students. Determine the number of students you will need to operate your lab, and do not exceed that number. First, more lab students means more students to manage, more papers to grade, more individual meetings, etc. You will already have enough responsibilities—don’t stretch yourself too thin. Second, your research program will likely start small, perhaps with some data to add to your dissertation studies, or piloting an exciting new line of research. If there are more students than there is work to go around, some may become frustrated by their lack of engagement in the lab’s work. Consider increasing the size of your lab as your research program develops.

Second, students’ grades in previous courses do matter, but they should not be the primary determinant for excluding or including students in your lab. Sometimes, hands-on involvement with psychology research can be the spark that ignites (or reignites) a wayward student’s interest in psychology and motivates them in other areas of their academic life. This may especially be the case for first- and second-year students. Be more cautious about recruiting third- and fourth-year students with poor academic records, and ask your colleagues for their impression of these prospective research students. In a formal application, I ask prospective
students to list their reasons for considering my lab, relevant course experiences, career goals, and faculty recommenders.

Third, aim for student diversity, not just demographically (e.g., gender, ethnicity), but also experientially and intellectually. For example, for my research on political attitudes, having lab students with an assortment of social and political beliefs creates more animated and ultimately more creative discussions that might not have been possible in a more politically homogenous group. Finally, you will eagerly anticipate semesters when you have a lighter teaching load (e.g., course release, or the lighter semester of a 2:3 academic year teaching load). However, a diminished teaching load also means a smaller pool of potential lab students for the following semester. During one such semester, I made the mistake of accepting students I normally would not have accepted so that I could meet the 6-student minimum enrollment requirement. The following semester, I paid for this mistake in the poor quality of student work I received. To avoid these consequences, and the frenzied rush to fulfill your enrollment needs, begin student recruitment earlier than usual during semesters with a lighter teaching load.

**Structuring Your Laboratory**

As lab director, you need to devise a system that optimizes both your research productivity and the educational experience of your students. I find it easiest to have a lab hierarchy with explicit roles and responsibilities at each level. Appendix 1 presents the lab hierarchy I include in my lab course syllabus. There are four levels of student involvement, with specific duties and responsibilities, in ascending order: research volunteer, research assistant, administrator, and colleague. As a student ascends in the lab hierarchy, they take on increased responsibilities, but they also gain opportunities for one-on-one research collaboration and co-authorship. I don’t always follow this hierarchy to the letter—for example, if a less-experienced student demonstrates high aptitude and interest, I might promote that student to a higher position. That said, this structure allows students to recognize both the opportunities the lab presents and my expectations for their advancement. I strongly discourage stagnation in the lab, and therefore limit students to only two semesters in which they can stay at the assistant level; beyond that, they must ascend to a higher position or make room for other interested students. This reminds students that I encourage their increased involvement, roots out students with waning interest, and ensures that I have a relatively steady influx of new and interested students.

**What to Expect from Your Lab Students**

Because students enroll in my lab just as they would any other course, they receive a syllabus at the beginning of the semester that delineates my expectations. The most important component of their grade is their involvement in lab research project(s). In a typical semester, we have a primary lab project involving all students, regardless of position in the lab. This is often a newly developed line of research, and we use lab meeting times to review the relevant literature, discuss research design, and evaluate stimuli and materials. All students are expected to be available for any necessary data collection sessions, and advanced students train less experienced students. Originally, I did not include the majority of students in the data analysis...
and interpretation phases of the project, choosing to do that work independently or in collaboration with advanced students. However, I began to suspect that this led to student disengagement with our research questions. I therefore began performing and discussing analyses in real-time during lab meetings (which is possible in our smart classrooms with SPSS installed on computers). This has not only enhanced students’ knowledge of data analytic procedures and interpretation, but increased their interest and engagement with our research now that they feel more included in the process.

In addition to this primary lab project, there are peripheral projects each semester on which I collaborate with more advanced students. These often involve data collection, analyses, or writing continued from a previous semester, and are especially well suited for advanced students who are familiar with the project and capable of more advanced data management and analysis. Sometimes a group of two or three students may work together on such a project, but with a typical enrollment of 6 – 8 students, my lab enrollment is usually low enough (and my backlog of data deep enough) that only one advanced student will be involved on each peripheral project.

The success of your research program depends on several people working together, which makes open and frequent communication essential. If a problem with data collection arises, I need to know about it immediately. Therefore, in addition to lab meeting times and data collection sessions, we use technology to remain in frequent communication. Students are expected to check their email at least once a day for communications from fellow lab members or me. When email communication is too slow, we phone or text each other. We maintain a website that is updated weekly and reflects input from all lab members. Finally, our online course instruction website at TCNJ allows students to contribute to a privately-accessed course blog. Students post weekly blog entries and follow the entries of their fellow lab members. We use these blog exchanges to supplement our lab meeting discussion—students use the time between lab meeting and their blog post to reflect on our lab meeting discussion and offer further insight into our research questions.

Students must also write a 10-15 page paper, which they present to the lab group at the last lab meeting of the semester. These papers and presentations may be relevant to either the primary or peripheral projects, and typically take three forms: a) literature reviews, b) proposals, for following up a project from the present semester, or c) reports of empirical results from an individual student’s research project. Less experienced students typically provide a literature review or research proposal, while more experienced students will provide empirical reports. These presentations hone students’ theory integration, research dissemination, and public speaking skills. I also invite students newly enrolled in the lab for the following semester to attend these presentations in order to meet our students, witness their accomplishments, and preview the following semester’s projects.

Finally, each semester students develop or create something that will contribute to the lab into the future. These projects have included developing the lab website, developing the lab procedural manual, designing the lab logo, updating the website after a semester or two of
neglect, and designing our lab banner for the Lab Olympics (more on that to follow). These activities not only support the lab, but also provide excellent team-building exercises for lab members.

**What to Teach Your Lab Students**

Although one goal of conducting student-faculty research is to advance your scholarship, the other primary goal is to mold your students into young scholars. I strive to guide all of my lab students through the entire research process. In fact, this is the purpose of the primary project: to let students experience each step of that process. At the beginning of the semester, we spend several weeks reviewing the relevant literature and developing hypotheses related to this project. I first assign a set of readings, but then ask each student to lead a discussion of an additional relevant reading of their choice. Selecting the article and leading a discussion of its implications for our project encourages them to think more deeply and independently about the topic. Don’t be surprised if your original idea changes based on student input—I am always impressed by their ability to challenge my initial thinking and ultimately shape and refine the hypotheses.

After formulating our hypotheses, we review design considerations specific to our project. Most of my research embeds experimental manipulations within online surveys, which advanced students create using online survey software (Qualtrics). After the survey is created, all students test and critique the survey on their own time, and we review and refine the instrument through extensive lab meeting discussions and exchanges on the lab blog. If we are collecting data in the lab, students dry-run the research protocol together in teams to ensure that all instruction sets are clear and that all instruments are operational. Again, I rely on a team of more experienced students to train students in the research protocol. Usually, a student will volunteer to assist me with the submission of the IRB protocol.

We usually collect data by posting a link to our survey online to Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk (an online labor market where researchers can recruit participants to complete surveys for compensation). However, if we are collecting data in the lab, students manage data collection: they schedule research assistants, manage the participant pool, assign participant credit, and oversee data collection sessions. Students do not enter data into SPSS because Qualtrics records and inputs the data into an SPSS file. There are of course considerations to managing student data entry, but I encourage you to lobby your administrators for access to Qualtrics or other survey software, as it saves a tremendous amount of time (a new faculty member’s most valuable commodity) and allows students to focus more on substantive work and less on mind-numbing data entry.

Data analysis proceeds in two stages: 1) data management and preliminary analyses, and 2) primary analyses and interpretation. Usually I select an initial team for the first stage. With less experienced students, I meet to review how to manage a data file (e.g., create measures, code for experimental conditions) and run preliminary analyses (e.g., reliability analyses, factor analyses, correlations, examining means, testing manipulation checks). More experienced
students will complete those tasks themselves and then meet with me to review their work. I then take this workable database to our next lab meeting, review the hypotheses and appropriate statistical analyses with the lab group, and perform the analyses and interpret the results with them. We will then generate alternative hypotheses and test them, all during lab meetings. This activity serves multiple purposes for the students: as a general statistics refresher, as a window into the data interpretation process, and (if the data behave) a glimpse into the excitement of scientific discovery. We will then develop a plan for our next step (e.g., more data collection? Crowning jewel in a Journal of Personality and Social Psychology paper? A dead end?) over the next few weeks.

Analyzing and interpreting data with the lab group strikes a good balance between busywork (finding measures, creating instruments, collecting data) and substantive work (engagement in hypothesis development, hands-on data management, data analysis and interpretation). As lab director, explaining complex theory, methodology, and statistics to your lab students not only improves your teaching abilities, but also likely your own understanding of these essential topics. Moreover, these faculty-student discussions will generate new and interesting ideas. Intellectually and personally, these interactions with my students are some of the most rewarding aspects of my academic career.

**Overseeing Independent Studies and Senior Honors Theses**

As a new faculty member, students seeking to complete an independent study or senior project under your direction may flatter you. Exercise caution—after agreeing to oversee three senior-level projects in the Spring of my first year, I found myself stretched too thin. At TCNJ, independent studies and honors theses are considered outside of the lab course enrollment. Therefore, directing these individual studies will necessarily increase the number of students you mentor in any given semester. That said, I strongly encourage mentoring your advanced lab students through individual independent study projects or honors theses. These are of course enriching experiences for your student, but they also enrich your scholarship and the experience of other lab members. Although these students are not enrolled in the lab course, they are required to attend lab meetings and contribute to the primary research project. However, this arrangement is mutually beneficial, as the other lab members also contribute to the student’s independent study or honors thesis.

There are a few considerations to keep in mind when deciding on a project topic and actively mentoring your student. First, choose a topic that will advance your scholarship, not one that the student has generated. This advice may seem harsh, but as a non-tenured faculty member, your priority is to advance your research program in order to gain tenure. While you should encourage your student to contribute as much as possible to hypothesis development, do not get trapped in a research project outside your area of expertise. In my first year, I opened up numerous lines of research to accommodate the interests of students. It took me three years to get through the backlog of data it created, and all but one of those projects ended up buried in my data cemetery. Now, depending on my research program goals, I either assign a student a particular project (usually an extension of an existing project), or give a student the choice of
two or three potential projects (usually new projects I am interested in starting). So, first tie up loose ends from graduate school, such as that additional experiment you need to make your dissertation publishable, before opening a new student-generated line of research.

Second, observe how other faculty members manage student research projects. Without prior knowledge, it is hard to know what constitutes a strong student paper, or what to expect from a senior honors thesis student. There are several things you can do to learn from your colleagues, such as volunteering to serve on honors thesis committees, organizing a best practices meeting on overseeing student research projects, or asking colleagues to share their former students’ thesis papers. Third, in managing your students’ progress, provide them the organization and structure they will need through weekly meetings, weekly assignments, weekly blog entries, explicit deadlines, and frequent email communication.

Finally, do not try to clone yourself. When you work with a highly competent and motivated student, it is tempting to mold that student in your academic image. Resist this temptation. First, in all likelihood, your students will not become professors, and this highly competent student completing an honors thesis is no exception. Listen to your students, encourage them to follow the career path of their interest, and prepare them for it. If a student does express interest in a research career, ensure that he or she has not prematurely foreclosed on this choice. I have seen several students decide on an academic career as first or second-year students only to change their minds midstream and struggle with the transition to an alternative path. Encourage them to explore their options and research experiences with other faculty members (Silvia, Delaney, & Marcovitch, 2009).

**Writing with Student Co-Authors**

If you have worked with a student or group of students on a research project that is publishable, you should consider co-authoring the manuscript with those students. For the student, this of course is an enriching experience that will improve their writing skills and bolster their chances of admission to graduate programs. There are also benefits for you as well, because working through the writing process with a student can make you a more conscientious writer. Moreover, depending on your institution’s values, co-authoring papers with students should reflect well on you as you apply for reappointment and promotion.

One of the first issues you will face is determining student authorship. How does a student earn authorship? When should a student earn lead authorship? Authorship conversations become more important as your career advances. In my first few years, students had no expectations of authorship because I had no previous student co-authors. Now that several students have co-authored papers with me, it is more important to explicitly state what constitutes authorship. If a student has assisted in developing the original hypotheses, or in overseeing data collection and management on a major project, I will offer them authorship, even if they end up doing only minimal writing and draft reviews. Of course, you may identify promising students who want more writing experience. For these students, I ask them to draft short sections of the manuscript (e.g., the Method), search the literature for articles to support a particular
argument, create the references section, format tables and figures, and read and make comments on my drafts. I find it useful to provide these students with several example articles (from our lab and from others) to use as models. Once we have a draft, we will read the paper aloud together, line by line. This is especially useful for student writing development because I can explain to the student my decision-making for the organization of the paper, sentence structure, language use, etc. As a writer, these line by line discussions help clarify your own thinking and avoid the inevitable glossy eyes from staring at the computer screen.

In all likelihood, the manuscript is intellectually driven primarily by you and not your students. Moreover, it is unlikely that your students possess the ability to craft a scholarly paper themselves. It is therefore more likely that you will be lead author. In this early phase of your career, lead authorship is especially important; later in your career, you can allow students to take lead authorship at your discretion. Of course, if your institution places more value on papers with student lead authors, you may decide to take a backseat to a student co-author. Whatever you decide, manage expectations by discussing authorship at the beginning of the research project. This is especially important for independent study and honors thesis projects, for which students’ authorship expectations are likely higher than on group projects, such as the primary lab research project. If the paper is a product of a student’s senior project or thesis, and this student wants and deserves lead authorship, make sure the student is aware that he or she must continue writing post-graduation.

I should note that one down side to including student co-authors on your manuscript is that it slows down the writing process, as you must essentially teach and write simultaneously. If you are in publish or perish mode, it may be better to write alone and wait until you are in a more comfortable position to include student writing collaborators.

**Establishing a Lab Culture**

Students enroll in your lab to learn the content of your research area, to learn about the research process, and to gain skills necessary for their careers. However, it is important to keep in mind that they will likely not follow you into academia—the vast majority of your students will go onto other non-research related careers. So, how can you create an enriching and enjoyable educational experience for students with diverse career trajectories? The answers to this question will depend on your temperament, the nature of your research, and the students enrolled in your lab. For me, the most important goal is to create a cohesive group of students, which I feel builds mutual respect and understanding, and ultimately a positive and enriching undergraduate experience.

Creating such cohesion is easier to accomplish in some labs than others. In the lab I worked in as an undergraduate, we established relationships by spending countless hours together in the lab collecting and processing data. Given that we do little data collection from student participants in my current lab, my students do not have these opportunities. So, we have to create them. Our weekly lab meetings are conducted in a relaxed manner, and students are comfortable expressing their ideas and interacting with each other. Outside of weekly lab
meetings, smaller units of students work together on either portions of the primary project, or in collaboration on peripheral projects. Each year, several lab members attend our annual regional conference (the Eastern Psychological Association conference) together. More recently, students have begun working together to develop research proposals for their final paper and presentation. Finally, at the end of each semester, I present a summary of that semester’s accomplishments, and preview our plans for the following semester. Doing so not only allows students to take a step back and recognize just how much they (and we) accomplished, but also allows us to acknowledge individual student accomplishments, such as having a paper accepted for publication or successfully completing a senior honors thesis.

On the lighter side, I invite my students to an end-of-the-semester party at my home (homemade pizzas and ice cream sundaes in the Fall; barbeque and canoe rides in the Spring). These parties serve as a way to celebrate our individual and group accomplishments, and in the Spring, as a celebration of our graduating seniors. Also, each Spring, our department holds the Interlab Olympics. This event entails a series of intellectual (psychology Jeopardy) and physical (water balloon toss) challenges in which multiple labs in the department compete against each other for title of Lab Olympic Champion. This is a good-natured competition that the students (and faculty) really enjoy. Although our lab has yet to win this event, we did win “Best Banner”, which the lab members created using fabric from their own clothes!

### Advising Lab Students for their Post-Graduation Plans

Your role as a faculty mentor also includes advising students in their career choices, and preparing them for their careers. Obviously, their faculty-student collaborative research experience will make them competitive for jobs and graduate school admissions. However, there are other ways that you will be expected to assist your students in their post-graduation plans. Perhaps the most obvious is writing your students’ letters of recommendation. When I began my career, I knew little about what constitutes a good letter of recommendation. Ask to see letters that your colleagues have written for former students, or ask colleagues to review drafts of your letters. Require that students provide a recommendation packet with materials that will allow you to craft the strongest possible letter: self-addressed stamped envelopes attached to any necessary application materials, their vita or resume, a list of schools to which they are applying (with deadlines), a description of why they are applying to each school, and a description of their career goals. I typically ask that students provide this information to me at least four weeks in advance of the first deadline.

Most often, students who have worked closely with you, and of whom you think highly, will ask for letters of recommendation. However, you may find yourself in the unenviable position of having a student you don’t know very well, or even an underachieving student, ask for a letter of recommendation. I do not refuse to write the letter for the student, because I know that sometimes students need a minimum amount of recommendation letters. Instead, I tell the student that I am willing to write the letter, but that the letter will not be particularly strong, and that they should consider an alternative letter-writer. After a frank discussion, if they still insist, I will write this student’s letters of recommendation, however unenthusiastically.
If your student has decided to attend graduate school, you should help them choose the best degree (e.g., MA vs. PhD) and institutional match for their career goals and intellectual interests. Students often use the institutions’ undergraduate education reputation as a heuristic for making graduate school application decisions—for example, considering Harvard University a “reach” school, and their large state university a “safety” school. Educate your student on the considerations specific to graduate education, such as selecting an institution based on the student’s shared interest with a prospective faculty mentor. Show them how to select prospective faculty mentors by perusing journal articles, journal editorial boards, and society websites. Encourage students to learn about these programs by visiting their websites and emailing prospective faculty and their current graduate students for information about student openings and graduate student life, respectively. Encourage students to apply widely and not limit themselves geographically (a problem I often see at my small state college).

**Keeping in Touch Post-Graduation**

Eventually, your students graduate. This is a bittersweet moment. While you will surely be excited for your students as they continue their education or begin their careers, there is a strong chance that you will miss these students, especially those in your first “class” of lab students. Stay in touch. For them, they will continue to feel connected to what was an important and transitional time in their lives. Knowing how their lives and careers have progressed also makes it easier for you to write strong letters of recommendation for these students in the future. For you, being able to write about the continued accomplishments of your students in your reappointment and promotion materials reflects your deep commitment to student development. It also sets a good example for your current students, both for their expectations for you and of themselves.

There are some very easy ways to remain in touch with former students. Social networking sites like LinkedIn allow people to stay in touch with professional colleagues. I’ve created a Facebook page for our lab, which allows both former and current lab members to remain in touch and share information with each other. Old-school networking at professional conferences is a great way to reconnect both socially and professionally with students who have gone on to graduate or professional school. Furthermore, current students who attend these conferences with you will enjoy meeting or reconnecting with these former students, an experience that will reinforce your lab mentorship model. Finally, do not underestimate how often your students might return to the area for college-wide, department-wide, or other extracurricular events (e.g., athletic competitions; homecoming). You may even invite these former students to speak to your current lab group about their experiences, or extend open invitations for lab alumni to attend your end-of-the-semester party.

**When Problems Arise**

Things won’t always go smoothly—a student may be disregarding his or her lab schedule, not performing adequately, or causing interpersonal problems or other disruptions in the lab. Remember that you are the instructor, and you are ultimately responsible for ensuring the optimal learning environment for all students. Nip these problems in the bud as soon as
possible by communicating your concerns privately to this student. Explain why you are concerned about his or her performance. Perhaps there is a personal issue that the student is struggling with—you may be comfortable discussing these issues with the student, or you may encourage them to seek the counseling services that your college or university offers. Perhaps the student is struggling to manage his or her busy schedule—you may simply need to set firm deadlines for this student and maintain more frequent communication. Hopefully just having this conversation, and agreeing on a plan for moving forward, will remedy the problem. If the problem persists however, you may need to consider some alternatives. The culture at TCNJ is such that as long as students’ performance is satisfactory, students earn As for the lab course, and students are generally aware of this policy. Therefore, the prospect of decreasing a student’s grade could serve as a deterrent. As a last resort, you may even consider involuntarily withdrawing the student from your lab. If the problems occur primarily at the end of the semester, do not invite the student back—explain to the student that you had already discussed concerns with their performance, which did not improve. You do not want the lab culture you’ve established, not to mention the quality of your data, to suffer because of an individual student’s behavior.

**General Advising Considerations**

So far, I have focused this discussion on mentoring students in the context of student-faculty research collaboration. Of course, you will likely have other advising responsibilities, including the assignment of several official advisees enrolled as Psychology majors. The number of official advisees you will mentor is likely determined by your department’s student-faculty ratio. For me, I have about 30 official advisees in any given year. For my first-year advisees, my primary goals are to support them through the sometimes difficult transition from high school to college, and to make sure that they are taking the fundamental psychology courses. It is always a good idea to ask that students arrive to your advising meeting with their tentative schedules prepared, as well as some alternative courses. For second-year students, we begin to discuss tailoring their academic schedule to their career goals. When they enter college, psychology majors often believe that they will become therapists—of course, as they expand their knowledge of psychology in their first and second years, they begin to understand the variety of careers that a psychology degree offers. We discuss which courses best fit their interests, and considering the strong undergraduate research culture in our department, which lab they might consider joining.

For third-year students, it is important to revisit their academic requirements to ensure that they are on track for graduation at the halfway mark of their undergraduate careers. This is also the time that they begin taking our more specialized seminar courses, and focus more intently on their future career plans. In our advising meetings, we talk about research lab involvement, internships, study-abroad, and other experiential learning that will improve their chances of employment or graduate admissions following graduation. For fourth-year students, we ensure that students have enough credits to graduate, and discuss job prospects or the graduate school application process.
Our department is unique in that we have recently implemented an advising course sequence in which all students enroll. For half of a semester each year, students take an advising course. These courses typically have 30 students enrolled in each section, and are taught by either faculty members or administrative staff. First-year students are introduced to the major and learn about their academic requirements and how to register for classes. Beyond the first year, students attend a variety of information sessions on topics including but not limited to choosing a career, seeking an internship, applying to graduate school, and job interviews. This advising course sequence has reduced our individual advising responsibilities tremendously, as most students have selected their courses prior to our formal advising meeting, and have received career guidance from these information sessions. Even if your college or university does not have such an advising program, you may consider coordinating with your Psi Chi chapter, other faculty members, and your institution’s career services office to schedule such events and advertise them to interested students.

Conclusion: The Joy of Mentoring

In this chapter, I have highlighted some of the challenges you will face as a mentor to students in faculty-student collaborative research. I would like to conclude however by noting that mentoring these students is without a doubt the most rewarding aspect of my academic life. Juggling teaching, scholarship, service, and your personal life presents a daunting challenge to any junior faculty member. During your pre-tenure years, one or several of those aspects of your life will frustrate you and even leave you doubting your career choice. The pleasure I take in watching these students develop, establishing relationships with them, making scientific discoveries with them, and encouraging their personal and intellectual growth, provides an escape from the challenges of an academic career. I may have once dreamed of a position at a research university while in graduate school, but it likely would not have provided me the opportunity to engage with young people like I can at a small undergraduate-focused institution. As you begin your career as a research mentor, I encourage you to create a lab community that is productive and both personally and professionally fulfilling.

Appendix 1

Example of a Research Laboratory Hierarchy

Lab Director: Professor

Colleague:
- Usually reserved for students enrolled in senior level lab course
- Manages operations of own research project (e.g., training & scheduling RAs; interfacing with participant pool, maintaining files and paperwork)
- Proficient in higher-order data analyses (e.g., multi-factor ANOVAs; hierarchical multiple regression).
- Demonstrates proficiency in scientific writing; co-authors manuscripts for peer review.

Administrator Positions (must demonstrate proficiency at Assistant rank):
Lab Manager:
• Manages operations of research projects not overseen by Colleague
• Assigns roles to Assistants and Volunteers
• Creates agenda for lab meetings
• Take lab meeting minutes
• Makes sure all lab materials are available and replenished at all times.

Webmaster:
• Proficient in web design
• Weekly communication with lab director to promptly update lab website
• Conducts research for links and other resources to post to website

Outreach Coordinator:
• Recruits new members to the lab through flyers, presentations, etc.
• Publicizes lab achievements around campus
• Updates lab application and other means of recruitment

Assistant (currently or previously enrolled in 300-level lab course):
• Must attend lab meetings
• Must promptly complete mandatory assignments
• Must competently run individual data collection sessions
• If prior lab involvement, must train and mentor new members
• Must be familiar with: creating surveys via Qualtrics; managing participant pool; conducting basic statistical analyses (e.g., descriptive statistics; correlations, t-tests, one-way ANOVAs) in SPSS
• Must make novel contributions to lab discussion

Volunteer:
• Must enroll in 300-level lab course to advance in rank
• Is encouraged to attend and participate in regular lab meetings and assist in data collection

Reference
Chapter 5

Setting up a Lab with a Budget and Incorporating Students into Research

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Congratulations! You have successfully defended your dissertation and completed your doctoral coursework, and then you went on the job market, interviewed and successfully obtained a faculty position. Welcome to academia...now that you have the job, it is up to you to keep it. This period of your life may feel both exhilarating (you are finally an assistant professor!) and terrifying (how will you ever attain tenure?). To help you get started in setting up your lab and incorporating students into research, the following topics will be discussed in this chapter: clarifying what is expected of you with regard to research productivity, pushing through the logistics of setting up your lab, recruiting and working with research assistants, and, finally, recruiting subjects for your research.

Clarify the Expectations for Research Productivity

Institutions of higher education will vary with regard to their expectations of research productivity. Ideally, these expectations would have been clearly outlined during your interview process. However, if you are at all uncertain about what is expected of you, you should clarify this immediately. One of the biggest roadblocks to productivity can often occur from a misunderstanding between yourself and your department/institution regarding what is considered “productive.”

There are two primary sources you will want to consult with regard to your expectations for research productivity: the department and the institution. At times, there may be a discrepancy between the departmental standards and the institutional standards. For example, in some environments the departmental standards are higher than the university standards. Whereas at other institutions (e.g., a small undergraduate department within a large research-oriented university), the individuals who sit on the promotion and tenure committees may have different expectations of “productivity” than those individuals within your department or area. Thus, if there appears to be a discrepancy in standards, attempt to meet the more rigorous of the two. This chapter will focus more specifically on how your departmental expectations will affect the decisions you make regarding your lab. For a more comprehensive review of research productivity and the tenure/promotion process, see Chapter 11. In addition, this chapter will focus on independently establishing your lab and working with students. For a review of establishing research in collaboration with other faculty and incorporating multiple projects (i.e., a multifaculty-multiproject model), see Gibson, Kahn & Mathie (1996).
Departmental Expectations

Speak with your department chair to determine what is expected of you within the context of your field of study and how that fits with the department’s expectations. The chair should be able to provide information regarding the minimum number of publications and/or presentations expected of you by the time you submit your dossier for review for promotion and tenure. It can be reassuring to have a quantifiable figure—will you be expected to publish once a year or five times a year? Some departments may not specify a hard number but instead may provide a range or a general rule of thumb. Either way, attempt to get as much specific information from your chair as possible. Ask if there is a faculty or departmental handbook that you may reference. Also, ask to review the dossiers of the most recent successful candidates for promotion/tenure within your department and try to get a sense of how many publications they produced and how they set up their labs. Depending on the size of your department, it can be difficult to make direct comparisons between yourself, your research goals, and how your colleagues have conducted their research. For example, you may envision working with several students in your lab while other colleagues work with a single student per semester. Furthermore, your research methods may differ from those of your colleagues (e.g., surveys, longitudinal, experimental designs, etc.) Despite these differences, a review of previous successful dossiers can assist you in understanding what tactics have worked before and help you make decisions with regard to setting up your lab.

Although it can be reassuring to have a quantifiable number of publications toward which to aim, do not let this lull you in to a false sense of security. Obtaining promotion/tenure is not always so straightforward as meeting a specific number of publications. One critical piece of information to understand is how various publications carry different amounts of weight, and thus “count” toward your promotion/tenure differently. Here is a list of issues you should consider and clarify with your department chair.

- Will differential credit be awarded to publications in journals versus book chapters? Often publications in peer-reviewed journals carry more weight than book chapters. If this is the case within your department, you will want to use this information to help you prioritize your commitments.

- How does the impact factor of various journals affect the significance of your work? Impact factors are a type of rating system to distinguish between journals and can be found online. Typically speaking, the higher the impact factor, the more weight that publication will carry. However, it can be helpful to know how much emphasis your department places on such issues.

- Are you expected to be the single author on your publications? If you are a co-author, how will this affect the amount of “credit” you receive for your work? In a similar vein, what effect will co-authoring papers with students have when considering your work? Likewise, if you co-author papers with your graduate school mentor, will that work be equitable to publications without your mentor?
• Similarly, clarify whether data collected at your previous institution yet published while at your current institution, will carry equitable credit as data collected and published at your current institution.

While these types of questions may be difficult to discuss with your new boss, it is important to get as much clarification as possible and to do so as early as you can. Early career psychologists (ECPs) can become dismayed after spending time and effort publishing data collected as part of their dissertation, only to find that co-authoring a paper with their previous mentor “doesn’t count” or does not carry as much weight as publishing alone or with other collaborators, or as publishing data collected at their new institution. Typically, departments will accept some amount of co-authoring; however, at the same time it is generally expected that you establish yourself as an independent researcher, and thus produce work that is not associated with your previous mentor. If this is the case in your department, attempt to specify these expectations as best you can.

One aspect that can make these sorts of conversations difficult is related to the chair’s understanding of your field of study. For example, if your chair expects the majority of your work to be published as a single author, yet your research involves collaborators at multiple sites, then you will need to prepare yourself to discuss this issue. Likewise, if you conduct multiple lines of research in different areas, clarify whether your chair expects the majority of your publications to come from a specific area of your research. Unfortunately, some chairs still maintain the antiquated view that the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is a “lesser” field of study, and thus accord less weight to SoTL publications than to publications in other areas of psychology. If your chair shares this viewpoint, you should be aware of how it may affect his or her opinion of your productivity. See Gurung, Ansburg, Alexander, Lawrence, and Johnson (2008) for a discussion of SoTL in psychology, its history, and the importance of pedagogical research today.

Furthermore, understanding the departmental expectations with regard to involving students in your research is important as well. Does your department value involving students in your research? If so, are there any expectations for how quickly you should bring students in to your lab? Or any expectations with regard to the types of activities in which students should be exposed? The answers to these questions may affect how quickly you get your lab up and running.

Clarifying the departmental expectations for research productivity is very important. When you submit your dossier for promotion/tenure, the chair and members of the departmental committee for promotion and tenure will review your work and compare it to the departmental and institutional standards. Thus, you should be aware of any expectations (e.g., minimum number of publications, order of authorship, field of study, student involvement, etc.) in order to best prioritize your time and efforts.
Push Through the Logistics

Now that you have clarified the expectations for your scholarship, it is time to start putting words into action. There will be many logistical issues you will want to tackle and get out of the way as soon as possible so that you can start your research. These logistics include training issues, obtaining materials/equipment, and managing your budget. For each of these issues, it is best to start as early as you can. If possible, you may be able to negotiate a course release during your first year. Often times, this provides the new faculty member with more time to handle the preparation for their courses and generally to get settled in the department. However, if you are expected to produce research, do not forget to use this time to set up your lab. While pushing through these logistics before you set foot on campus can be ideal, there will inevitably be certain items that you cannot complete until after your official start date, and thus will spill over in to your first semester.

Training Issues

If at all possible, take advantage of the time you have prior to starting your new job to tackle as many training issues as you can. If your research requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, then you will need to complete IRB training prior to starting your research. Many institutions utilize an online training program (e.g., Collaborative IRB Training Initiative). Check with your institution’s IRB or Office of Sponsored Programs to obtain information about IRB training. Complete this online training prior to arriving at your new campus. Likewise, if your institution will require any other online training programs (e.g., sexual harassment prevention) complete these as soon as possible.

As previously mentioned, you may not be able to complete these sorts of online training programs until after your official start date or until you have received an employee identification number and/or email account. If this is the case, then complete these trainings as soon as possible after you have begun your position.

Obtaining Materials and Equipment

During your negotiation process for this job, you most likely established lab space and start-up funds. If not, then you will certainly want to clarify these resources immediately. With regard to lab space, you ideally would have seen your designated space during your interview and concluded that it would be sufficient, but sometimes departments might have to remodel or build additional space in order to suit your needs. If this is the case, you will want to be clear on exactly what you will need (i.e., the layout) for your lab and when it will be completed. These details should be included in your negotiation process and clearly documented. If for some reason your lab space will not be available on your start date, you should discuss this with your chair and document how this delay will affect your research productivity and the departmental expectations of your research.

The next step will be to start filling your lab space with the necessary equipment. There are two ways to accomplish this task: spending your start-ups funds or accessing free equipment from departmental or institutional storage. Either way you go, establish contact with the
departmental administrative assistant, as she/he may be able to offer a great amount of assistance. The administrative assistant may also be the primary manager of your start-up funds; thus, once you begin spending those funds, she/he will be involved in processing the paperwork and accessing your account. It is also recommended that you keep track of your funds in a separate spreadsheet for yourself—this will be helpful when you need to quickly reference how much money you have remaining in your account.

**Accessing free equipment.** Before you start spending your funds, investigate the possibility of salvaging leftover equipment. Ask the administrative assistant if the department has a supply closet or storage office that may contain extra desks, tables, chairs, bookshelves, and other basic lab equipment that you can requisition. The department’s storage closet can be a good source from which to obtain basic supplies. Also, contact the institution’s Information Technology (IT) office. Some institutions will re-deploy older model computers and printers at no cost. While an older model computer might not serve all of your computing needs, it could serve a useful purpose or, at least, be an inexpensive option to get you started.

In addition, some institutions may have a Surplus Supplies division. This office coordinates surplus items from across the entire campus, collecting extra equipment that departments can no longer store, and redistributing it to other departments. Contact the director of the Surplus Supplies division and ask if she/he has the particular item you need in stock. Alternatively, ask if you are allowed to walk through the storage facility and “shop” for yourself. Remember, these are surplus supplies accumulated from every department, thus your shopping expedition may feel a bit like wading through a huge garage sale of miscellaneous junk! Nonetheless, you may find a useful item or two. Furthermore, you would be wise to reserve some of your start-ups funds for future replacement of these items (or any gained from salvage). Given their age and use, they may malfunction sooner than you would like. Thus, having funds on hand to replace them is important. Yet at the same time, obtaining salvage items is an opportunity to obtain supplies for your lab for a fraction of the retail cost, if not completely free, and help get you started in setting up.

**Spending your start-up funds.** Most certainly, you will not be able to fill your lab completely with free equipment. Thus, as you begin to purchase equipment using your start-up funds, remember to start early. The use of such funding necessitates processing paperwork through multiple offices, including your department and the institution’s accounting department, and this process will inevitably take longer than you expect. Therefore, if it is at all possible, place the orders for your computer, software, printer and other equipment prior to actually arriving on campus. This request may save you from having to wait several weeks to receive your equipment after you begin your new job. Another benefit to spending your start-up funds earlier rather than saving them too long is that many start-up packages are stipulated to be spent within a certain time frame. Thus, while you want to spend your funds judiciously, at the same time you do not want to save them for so long that they become unavailable. It is important to be aware of this balancing act as you use your start-up funds.
Compare the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing technology through your institution’s IT department or campus bookstore versus purchasing these items online via other vendors. Many institutions have pre-established contracts with certain vendors, and as a result you may be able to get a better price. Alternatively, your institution may require you to purchase items through their IT department and prohibit the use of outside vendors. In addition, many IT departments will only agree to provide service/maintenance to computers or printers sold by their bookstore or preapproved vendor. The last thing you want to do is spend money on technology for which your IT department will not provide support. Be sure to investigate these issues before spending your funds. Once again, your administrative assistant may be able to provide guidance in this matter.

**Working with Research Assistants**

Now that you have completed your prerequisite training and set up your lab with the basic necessities, you are getting closer to conducting your research. If you have not done so already, you should consider what type of research project you want to conduct. Conceptualizing your study and understanding its scope are important factors to consider as you get started. Will you be extending your dissertation, thus capitalizing on literature with which you are familiar? Or will you be starting a new line of research? Ideally you would have considered these factors during the interview process and assured yourself that you would be able to conduct your research within this environment, thus you are a “good fit” for your department and institution. However, now is the time to get specific and consider exactly what you need to start your first research project. For example, how many research assistants (RAs) do you anticipate needing in order to carry out your research projects? Will you be working with undergraduate or graduate RAs? How do you recruit and train quality RAs? Before we begin, consider this tip—do not accept too many students into your lab too quickly. It is best to grow gradually, confidently adding trust-worthy students over time, than to open the flood gates and be bombarded with more students to supervise than your research will support (Zacks & Roediger, 2004).

**Recruiting Research Assistants**

How you recruit research assistants (RAs) into your lab may vary depending on whether you will be working with graduate students or not. There is the stereotype that undergraduate students are not helpful in producing research—either because they do not have the training or motivation to do so. However, this stereotype does not always hold true. Gant, Dillon, & Malott (1980) discuss specific behavioral strategies one could use to increase productivity among student researchers, including establishing performance records and making letters of recommendation dependent upon performance. Furthermore, if you are willing to follow the tips below to create an atmosphere of a professional and productive lab, working with undergraduates can be a rewarding experience. However, before discussing working with undergraduates, let us begin by talking about graduate students.

**Graduate student RAs.** Working with graduate RAs can be exciting and productive. Depending on your department/institution and how much emphasis is placed on research, the
graduate students who apply to your program will have some understanding of what will be expected of them with regard to research productivity. At the very least, they should be aware of whether they will need to complete a thesis or dissertation in order to complete the program. Thus, you are able to select RAs from a group of candidates that share this mindset, and that is one step in the right direction.

Many graduate-level programs institute an interview day or interview weekend when selecting new students to enroll in the program. This interview process can help to impose a sense of structure as you recruit your RAs. To begin, if you are a member of the selection committee, you may be able to review the candidate’s application materials prior to the interview. This preview can help you get a sense of the applicants and which ones might be a good match for your research. Your department will establish a schedule for the interview day/weekend and you will meet with the candidates. During these interviews, you will have a lot of material to cover in a relatively brief period of time. Not only do you need to assess their appropriateness for your department’s program, but you also want to interview them for eligibility to work in your lab. To this end, be prepared to discuss your research, both what you have done and where you are going, but also be ready to interview the candidate regarding his/her skills and assets. Consider the following questions: Are there certain skills or experiences you expect out of your graduate student? Do your expectations of the student’s performance align with his/her goals for graduate school? If the student’s research interests do not align with yours perfectly, then how far away from your line of research are you willing to venture? These sorts of interview questions, combined with a review of the student’s application materials (e.g., GRE, GPA), will hopefully yield a strong group of applicants from which you can choose a student.

Undergraduate student RAs. If your department does not include graduate students, you can still recruit high quality undergraduate assistants to work in your lab. While working with undergraduates is different than working with graduate students, it can be a very rewarding experience and one that can yield productivity for your research as well. However, you will need to engage in a more rigorous selection process. As opposed to graduate students who are pre-screened (e.g., they have passed the departmental cut-offs for GRE and GPA prior to being offered an interview), undergraduate students are a more heterogeneous group.

Start by devising a formal application for your lab (Lechago, Love, & Carr, 2009). This form should include the applicant’s contact information, grade level, GPA, a list of relevant courses such as Statistics and Research Methods and the grade received in each course. You may also want to ask whether the applicant took these courses in your department or transferred them from another institution. If the applicant took the course within your department, you may have a better understanding of the rigor of the course and, thus, the applicant’s knowledge and skill. You should also ask the applicant to articulate why they are interested in working in your lab. Do they intend to apply to graduate school? Do they expect to be compensated? Getting the answers to these sorts of questions can help clear up any confusion early on. For example, if you do not have the funds to pay your RAs, but instead intend to recruit volunteers, work
with students for course credit, or with students via “work study” or financial aid programs, this should be communicated clearly.

You may want to consider setting up a website for your lab. As your lab grows, you can post information about your research, your RAs, your CV, etc. In turn, your website can become a recruitment tool for future undergraduates who are interested in getting involved in your research. However, to begin, you can post your lab application online and direct students who express interest to access it, complete it, and return it to you. Be aware of which students voice interest in being your RA, yet fail to return a completed application (or do so after an extended period of time). You may be approached informally by students (e.g., in the halls, before or after class, in the Student Union) who inquire about your research and whether you need a RA. Some of these students may genuinely be interested in and committed to becoming a RA; however, many others will be expressing their interest “off the cuff” or are merely not aware of the level of responsibility required to be a RA. The very first step in your screening process can be to direct students to your website and request that they complete and submit an application to your lab. How quickly and thoroughly they do this task can speak volumes about their work ethic and their readiness to accept the responsibilities of being a RA.

After receiving a completed application, schedule an interview with the candidate. Inform the student that this interview will be formal and they should come prepared with a resume and appropriate interview attire. This information serves two purposes: first, it conveys that you take your research seriously and expect any potential RA to do the same, and secondly, it provides another opportunity to observe the student’s behavior during the interview. If he/she arrives in inappropriate attire or unprepared, you may consider this behavior as indicative of someone you do not want to bring into your lab.

The interview of an undergraduate applicant will follow a similar format as that for a graduate student. You should be prepared to discuss your research and to ask about the applicant’s interest in your lab. However, you will need to be particularly clear about your expectations for an undergraduate student. As previously mentioned, graduate students understand that they are expected to be involved in research. Most undergraduate students are not required to be a RA in order to graduate. Thus, you should be able to articulate exactly what types of activities the student could expect—recruiting subjects, data collection, data entry, data analysis, etc. However, even such common terms as these may not hold much meaning for an inexperienced undergraduate student. Therefore, you need to be able to give details. For example, instead of merely referencing “subject recruitment” describe exactly what this would entail (e.g., making, printing, and posting fliers around campus, placing advertisements in the student newspaper).

Share with the student your expectations for your RAs. Clarify with the student which projects you expect him/her to be involved in and at what stage those projects are (e.g., still in conceptualization, currently under IRB review, post-data collection). Discuss with the student how many hours per week he/she could devote to the lab and any other extracurricular activities they are involved in which might interfere with their availability. Communicate your lab policies with regard to professional dress, interacting with subjects, and whom to notify if
the student were suddenly ill or unable to keep a lab-related appointment. Also let the student know if you are willing to supervise research projects that he/she creates independently of your work. Toward the end of the interview, you may consider taking the student to your lab space and giving him/her a tour of the facility and/or letting the student meet with your current RAs so he/she might be able to gain another student’s perspective of what it is like to work in your lab.

The goal is to use the interview period as a time to both assess the student’s readiness to be an RA, but also to provide the student with as much information as possible so he/she can accurately determine if they truly want to become an RA. The level of formality with which you conduct this interview will help to convey to the student the gravity of accepting a RA position. There are some circumstances that provide more structure and thus help influence the expectations of a RA. For example, if the student will be enrolled for course credit in exchange for their work as a RA, or if you are able to monetarily compensate the student, then the student is entering into a more structured agreement. If the student will be enrolled for course credit, you should construct a syllabus outlining your expectations, the student’s duties, and how you will assess the student’s progress (Lechago et al., 2009). There should be a clear grading system (Lechago et al.) which informs the student under which circumstances he/she should be dismissed from the lab or receive a failing grade (e.g., breaking confidentiality). Similarly, if the student will be compensated, a contract should be written detailing the number of hours expected of the student, the corresponding hourly wage, specific duties, etc. A sample contract can be found in DiBartolo & Shutts (2000). This contract may also be used for students seeking course credit.

However, working with students for course credit or providing compensation is not always feasible. As previously stated, many junior faculty may not have the funds to pay their RAs. Furthermore, there may be departmental requirements associated with students enrolled for course credit. For example, some departments require Statistics or Research Methods courses to have been completed before a student can enroll in an Independent Study/Research Credit course. While these sorts of pre-requisites are understandable, they also limit the pool of students from which you can recruit. Thus, consider working with students on a purely volunteer basis instead of for course credit or monetary compensation.

Working with undergraduate students on a volunteer basis has both advantages and disadvantages. Perhaps the largest disadvantage is that, without a formal agreement (i.e., course credit), the student is free to quit working in your lab at any point (Lechago et al., 2009). While this is a serious matter to consider, there are tactics to lessen the probability of this offense occurring. A very rigorous and cautious selection process, as discussed above, can go a long way in finding a volunteer RA you can trust. Furthermore, if you are able to find freshmen or sophomore students who are mature enough to work in your lab, then you will be able to develop a working relationship with them over a longer period of time and thus not only build your trust in them but also allow them to make more meaningful contributions to the lab. Finally, you may decide to seek references from the more senior faculty in your department and/or the faculty advisor of Psi Chi with regard to top students within your department.

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Training Research Assistants

Once you have selected your RAs, it is important for you to keep in mind the nature of their role in your lab. Whether the student is receiving course credit, being paid, or working voluntarily may affect how you interact with him/her. If the student is receiving course credit, then you may structure your interactions similarly to how you would in a traditional course (e.g., use a syllabus, assign readings or projects, grade the student’s performance on these tasks). If the student is a paid employee, then this relationship grants you more authority to set hard deadlines and take an overall more authoritarian role. However, working with volunteers can be different than either scenario above. Your goal is to get as much productivity out of your RAs as possible without having them burn out and quit your lab. Thus, you may change your approach so as to combine being an educator, mentor, and boss all in one. As a volunteer, the student most likely has expressed a sincerity and passion for learning and for conducting research (otherwise, you probably would not have selected them in the first place!). It is up to you to continue to nurture their enthusiasm, and thus their contribution to your lab, rather than stifle it. Maintaining a very honest and open line of communication between you and your RAs will be essential. Weekly meetings with your RAs during which time tasks and deadlines are discussed can be a helpful format to improving communication (Gant et al., 1980).

In communicating with your RAs, first acknowledge the fact that they were specifically selected for this position above other applicants. Identify the positive qualities (i.e., enthusiasm, professionalism, potential) you saw in their application and during their interview process and congratulate them on becoming a RA. This discussion underscores the serious nature of being a RA and reinforces the positive qualities you want your RAs to continue to exhibit in your lab.

Second, if you are working with volunteer RAs, acknowledge this fact and discuss both the advantages and disadvantages of this relationship. Do not shy away from stating the obvious, such as working without pay—your RAs are quite aware of that fact! Instead, accentuate the positive: discuss what they will learn, what activities they will get to engage in that they perhaps never would have if they had not been selected into your lab, and the benefit of getting a strong letter of recommendation from you for applications to graduate school and/or employment.

Third, delegate transparently. In other words, have a clear sense of the tasks that need to be accomplished, and delegate them to your RAs, but delegate these tasks in a way that clearly communicates your thought process and acknowledges their role in the lab. For example, you may have two tasks on your to-do list: post fliers around campus to recruit subjects and enter data from another study. You would most likely delegate the recruitment task to the RA with the least amount of experience and the data entry to a more experienced RA. This strategy may be obvious to you. It makes sense from a training perspective (not to mention an efficiency one). Yet you should communicate this strategy to your RAs. Explain to the junior RAs that the senior RAs have already gained experience posting fliers, and that they may have also completed coursework (Statistics or Research Methods) that better suits them to work with the database. Furthermore, the contribution of the junior RAs is equally important to the lab, for without recruitment the research cannot take place. Encourage them to continue to
progress in their training, and that by doing so, they will advance in the types of tasks they will be assigned.

Finally, discuss the deadlines by which these tasks need to be accomplished and ask each RA if they will be able to complete the task by that time. Remember, you are working with student volunteers—they will have many other obligations, both academic and extracurricular. Thus, be transparent when you delegate, emphasizing which tasks are top priority and which are less so, and ask your RAs to only accept the task if they are confident they will be able to complete it within the designated time frame. Furthermore, assure your RAs that there will be plenty more work to do in the future; therefore, they should not feel pressured to accept a task they cannot complete. If you are able to convey this message in a collaborative and supportive framework, you will create an atmosphere in your lab in which RAs feel they can work voluntarily without getting burnt out. In the end, you will serve as both a mentor and educator to your RAs, be able to accomplish your research goals, and save spending your start-up funds.

One of the first tasks you should assign your RAs is to complete any applicable IRB training as it pertains to your research. Many institutions have this training available online. Indeed, as previously stated, you yourself will need to complete such training. While this information may seem obvious to you (it may be very similar to the training you received in graduate school), and you may feel tempted to have your RAs rush through it so they can get started on other tasks, keep in mind that you are working with students. Whether they are undergraduate or graduate level, their educational experience is of utmost importance. Thus, make it clear to your students that you want them to take the IRB training seriously, to fully engage in the material, and not to rush through it. This message conveys two points. First, you respect the educational nature of their position as a student and you want them to have a solid foundation in their training experience. Second, as a professor and as a researcher, you adhere to and conduct yourself in an ethical manner.

As you build relationships and continue to work with your RAs, consider instituting a regular performance evaluation—no matter if the student is getting paid, course credit or a volunteer, it can be helpful for both of you if they receive regular, documented feedback as to their progress in your lab. This type of feedback could occur at the end of each semester or at the end of the academic year. It should be consistent with whatever previously documented goals you provided to the student (e.g., what you outlined in your syllabus). Furthermore, it should clearly state whether the student met your expectations and identify their strengths and areas for improvement. This evaluation will not only provide structure and consistency when supervising your RAs, but it can help the student to become productive in your lab.

**Starting Your Research**

You have completed your IRB training, set your lab space up with basic materials/equipment, and recruited a few good RAs—now you are ready to start conducting your research. No one knows your research better than you; thus, how you proceed in starting your first project will depend on your study and its aims. Obviously, the first step in starting a line of research is with
the first project. Yet as you consider exactly what you would like to do for your first project, conceptualize this in terms of your entire line of research—how will this first project be the stepping stone to a second project or a third project? In what ways are you willing to expand your area of research to include other related topics, populations, etc.?

As you are conceptualizing your line of research, think about how this will apply to the number of RAs and types of supplies you will need. Perhaps if your first project consists of a relatively simple online survey, then you will only need one or two RAs to assist you. However, if your second study is going to be more in depth and require more training, then perhaps you will need to recruit more RAs now in order to have enough time to get them ready for future projects. In this vein, you should envision your line of research as a series of overlapping threads, and begin to set up your lab with this in mind.

If you intend to use a college student sample, then you will need to be familiar with the recruitment options within your department and on your campus. If you did not clarify this during your interview, you should inquire as to whether your department utilizes an electronic research management system (e.g., SONA) and whether there is a subject pool from which you can recruit. If the department uses an electronic research management system (i.e., a system in which subjects can electronically sign up to participate in research and researchers can monitor their subject participation) then you will need to make contact with the administrator of that system (typically the department’s administrative assistant) and complete any procedures necessary to become enrolled in the system. Likewise, if your department utilizes a more traditional approach (i.e., students sign up on a departmental bulletin board to participate in research), you will need to check with the administrative assistant to determine if there are standard forms you should use when posting your studies. If your department does not have a subject pool, or you are otherwise unable to collect a large enough sample on campus, consider utilizing the Internet to access additional subjects or collaborating with researchers at other institutions (Zacks & Roediger, 2004).

Clarify any sort of departmental requirements with regard to subject participation. Some departments require students to participate in a certain number of hours of research and this participation affects their course grade. Other departments allow their students to participate for extra credit points to be determined by the individual faculty member. However your department is set up, be clear on the policies and procedures, and how that will affect your need to track your subject participation. If your department utilizes an electronic system, you may have very little to do with tracking your subjects and assuring they receive their due credit. However, if it is a more traditional approach, you may be responsible for creating and distributing “receipts” for your research subjects.

Finally, if you intend to collect data on students outside the departmental subject pool (i.e., typically students not enrolled in any psychology course), investigate how best to recruit these students. Your RAs can provide valuable information on this topic. Ask them what sorts of media outlets the students on campus tend to use. Is it the student newspaper? Or the campus radio station? Or social media outlets such as Facebook or Twitter? Ask them about
the best places to post fliers and whether there are any institutional regulations regarding such activity. You can also talk to your fellow faculty members—ask them if there are any email listservs on which you could send an announcement about your research or if you could make an announcement during their class. With trial and error, you will come to know the most effective ways of recruiting participants for your studies at your campus. However, the tips mentioned previously will be a good place to start.

**Summary**

At one point you may have thought nothing could be harder than getting into graduate school, or passing your comprehensive exams, or defending your dissertation, or nailing down your dream job in academia. While each of those accomplishments were certainly milestones in your professional development, you are now facing yet another challenging hurdle...setting up your lab on a budget and getting students involved in your research.

Hopefully the tips provided in this chapter will help calm your fears a bit. Remember to start early, even prior to arriving on campus if at all possible. Be sure to clarify what the expectations are for your institution with regard to promotion/tenure and then conceptualize your research goals within that context. That is, set reasonable goals for conducting research within the context of your department, institution, and other obligations (i.e., teaching and service). Push through the logistics of getting your lab set up fairly quickly. You will always have time to upgrade in the future, but until then, take advantage of the low-cost opportunities to stock your lab with basic equipment such as computers, printers, tables and chairs.

Recruiting and training quality research assistants will be an ongoing endeavor. However, start early and be persistent in these efforts. A well-trained and motivated undergraduate student can be as valuable to your lab as a graduate student. Similarly, recruiting research participants will be an ongoing endeavor as well and one that you will fine tune with practice. Start out by gaining a better understanding of the infrastructure and policies within your department and institution and do not be afraid to ask your RAs or fellow faculty for input.

The timeframe for implementing these tips will vary by individual. Some junior faculty are collecting data before Thanksgiving of their first fall semester, while others require a full semester or two to get the ball rolling. However, the quicker you start, the more time you will have to budget for any unexpected setbacks. Your end goal is to establish a strong dossier for review when you are evaluated for promotion and tenure—these tips will help you get started off on the right foot.

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Chapter 6

That’s an Empirical Question. . .
The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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As a psychologist you have no doubt been invested in the practice of using science and its research findings to inform your decisions. You likely consult the research literature before making decisions about your own research, which treatment might be best for a client, or even what side effects are prevalent in a new prescription your doctor has suggested. Perhaps you also consult the literature to confirm claims about what “causes” cancer or Alzheimer’s that you encounter in the media, or to clarify under what conditions one diet and exercise regimen may be most effective. You may have even consulted the literature to inform your teaching practices. No? Well, there is no time like the present. And while you are at it, you may even consider contributing to the literature on the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

While it has long been commonplace for psychologists to inform myriad decisions (both within their own research and personal lives) with the support of data derived from the strategic and careful implementation of the scientific method, the notion of research related to teaching is a relatively new one in psychology’s history. Perhaps Boyer (1990) was among the first to suggest that teaching itself is a scholarly endeavor and others since have sought to extend and clarify the definition of scholarship in teaching (Halpern, Smothergill, Allen, Baker, Baum, & Best, 1998; Irons & Buskist, 2008). In order to understand scholarship of teaching, it is perhaps best to begin by contrasting it with scholarly teaching. Many teachers of psychology today engage in what is referred to as scholarly teaching, or teaching that is informed by the research literature. Although young, research in the domain of teaching (and in particular teaching of psychology) is quite rich and consulting its contents may well inform many decisions you make in the classroom. Those interested in implementing this practice can conduct a PsychInfo (or other) search for topics in teaching just as you would for other areas of psychology. Scholarly teaching might also include examining your own teaching by collecting some data to assess the efficacy of an assignment or technique. To the extent that teaching is “personally empirical” (Daniel & Poole, 2009), meaning that what works for one teacher (or topic) may not work for another, scholarly teaching allows for informal investigation of what seems to work for you and under what conditions.

While scholarly teaching may involve studying one’s own teaching, SoTL is the process of studying teaching using the scientific method and sharing those results (after peer review) with the broader discipline. A further useful distinction can be made between SoTL and the science of learning, an integrative scientific approach to studying learning (as opposed to teaching and learning) that involves development of a common theoretical framework for the understanding
of learning. The science of learning can be characterized as a cross-discipline, theory-driven (seeking to understand mechanisms of learning, what factors affect learning, etc.) approach to understand learning, not necessarily in the context of teaching.

What is SoTL and What are Potential Challenges?

SoTL is distinct from scholarly teaching in that it is informed by existing literature or theory, employs the scientific method, data undergo peer review, and the findings are made public. In sum, SoTL is simply research on teaching. Initial reception of this idea is typically eager—of course, it makes so much sense! But upon further consideration, many teachers become skeptical of the process for various reasons.

First, and perhaps foremost, some teachers are in an unfortunate position of knowing that SoTL will not count as scholarship towards promotion and tenure (although for many institutions it certainly does; Gurung, Ansburg, Alexander, Kerr Lawrence, & Johnson, 2008). If effort is not counted towards tenure, then many will shy away in lieu of other research endeavors; however, excellence in teaching is typically valued, at least in some part, for tenure. SoTL, even if it does not count towards scholarship, can be part of a process to improve teaching—not only your own but others’ as well. You may also be able to package your work as service to the teaching community. Additionally, the teaching of psychology community is in and of itself a valuable resource for professional contacts, mentoring, and potential collaborations. Organizations devoted to teaching of psychology and/or SoTL also often provide opportunities for teaching-related research or travel grant funding (see Suggested Readings and Resources at the end of this chapter). Experiences with members of the teaching community may lead to important professional relationships that can be beneficial when letters of recommendation for tenure dossiers are needed from colleagues outside of your department. Although SoTL may not be valued as scholarship in your institution, engaging in SoTL certainly has much value.

A second reason some may be leery of SoTL is that as researchers, you might immediately identify the challenges with respect to experimental control and generalization. Certainly, there are many aspects of a teaching context that are a challenge to internal validity—inability to randomly sample students to enroll in courses, snow days (and the like) that prohibit attendance/data collection, and no control over what other courses students may be taking simultaneously, to name a few potential extraneous influences. Also, questions of external validity are always present—how do we know if what works for one class works for another or for a new set of students or for another teacher? Although these are valid concerns, they are not unique to teaching research. Rather, these concerns are the same as those that researchers must consider for nearly all research. Clinical trial research is a particularly well suited analogy in that it is often difficult to sample randomly or to control for circumstances such as weather preventing scheduled appointments (or class meetings), attrition (or withdrawal from classes), or diffusion of treatment conditions (or students talking to one another contaminating the manipulation). The same questions of external validity are present when considering if a treatment will work for others outside of the study, for those with slightly different sets of
symptoms, or for different clinicians. When we examine these similarities it is difficult to suggest that teaching research is too riddled with challenges to undertake.

If you are not a researcher, you may also be reticent to engage in SoTL, but for very different reasons than the hesitant researcher described above. Perhaps the most notable barrier to a novice or out of practice researcher is confidence in one’s ability to conduct research. If you want to engage in SoTL and you are unsure about how to begin (or any steps beyond!), consider recruiting a collaborator. You may do this locally within your own department or campus or you may reach out to someone you identify from the literature or a teaching conference who shares your interests. Working with a more experienced collaborator will not only allow you to feel more secure in the methods you employ, but will also allow you to be a student of the process. If you do not have a collaborator, you may borrow a colleagues’ research methods text to brush up and get some ideas. Alternatively, you might examine articles from the *Teaching of Psychology* journal to find studies similar in content or process to your own interests and model what you see or contact the authors with questions.

A final reason many teachers may avoid SoTL may be related to concerns about student well-being. What if you randomly assign students to one condition or another and one method fails and some students are actually worse off than others? This way of thinking may be of issue to both teachers personally or the Institutional Review Board at your institution (IRB). IRB members will often note that randomly assigning students to different conditions in your course is unfair and one group may be at an advantage. Students who know they have been assigned to one group or another may complain of unfairness either because they may be in the group that is likely to perform better, or the group that has to do more or less work (for example). Although these concerns have the potential to be real challenges (ethically or experimentally), there are safeguards to employ to minimize such issues (detailed below).

Hopefully, you will be able to overcome the potential challenges of SoTL and utilize it to answer your own questions about what you do both in and out of the classroom. What follows is a brief introduction for beginning SoTL, as well as some caveats to keep in mind once you begin to collect, interpret, and share data. Although SoTL can be descriptive in nature, I will focus on experimental and quasi-experimental methods, as those tend to yield the most potential challenges.

**How Do I Engage in SoTL?**

Once you decide that SoTL is an option, you may first begin to think of your course(s) as an experiment (or descriptive study). Your research question may be “is this technique/assignment/process effective?,” “does one technique/assignment/process work better than another?,” and so on. Just as you would with any other study, settle on one parsimonious question to guide your next steps. You may consider asking research questions about many different aspects of a course and/or your teaching: your textbook selection or use of readings, course policies, availability, syllabus content, questions about specific assignments, types of feedback provided, demonstration efficacy, or test construction and beyond. Do not
limit your thinking to just what happens within the classroom. You may even consider studying the efficacy of some aspect of your advising—studying the effectiveness of a resource you have developed for advisees (perhaps a handout about selecting graduate schools or about the registration process at your school) or the way you disseminate information to advisees (e.g., email, website, group meetings).

Once you have a question, identify reasonable dependent variables. Dependent variables should be objective and should focus on student learning outcomes whenever possible. Likely, you already have a number of student learning measures (e.g., exams, projects, papers) in your course. However, it may be necessary to make adjustments or develop or add new measures for the sake of your study. A potentially advantageous by-product of SoTL is that in attempting to employ sound research methods, you might also improve your student learning assessment tools. For example, you may need to ensure that your exams are content valid and represent the breadth of information covered in class and readings or you may create a more specific and objective rubric for grading written work.

In addition to student learning outcome variables, dependent variables may also focus on teaching evaluations as outcome. Presumably, good evaluations will reflect good teaching. To the extent that this is true, evaluations as outcome data can be informative in SoTL. However, remember to exercise caution when interpreting data derived from evaluations, as student feedback may be sparse, from extreme responders (e.g., they loved or hated your course) that do not represent the majority of student experiences, and/or influenced by variables unrelated to your teaching. It may be tempting to include among your dependent variables some measure of student liking or preference for assignments (or other intervention); although this may be of interest, this should not be your primary dependent variable. Students may prefer what is easiest or most fun, not necessarily what is best for their learning (although they certainly can be one in the same). Once you have identified dependent variables, next you may identify hypotheses, proposed analyses, and begin to develop strategies for collecting sound data.

Before data collection, some initial decisions that must be made are related to the setting of data collection for your study. First, you must decide if you want to collect data in a research laboratory or classroom setting. Both have their distinct advantages and disadvantages. A particular advantage of the lab setting is control of potential extraneous variables. A disadvantage is that you may have poor ability to generalize to a classroom setting as there is little or no incentive (i.e., no grade at stake) to perform well in a lab protocol (thus students may not put forth effort to learn or perform), but there is much incentive for performance in a class (such that students will likely attempt to learn and perform well). Collecting data in the classroom adds an element of confidence in the effects of your teaching, but there remain concerns about generalizability to other classes, topics, or teachers, as well as threats to internal validity that could influence the outcome variable(s). Ideally, you would attempt to answer your question both under controlled and applied conditions through a programmatic approach (discussed below), but you have to start somewhere and in most cases there is no wrong decision. Unless your primary area of study is SoTL or something directly relevant, you may consider beginning in the classroom, particularly if you are really most concerned about
what works for you and your students. Once you share your findings, someone else may replicate your work to add to our understanding of the results.

If your research question involves a complex manipulation, you may need to make a decision about incremental versus full-scale manipulation. In other words, if you are examining the efficacy of a set of techniques or methods or a collection of activities or assignments, you may want to consider a programmatic approach that will examine the complete set or collection, as well as its component parts. You may begin with incremental manipulation (component analysis) and work towards full-scale implementation or vice versa. Not all research questions will require this step, but for some it will be an essential part of planning. As an example of these possibilities, consider a course for which you want to implement problem-based learning (PBL; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). You may begin by developing a series of PBL activities to be used throughout the course for a variety of topics. This would be an example of a full-scale manipulation in which you make changes using a set of activities. You might compare exam scores from one section of a course that experiences PBL to another section that does not. Suppose you find that that the PBL section shows significantly higher scores on exams (presumably as a result of better learning).

Although you might be tempted to conclude that PBL improves learning, you now have new questions to consider—was the group difference a result of PBL or pre-existing differences in sections? Were all the PBL activities contributing to group differences or do some work while others have no impact on learning? Would these types of activities work for other courses? A program of research examining the effect of PBL on learning might include subsequent studies, some that involve random assignment of group membership or order of condition exposure, some that involve other classes and/or teachers, and some might examine each PBL activity on its own to determine which activities may be best relative to others with respect to learning outcomes.

Another decision to consider, much like any other study, is from where your participants will come. For a lab study, you may use a participant pool, flyers on campus, or campus emails. For a classroom study, you may choose to compare separate sections of a class (or separate classes) for a quasi-experimental comparison (pre-existing groups or pre/post) or you may use a single class from which students are randomly assigned to groups (for a between-subject comparison) or order of condition exposure (for a within-subjects comparison). If you choose to randomly assign within a class or to compare one section to another, you will want to think about how to ensure that some students are not at particular disadvantages compared to others. Unfortunately, we do not always know what will lead to an advantage (or not)—that is why we are doing the research! To handle this potential issue, you might consider implementing a strategy whereby you examine differences in the outcome variables before the end of the semester. If there is a significant difference, you offer remediation opportunities (when possible and appropriate) and you have a system in place for adjusting disadvantaged scores. After all, if it appears that the differences in those groups’ scores are due to your manipulation, then one group was at a disadvantage! This process is analogous to a wait-list control group in a
clinical trial (where wait-listed controls are offered the treatment that appears best according to the data after the study is complete).

Once you make decisions about the basic procedure for assignment of groups or order of conditions, you should carefully consider how to measure your dependent variable(s) and how to employ any possible controls you may wish to exert. Many studies include measures of student preference or liking for an activity or process, but recently priority has been given to measuring student outcome variables, like student learning, retention, ability to generalize information, or skills. Although it may seem easy enough to quantify the outcomes noted above, it is certainly quite a challenge to operationalize many of the dependent variables of most interest and value to teachers (and students!). Certainly, scores on already existing measures (such as exams, project scores, or other graded assignments) in your course are possible dependent variables when appropriate. Appropriateness of measures will depend on your particular question. You might consider developing new measures (e.g., assignments) to assess student outcomes, especially if your question cannot be measured with your current student learning outcome measures. You may also consider having blind raters (such that bias may be reduced and inter-rater reliability may be calculated) score your students’ work in addition to and independently of you for the purposes of SoTL. Development of a rubric for any subjective measures will be necessary if you do not already have one. If comparing data across semesters, remember to consider those data when making course preparation decisions such as the text you will use, the time of day for the course, etc. If your dependent variable is teaching evaluation data, you might consider employing a variety of measures to capture information about your performance. Consult the SoTL literature for many excellent suggestions (e.g., Buskist, Sikorski, Buckley, & Saville, 2002). Once you iron out details of execution specific to your research questions, you are ready to begin!

Examples of SoTL

I have summarized the key considerations above in broad context. Specific examples may be helpful to fully realize how this process works. To illustrate this process both in and out of the laboratory, I will use several examples from the SoTL literature. First, I will describe a program of study in SoTL designed to examine the efficacy of what is known as interteaching (see Boyce & Hineline, 2002 for more detail). In brief, interteaching is based on behavioral principles and involves providing preparatory discussion (or “prep”) guides to students that correspond to assigned reading material. Students are asked to complete the prep guides prior to class. Upon arrival to class, students pair off (always working in a new pair when possible) and discuss their work (for which they receive a small amount of participation points). Following discussion, students report on what aspects of the material were most challenging and teachers then (often the next class period) lecture on the most commonly reported challenging material. On exams, students are awarded quality points, or points awarded if both they and their discussion partners receive full credit on certain exam questions (designed to reinforce quality discussion). Research has recently been conducted to examine the efficacy of interteaching relative to other forms of teaching, as well as some component analysis to determine which aspects of interteaching may be most important (or unnecessary).
Broadly, the research question we will consider is: does interteaching lead to improved learning relative to other types of teaching? The dependent variable of interest is student learning outcome, in particular, test scores. Saville, Zinn, and Elliott (2005) conducted a preliminary laboratory examination of the efficacy of interteaching relative to lecture, reading only, or control (no instruction). Student volunteers were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions noted above, presented with material, and then quizzed in the lab setting. The interteaching group performed significantly better than others on the quiz. As a follow-up, Saville, Zinn, Neef, Norman, and Ferreri (2006) conducted one of the first classroom studies examining interteaching relative to traditional lecture. In a set of studies, they alternated interteaching and lecture throughout two courses (counterbalancing exposure in two sections in the second study). Quiz scores were used to measure learning. For both studies, quiz scores were higher for material tested under the interteaching condition. Several other studies have been conducted to support these findings; however, Saville and Zinn have begun to engage in component analysis to determine if some aspects of interteaching may be unnecessary. In a study examining the contribution of quality points to learning in interteaching, Saville and Zinn (2009) alternated the use of quality points in counterbalanced order in two sections of a course. Results suggested that quality points seem to have little impact on exam scores in interteaching. This sampling of studies illustrates the notion of programmatic research in that the researchers began in the laboratory, extended to the classroom setting, and examined component parts of their teaching method. Based on the work that exists to date, it appears that interteaching may be a viable alternative to lecture, if not an improvement, with respect to student learning. Questions still remain such as for whom does this method work best, for what topics might this method be most effective, and which components are contributing to improvements in learning.

As a second example, we will consider the question: Does a welcome email sent to students before a class begins impact student outcome variables and evaluations of the teacher? Legg and Wilson (2009) examined the impact of a welcome email sent to students from the professor just before the term began. Students were randomly assigned to receive the welcome email or not and then all were asked to evaluate the professor at three time points throughout the semester. Results revealed that the welcome email enhanced both student self-reported motivation as well as retention (presumably as a function of increased motivation to learn). In addition, teaching evaluations were higher from students who received the welcome email relative to those who did not. This research is an example of a study that examined both student outcomes (retention), as well as teaching evaluation data. As you can see, the study was simple in design and execution and provided interesting and important data.

Daniel and Woody (2010) also provide a nice example of elegant SoTL in their examination of student learning via podcasts relative to reading. Students were randomly assigned to listen to a podcast or read an article on the same content. Students completed a 10-item quiz related to the content following exposure to material. Students who listened to the podcast yielded significantly lower mean quiz scores than those who read the text. In addition to quiz scores, Daniel and Woody collected data related to student perceptions of their own knowledge,
understanding, and enjoyment of the podcast or text. Data revealed that before the use of the podcast or text, students preferred podcasts, but after completing the quiz (even before feedback), preference for podcasts decreased. These data suggest reading a text may be more beneficial for learning than using podcasts such that podcasts should be used cautiously in conjunction with reading (or not at all)—and not in lieu of reading. This research is a simple and straightforward manipulation that contributes to our understanding of the utility of a new teaching tool with respect to an already existing best practice.

For each of the examples provided above, the researchers engaged in the research and then presented findings at a conference. There are myriad teaching conferences including local, regional, and national meetings. Following conference presentation, data were written up for publication and, as noted with each study, published in the literature. In some cases, replication may be necessary before publication, but that will vary by study and intended outlets for presentation and publication. Journals that publish SoTL, such as *Teaching of Psychology* or *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, are peer-reviewed and require the manuscripts to be written just as you would any other scientific report for psychology—in APA-style (unless otherwise noted). See the Society for Teaching of Psychology website (www.teachpsych.org) for further details on teaching conferences, as well as information about the *Teaching of Psychology* journal. See Suggested Readings at the end of this chapter for links to lists of journals that publish SoTL that may not be psychology specific. Also, consider presentation and publication in outlets that may not be SoTL specific when appropriate (e.g., Saville, & Zinn, 2009 was published in *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*).

Although the majority of this discussion has centered on experimental and quasi-experimental (i.e., without random assignment) SoTL research, you may certainly employ descriptive methods such as correlational studies to answer a variety of questions you may have about your students’ learning or your teaching. You might also consider the use of qualitative data (e.g., open-ended written responses from students to provided prompts) instead of, or in addition to, quantitative data when appropriate. Regardless of the strategy you choose to employ, consider engaging students in the research side of the study—project development, data collection, data analysis, and so on—just as you might with other research. Teaching assistants, research assistants, or independent study students might be well served to have the research experience and you will have help conducting your study. Many students are very interested in what helps them (and others) learn!

**What Are the Caveats of SoTL?**

I hope that by now you are very excited by the possibility of completing your own SoTL studies! While you maintain that excitement, consider a few sundry caveats. First, patience is a virtue (and often not a virtue we all possess!). Because there are a multitude of potential variables that may influence our abilities to draw sound conclusions from our data and because you may be more focused on your primary area of study, you must be patient and understand that good data may take several semesters (and even longer if you teach a course of interest...
sporadically). Not all studies will take time but be forewarned that they may take upwards of years depending on your question and other variables at play.

A second and related caveat is the notion that “teaching is live” (B. Buskist, personal communication, 2003). In other words, you simply cannot plan for everything that happens within the context of your class, or even in the laboratory. Sometimes your study may be thrown off course in unexpected ways that must be acknowledged. You are a teacher of the course first, and the study is secondary to that mission (although certainly it serves the mission in as much as you may improve your teaching). When snow days (I cite this example from personal experience!), dropped students, technological difficulties, or other issues arise, be patient and reassess—sometimes a study can be salvaged as is, sometimes you will need to chalk it up to pilot data and start fresh in a new semester—there will always be another semester and more students.

As hard as you may try to control potential extraneous variables and to be a good experimentalist in your study, sometimes the classroom setting (or the lab setting) will necessitate compromising best methods. For example, perhaps a class or sample is too small to randomly assign as planned or perhaps you are not able to isolate your manipulation because some of your students are enrolled in another one of your courses or differences in classrooms may influence your dependent variable. The best way to reconcile these hurdles is to recognize the possibilities and to plan for programmatic research if possible and/or measure variables to later control statistically.

A third consideration when deciding whether to engage in SoTL is your teaching evaluations. Many institutions rely heavily, or only, on teaching evaluations to determine quality teaching. It is possible that while engaged in the process of SoTL you may make a change—add an assessment, randomly assign students, or some other element of the study—that may lead some students to evaluate your teaching as lower than it might otherwise be. The opposite is also true; perhaps caring about your teaching and attempting to better understand what works well will lead students to rate your teaching better than they might otherwise. However, many people prefer a known quantity and if no changes are made, evaluations are likely to be a bird in the hand. One strategy for reducing the likelihood that students will respond poorly to your SoTL endeavors is to explain to them what you are doing and why (within reason experimentally). It may be necessary to wait until the end of the term, but if you can impart to them a rationale for your methods and even share the results whenever possible, most students will be understanding and respectful of your goals. Some students (and even colleagues) may never offer understanding; there may always be critics, but the reward for both you and your students typically outweighs the risk.

A final caveat is related to interpretation of findings. Remember to attempt to interpret your findings in the context of the existing literature both in teaching and in any other relevant literatures that may exist for your question. This step is particularly challenging in SoTL, because in some cases there may be little or no data and/or theory to help inform your interpretation. In other cases, data may be largely laboratory findings while yours are classroom or vice versa.
It is important to remember, much like with other areas of research, to be cautious in interpreting findings from a single study. Further, we must also be cautious when applying findings from a program of research conducted in a lab setting to the classroom—sometimes what works in a lab simply does not work in a classroom. Translation of findings in SoTL (or studies to examine if what appears to work in the lab also works in the classroom, and if so under what conditions) is an area of relative weakness at this time such that we are left to make best guesses until the research offers sound data for conclusions. Be mindful of these thoughts when interpreting your own work as well as the work of others.

**Final Thoughts**

SoTL is just like any other research you may do in most ways. Depending on your primary area of study you may be more accustomed to very controlled study conditions or perhaps, you are not a researcher at all and SoTL will be a new endeavor in more than one way. It will serve you well to borrow from what you know—let your primary area inform what you do as much as possible if you have been trained in research. Regardless of your level of experience with conducting applied research or research at all, the scientific method you have used to conduct and/or understand research throughout your career can be applied to study teaching. If you have no research experience, avoid a common novice mistake and start simply. Consider collaborating with others when appropriate and seek out sources of support (e.g., members of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology and their web resources) to help you through the process as needed. Whether you engage in scholarly teaching or SoTL, remember that the goal is to improve teaching so that your students might have improved learning—after all, that is what teaching is all about.

**References**


Suggested Readings and Resources

Readings


Websites


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Chapter 7

Networking and Politics Within Your Institution as a New Faculty Member

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Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.

Will Rogers

If you are anything like me, you likely devoted considerable time to locating information to help answer the type of questions commonly asked by new faculty members. How to structure your classes (even if you have taught some of them before) now that you have a full course load, planning your research program, and figuring out all of the nuances that come with being a new faculty member have likely consumed your life—or will begin to shortly. One area of preparation that is often overlooked in this process, but is of critical importance, is how to deal with institutional networking and politics. Most teachers (and all exemplary faculty members) would never consider going into their classroom without a plan. Yet when it comes to networking and dealing with departmental and institutional politics, very few new faculty members have a developed strategy to excel in these areas (Pifer, 2010).

While every university, college, and department has its own culture, organization, and idiosyncrasies, the information provided throughout this chapter can be utilized in a variety of academic settings. Before we discuss these strategies, let us first look at what research tells us about new faculty member’s job expectations and what role institutional networking plays in this process.

Networking as a Tool to Bridge the Gap between Expectations and Reality

“Hit the ground running.” Since accepting your new position, this is a phrase that you have likely heard from numerous counsels (e.g., your dissertation advisor, new department chair or dean, etc.) or adopted as your own motto. Unfortunately, for many new faculty members the goals that they set during their first years are often unrealistically high and are a leading contributor to work stress and job dissatisfaction (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992; Whitt, 1991). For example, during my first year as a new faculty member I expected that I would be able to publish several manuscripts, present at multiple conferences, apply for at least one grant, develop working agreements with a number of practicum sites for our new graduate program, direct four to five thesis projects, and excel in all of my other job responsibilities (i.e., teaching, research, service) while still having time to spend with my family and enjoy my hobbies. Like many new faculty members, my expectations were met with the
reality of several unaccomplished goals, reduced family and leisure time, and a level of work-related stress that was not anticipated.

My experience was not uncommon, as research has shown that new faculty members almost unanimously report experiencing significant work related stress due to time constraints (Sorcinelli, 1994). While graduate school certainly provides opportunities to practice time management skills—serving as a research assistant, working on a dissertation, or teaching a course—it does not simulate the pressures and time constraints that are placed on faculty members. Difficulties in balancing a full teaching load (not just one or two classes like in graduate school), conducting independent research, and participating in a variety of committees can quickly become debilitating (see Chapter 9).

Another commonly reported area of disillusionment for new faculty members is collegiality or the cooperative interactions and relationships amongst colleagues. While a number of faculty members have reported being pleased with the collegiality within their departments and/or universities (Ambrose et al., 2005), several studies have shown that it is not uncommon for junior faculty to report feeling isolated and lonely, and experience an overall lack of social interactions (e.g., invitations to dinner, sporting events, parties, etc.) and support from senior faculty members (Boice, 1991; Turner & Boice, 1987; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). When combined with the fact that few graduate students report receiving any guidance or training on a variety of faculty responsibilities unrelated to research or teaching (e.g., advising, committee work, ethical issues, etc.; Austin, 2002), this lack of collegiality and professional development can lead to new faculty members reconsidering their career choice (Ambrose et al., 2005). These findings certainly paint a different picture from what most new faculty members probably envisioned professorial life to hold for them. This information is not presented to make you question if you have made the correct career decision, but to prepare you for the possibility of experiencing a work setting that does not map on to your expectations. Fortunately, even if you do find yourself feeling stressed, underprepared, and/or socially isolated, there is a way to assuage those sentiments—networking.

**Institutional Networking**

When you hear the word "networking" what is the first thought that comes to mind? Do you think of social media networking (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.)? Maybe you envision a bunch of middle-aged businessmen playing golf or sitting in plush leather chairs drinking brandy and smoking cigars. Others may think of a more formal network that is based on hierarchies and position descriptions (Pifer, 2010). Regardless of the type of networking you visualized, those of us in the professoriate know the significant role that networking plays in your academic career. As a faculty member you are most likely to utilize informal networks, which are associations that are based on personal characteristics (e.g., gender, race, etc.), academic interests (e.g., cognitive psychology vs. industrial/organizational psychology), and voluntary interactions (e.g., church, athletic teams, etc.). Formal networks are more structured and are often created through university procedures and institutionalized programs (e.g., orientation programs, etc.). While you are likely to utilize both types of networks as you collaborate and interact with
individuals within the broader field (see Chapter 8), it is critical to also become involved with colleagues at your university/college and especially within your department.

Advantages of Networking
The advantages of networking in various settings, including academic institutions, are well documented (Boice, 2000; Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005; Lucas & Murry, 2007). Finkelstein (1982; as cited in Pifer, 2011) conducted one empirical study examining the structure and outcomes of social networking in academic careers. Through survey responses from a sample of faculty members, Finkelstein identified five areas of need that can be fulfilled through networking relationships (see Table 1). As the table suggests, networking can serve multiple purposes with both formal and informal networks leading to resources that may not be available otherwise. So what can you expect to gain by networking within your institution? Let's look more in-depth at some of these potential resources.

Table 1

Finkelstein's Five Functions of Colleagueship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>• Curriculum/course development</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classroom instruction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Managing student behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>• Collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Feedback and/or editing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Grant development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Linkage</td>
<td>• Departmental/Institutional policies and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sponsorship for academic committee work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifying funding sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Linkage</td>
<td>• Facilitating contact with disciplinary colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Access to journal editors and grant agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sponsorship for professional organization positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Support, Intellectual Stimulation, &amp; Friendship</td>
<td>• Reinforcement and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social and intellectual stimulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Career advice</td>
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</table>

The first area that Finkelstein (1982) identified as a strong candidate to benefit from your utilization of institutional networking is teaching. Having had the opportunity to teach a number of courses as a graduate student, I felt comfortable in the classroom, but as a new
faculty member I quickly realized that teaching involved much more than lecturing and grading. As part of my new position, I was required to develop several new courses that would be added to the department’s curriculum and assessed as part of a national certification process for our master’s program in Applied Behavior Analysis. Having never developed a new course before, I identified several faculty members that had years of experience in course development and were familiar with how our university’s curriculum committee viewed proposals and the intricacies (e.g., support from other departments who teach similar courses, expected enrollments, etc.) that are associated with receiving approval for curriculum changes. With their assistance, the courses were approved with minimal changes; what could have been a challenging, tedious, and political process became a valuable learning experience.

Another resource that may be available on your campus that could be extremely beneficial to you as a new faculty member is your university/college’s Center for Teaching and Learning. The name of this center is likely to differ from campus to campus (e.g., Center for Teaching Excellence, Office of Instructional Support and Development, etc.), but is typically designed to promote the professional development of instructional, administrative, and professional staff in support of excellence in teaching and learning. Attending workshops, seminars, lunches, or other programming opportunities that are offered through this center can provide you with an excellent way to gain valuable information about best-practices in the college classroom, as well as a chance to meet individuals outside of your department. These new relationships are likely to be advantageous not only in terms of your development as a teacher, but in creating new friendships and potential opportunities for research collaboration.

As Finkelstein (1982) suggested, being proactive in your institutional networking can often benefit your research productivity. Various studies have found that faculty members who are more connected both intra-departmentally and across the broader field have higher publication rates and are approached more frequently with collaboration opportunities than peers who are less connected (Fox & Mohapatra, 2007; Mitchell, 1987). Although some of these findings may be moderated by other factors, such as the reason for collaboration (e.g., access to special equipment or collaborator has a complementary skill set; Lee & Bozeman, 2005), these data strongly suggest that networking and the collaborations that result from this process are extremely beneficial. For example, as a result of meeting two junior faculty members at one of the programs being hosted by our university’s Center for Teaching and Learning, I was able to collaborate with them on a project that was of interest to me (i.e., body image and weight-management behaviors), but outside my area of expertise. Because of this collaboration, I was able to present the research at a conference that I had never been to before, which in turn created additional networking opportunities.

As you will likely encounter during your first few years as a junior faculty member, your networking experiences as they relate to the various areas identified in Table 1 will not be independent of each other. To illustrate how networking can influence the first two areas (teaching and research) discussed by Finkelstein (1982), let us look at an example that occurred during my first year as a new faculty member. At the start of the second quarter I was contacted by an individual from our campus Disability Support Services (DSS) office and asked if
I would be willing to speak with some of their supervisors about identifying ways to help several students on campus who had a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome (AS). Through this initial meeting and over the next year, we identified a number of areas where the university could create additional supports for students with AS that were transitioning from high school to college. In collaboration with faculty and staff from the Departments of Psychology, Special Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences, as well as Campus Housing and the DSS office, we developed a program to help address some of the common deficits and difficulties that this student population often faces. While I had always been interested in providing behavioral services to individuals with developmental disabilities, it was not until that initial meeting that I had considered working with this particular population. As a result, I began to include more information about behavioral interventions for college students with AS in my graduate Applied Behavior Analysis course, which in turn led to several students conducting their thesis on this topic. Of course, my hope is that this research will inform other individuals' teaching and the cycle will continue.

The third and fourth areas that Finkelstein (1982) discusses are institutional linkage and departmental linkage. Perhaps the most advantageous resource available to you in these areas is a mentor. Mentoring in academia typically comes in three different forms: mentoring in intellectual activities (i.e., teaching and research), professional/career development (i.e., how to network outside of the department and achieve a strong work/family balance), and departmental politics (e.g., navigating departmental policies and boundaries) (Ambrose et al., 2005). Sometimes guidance in these areas can be addressed by a single individual, but often you will likely need to turn to several different colleagues or mentors depending on the issue at hand (for issues related to the selection of mentors see Lucas & Murry, 2007; Smith & Davis, 2012).

In addition to providing you with support in the areas that we have already discussed (i.e., teaching and research), a mentor can also help you in the area of institutional linkage. Support in this area can vary widely and may include: (a) nominating you to serve on a departmental or university/college committee, (b) describing institutional politics, and (c) introducing you to administrators, faculty, and staff that would be strong resources for you as a new faculty member. Another area of support within institutional linkage that mentors can help with is in identifying funding sources.

Through my first four years of faculty work (at two different universities), several mentors have provided me with the opportunity to earn additional income and travel funds that would likely have gone unnoticed without their help. As an example, while preparing to teach an online course for the first time in my career, I spoke with one of my well-respected colleagues that had been teaching distance learning courses for a number of years. While discussing best practices for teaching online courses, she asked if I had applied for an online course development grant from the university. Having never taught online before, and only being at the university for one quarter, I was not aware that there were funds available for this type of course development. As a result of seeking out advice on the development of my course, I was able to receive a small grant from the university every time I developed an online course that had not been offered.
previously. Over the course of four years, I have received several thousand dollars to support my distance learning curriculum development. If I had not taken the initiative to consult with my colleague and begin to develop a mentoring relationship, I most likely would not have known about, much less applied for those funds. Networking with my colleagues in the department and university has also contributed to me being able to secure additional funding for conference travel and research through university resources that were not widely publicized (e.g., discretionary funds from our dean).

Support from mentors in institutional and disciplinary linkage can also address a problem that new faculty commonly report—lack of recognition and inadequate feedback (Olsen & Sorcinelli, 1992; Sorcinelli, 1988). Some of this tension can be alleviated by utilizing mentors and requesting that they provide you with feedback in various areas (i.e., teaching, research, service). The added benefit of taking the initiative and seeking out additional feedback is the opportunity to highlight your teaching and research interests to senior faculty members. The earlier in your tenure process that this occurs, the easier it is to make a positive impression on the likely members of your promotion and tenure committee. First impressions are extremely important and in larger departments, you never want the first impression of your teaching and research to occur when the committee members look at your vita. As Penner and his colleagues suggest, it is important not just to be known, but also to be well-known (Penner, Dovidio, & Schroeder, 2004). By having your mentors facilitate contact with journal editors, granting agencies, and potential collaborators—all of which are part of disciplinary linkage—not only are you becoming more "well-known," you are also increasing your opportunity to receive feedback and establish a larger network in the broader field (see Chapter 8).

Another advantage to networking within your institution and developing strong institutional and disciplinary linkage is job support for dual-career couples. Approximately 80% of the professoriate have spouses or partners who are working professionals and almost half of these partners are also in academia (Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, & Rice, 2003). Given the challenges that many dual-career couples in academia face, The Chronicle of Higher Education website has an online forum (http://chronicle.com/forums/index.php/board,54.0.html) that has a permanent thread dedicated to those individuals with the "two-body problem" (i.e., both individuals are in academia and seeking tenure-track positions). Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this dilemma; but networking within your institution and in the broader field can lead to some solutions. Smart employers are learning how to address this problem and have realized that there is an economical advantage to securing positions—either within the institution or locally—for dual-career couples.

When surveyed, most dual-career couples would suggest that you disclose your partner situation only after your face-to-face interview, but before you receive an offer; this allows the university some flexibility in identifying or creating a viable option for the trailing partner. However, other individuals believe that it is best to wait until you have an official offer before raising the issue (Kaplan, 2010). Debating the timing and logistics of this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter, and since this book is designed for early career faculty members, I will assume that you have already accepted a job offer and no longer have to decide when to
discuss the two-body problem. Although you have the most leverage in securing a position for your partner prior to accepting a job offer, it is still possible to network with those individuals at your institution that will ultimately make hiring decisions once you are on campus.

For example, at my current institution I was unable to negotiate a position for my spouse during the initial hiring process. Rather than have my spouse leave the tenure-track, we decided that it would be in our best interest for her to stay in her current position while I accepted the new appointment. Upon arriving at my new job, I made sure that I started to become "well-known" to a number of important university decision makers (i.e., my department chair, the dean, the provost). During one of the initial new faculty orientation programs, we were invited to have dinner with all of the university's deans, the provost, and the president. My spouse was still in town during this event and she had the chance to introduce herself to these administrators and discuss her academic background. Through these conversations, we learned that the university was in the initial process of adding a new specialization that just happened to be my wife's area of expertise. Over the course of the next year, the provost kept me informed of developments related to the potential job opening and once it was officially advertised, encouraged my spouse to apply. Following a phone interview and an on-campus interview, my wife was offered the position. When combined with a little bit of luck, taking the initiative to network can work wonders!

The final areas identified by Finkelstein (1982) that can benefit from strong networking skills comes in the form of friendships, intellectual and social stimulation, and general support. While these areas may not seem as critically important to your development as a new professor, senior faculty members (and experienced junior faculty) will be quick to tell you that the value of having friends to relax with and count on for support (emotional, physical, and maybe even financial) should not be underestimated. As with all of the previous areas, your ability to identify individuals through informal and formal networks that can fulfill these roles will only serve to benefit your career in the long-run.

**Laying the Groundwork**

At this point, hopefully you realize that a new faculty member must come into their department with realistic expectations and a clear strategy of how to address the potential hazards (e.g., stress from time constraints, feelings of isolation, lack of feedback/recognition, etc.) they will encounter during their first few years on the job. One strategy that can allay some of these concerns is to consider how you can enhance your networking opportunities once you are on campus. As in real estate, networking is often about location, location, location! As the previously discussed research shows us, it is not uncommon for new faculty members to report feeling isolated and lonely (e.g., Ambrose et al., 2005). One way to moderate this effect is to request an office that is close to other faculty members that you are likely to collaborate with or have shared interests (i.e., same subfield). Of course proximity to other faculty members is a double-edged sword. While being more isolated can lead to greater research productivity and efficiency, the isolation can reduce the opportunities you have to interact with senior faculty and develop relationships that will be more beneficial to you in other areas (e.g., committee selection, research/teaching collaboration, etc.). You may have
little influence in office selection, but if given the opportunity, this is one easy way to immediately enhance your networking possibilities.

Another simple strategy for increasing your opportunities to network is to plan on moving to your new job's location as soon as possible. Not only will this provide you with the chance to start interacting with your colleagues, it will provide you with the opportunity to become acclimated to your new city, get your house or apartment organized, find employment for your partner, identify daycare options for children, complete paperwork, pickup campus keys and parking tags, and reduce a lot of the stress that is often caused by a last minute move. Arriving on campus early also will allow you to participate in your university's new-faculty orientation session or workshop. While the majority of these orientation programs are often limited in scope, they do provide faculty with a venue to ask questions, meet their new-faculty cohort (including those individuals outside of your department), and begin the acculturation process.

**How to Network**

Structured networking opportunities and formal mentorship programs may be offered at your new university, and if they are it is crucial that you take advantage of this system. However, in the vast majority of cases you will likely be left to your own devices, without a specific colleague appointed as your mentor. In these situations, most of your networking and mentoring may just naturally happen; but for certain individuals (e.g., women, racial minorities, etc.), it may be more challenging due to biases and the principle of homophily—the finding that social interactions occur most often between people with similar attributes (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, Cook, 2001; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). In these cases, you will have to take the initiative and actively seek out guidance. Bringing questions about a specific topic to a colleague will not necessarily create a long lasting mentorship, but by demonstrating your willingness to seek information and ask questions, it can create some behavioral momentum. Consequently, these informal relationships can lead to the acquisition of information vital to your career advancement.

In addition to consistent interaction with your colleagues and/or mentor, another possible avenue of institutional networking is through committee work (Stewart, 2007). At some universities/colleges, individuals must be elected to a committee, which inherently requires you to be active in networking across campus so that you can meet certain service obligations as part of tenure requirements. While most of your colleagues will tell you to avoid as much committee work as possible—especially as a new faculty member at a research oriented university, and maybe even some teaching oriented ones—participating in a college-level or university-level committee can be an excellent way to network outside of your department. As a first-year faculty member I had the opportunity to serve on a college-level committee that evaluated proposals for small research and travel grants. Not only did this give me insight into how to write a better proposal and information about additional funds that were not publicly advertised, it allowed me to meet faculty members from a number of other departments. Out of these informal conversations, I was able to identify a possible collaborator for a future study abroad program. While most committee work will do little to enhance your research productivity and teaching repertoire, it can make a positive impression on your colleagues and
university administrators. The key is to find a balance between your service commitments and other responsibilities. If at any point you start to feel overwhelmed by extra-departmental service requests, asking your chair—in a judicious manner—to provide an excuse so that you can politely decline is strongly advised (Penner et al., 2004).

While committee work can enhance your relationships, it is often time consuming. One strategy to build your network that is less stressful and protracted is to attend departmental and/or campus activities. Most universities/colleges or departments will hold monthly brown bag lunches featuring a guest speaker or faculty member. These are wonderful opportunities to enhance your intellectual stimulation while simultaneously networking with faculty within or outside of your department. If that does not appeal to you, you could always use your lunch time to interact with faculty and staff in recreational activities. During my first year at my previous institution I would routinely attend our university’s Faculty Wellness Hour, where I played in a faculty member basketball game. Your university may also sponsor "research circles," faculty scholarship retreats, or teaching workshops (Gillespie et al., 2005). These events are usually limited to a small number of faculty and provide you with a chance to improve your research productivity, enhance your teaching skill set, link your scholarly practices to teaching and learning, and facilitate your acculturation into university life.

Finally, if you are not able to do any of the above or would like to start out slowly, I would encourage you to at the very least make yourself available for "small talk" within the department. These interactions should be light-hearted and non-anxious. The important part is not to isolate yourself or suppose that one or two meetings with your chair or senior faculty members are enough (Boice, 2000). Utilizing some of the strategies noted above can help keep you afloat during your first few years as you become accustomed to life as a faculty member. While you may be extremely productive in your research and excel in your teaching, if you isolate yourself you’ll end up on an island that will be tough to get off.

Proceed with Caution
Throughout the entirety of this chapter I have largely championed the benefits of networking within your institution. As any experienced faculty member can tell you, one also needs to understand the potential drawbacks that are possible during the networking process. First, do not ingratiate yourself to any one colleague or the department chair assuming that they will always have your best interests at heart—they may not. Similarly, do not assume that a strong relationship with your department chair or other senior faculty will negate a weakness in your portfolio during the tenure and promotion process. Unfortunately, a naïve colleague of mine in another discipline spent several years catering to their department chair, anticipating that this well-respected chair would have enough influence on the tenure and promotion process to help her earn it despite a lack of research productivity. Although the chair was unlikely to successfully argue the case for this faculty member’s tenure and promotion, the situation worsened when the department chair was forced to resign unexpectedly, leaving the faculty member with little hope of keeping her job.
Returning to the concept of homophily, new faculty members will likely find themselves gravitating towards other faculty who have very similar interests or characteristics. While this is not inherently problematic, you need to be careful about falling into a clique.

The problem with cliques is that often one side wins, or at least gains more than its fair share of power. If new faculty cast their lots with a clique that ends up on the losing side, they may end up doing irreparable harm to their new careers. (Smith & Davis, 2012, pg. 195)

Alternatively, even if you were to cast your lot with the "winning clique," there is no guarantee that this clique will always be the one in power. Avoiding cliques will not only provide you with more depth intellectually, it will also give you different perspectives on the culture and politics of your new institution.

**Departmental and Institutional Politics**

When discussing departmental and institutional politics, it is always beneficial to have an understanding of the structure of your specific university. Several book chapters provide thorough reviews of the governance, power structure, and roles that various entities play across different types of universities in the United States (see Capaldi, 2004; Colton, 2007; Pye, 2007). While this section cannot provide you with specific information related to your individual university, it will provide you with a few general guidelines to follow as you start your academic career.

The first responsibility that a new faculty member is faced with when dealing with the political nature of academia is to assess, understand, and respect the institutional culture at your new university. Aside from personal observation, one of the best sources of information is a trusted colleague or mentor. These conversations can provide you with valuable information about the decision makers in your department and university, as well as the history of your department (i.e., institutional linkage). By avoiding cliques and gathering information from multiple sources, you can make more informed decisions (e.g., who to ask for teaching or research support, how to inquire about extra funds for travel or lab equipment, who to distance yourself from, etc.).

Having a thorough understanding of the dynamics and history within the department can often save you from potentially uncomfortable situations. For example, while advising one of my thesis students on who to include on their committee I mistakenly suggested two individuals who had a history of not working well with one another due to a disagreement between their respective "cliques" several years previously. During the proposal meeting, these two colleagues proceeded to argue with each other over exceedingly trivial details. Since they were senior faculty members it left me in a very uncomfortable position of asking them to refocus and temper their discussion. All of this could have been avoided if I had first understood the history and dynamics of my department.

New faculty members would also benefit from being informed on departmental matters and voicing their opinion. It is important to show collegiality and be agreeable, but only when you are okay with the decisions that are being made. Having a trusted mentor or other senior faculty member that can guide you through the first year and help mediate difficult situations is
essential. Ideally, your department chair and other colleagues will do their best to shield you from departmental and university political battles, but department chairs cannot always be counted on to be effective conflict managers. If conflicts do arise, it is important that you do your best to seek a resolution within the department without involving any outside departments or administrators. This may not always be possible, but is always the first approach that should be utilized. Academia is a very small community; and although your actions may have desirable short-term effects, there are also long-term consequences that must be considered.

I suspect that you will find it easy to be put off by the procedures and politics of your department, college, or university as a whole. It is easy to become disillusioned with a process that you often have little control over; but I would encourage you to take each instance as a learning opportunity, as it may be helpful in one of your future endeavors. Finally, remember that as your institution grows and additional faculty are hired, you will become an individual that new faculty members look to for support and guidance in teaching, research, institutional and disciplinary linkage, and a variety of other areas. Remember how you felt at this moment in your career and do your best to aid these new individuals as they begin a new cycle of networking and advancement.

You have taken the first steps in being proactive and put yourself on the right track by reading this chapter. Now it is up to you to utilize the information on institutional networking and politics to enhance your early career; like the quote at the beginning of this chapter states, you need to keep moving or you are bound to get run over.

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Chapter 8

Casting a Wider Net: Networking within the Broader Field

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Academe is exciting, challenging, stimulating, and rewarding, and we wish you all the best in what we believe is the greatest career out there. As an academic, you must be successful at many things, including teaching, research, service, and advising, all the while keeping your eyes on the prize: tenure. On top of this, you must strive to maintain a healthy balance between your professional life and your personal life. All of this can seem daunting, and we should know, as we are Early Career Psychologists (ECPs) too. But, fear not—networking within the broader field is a great tool for juggling all of the things on your plate. Unfortunately, many people may feel uncomfortable with, or unskilled in, networking (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). We don’t want this to be you, so in this chapter, we will share networking tips and techniques (for which we personally vouch) that will help you comfortably and skillfully gain, and maintain, your professional momentum.

**What is Networking, and Why Does it Matter?**

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2012) defines networking as the “cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business.” When you network, you develop and maintain relationships with people. These are the people to whom you can turn when you are in need of things that will benefit your career development, including access to resources, guidance, and social support (de Janasz & Forret, 2008). No ECP lives in a vacuum, which makes networking essential. As we see it, networking is a critical competency that ECPs must develop in order to achieve career success.

When we as ECPs engage in networking, it can be internal or external. For example, we might engage in internal networking by fostering a friendship with another faculty member in our department and then engaging in a collaborative research project (see Chapter 7). We might engage in external networking (the focus of our chapter) by attending a national conference and striking up a conversation with someone presenting a poster. Before we know it, we have exchanged business cards and four years later this person is our first point of contact when we have questions about the tenure process. When we network, both internally and externally, the benefits that we can acquire are many.

Both internal and external networking is positively related to objective and subjective career success. In one study (Forret & Dougherty, 2004), the amount of both internal and external networking was related to number of promotions, total compensation, and perceived career success. In a three-year longitudinal study (Wolff & Moser, 2009), both internal and external networking was related to yearly salary, career satisfaction, and growth rate of salary over time.
No matter your work setting (e.g., research-intensive university, four-year college), networking is an essential element of your career success. However, it is important to remember that not all of your networking efforts will lead to fruitful collaborations (in fact, a lot of the people you approach will not remember your name the next day). Be assured that some of your efforts will be productive and fulfilling, both personally and professionally. Other contacts may become casual acquaintances with whom you never collaborate. But that does not mean they are not fruitful or productive relationships. Some of your contacts may participate in your tenure process as external reviewers of your research. Others might be the bridge that connects you to someone who becomes your research partner for the next 25 years. A few could become informal, occasional mentors or advisors. And all of this is okay. If your goal for networking is to cultivate sincere professional and personal relationships, you will be successful.

Where Can You Network?

It might be a bit easier to understand why it is so important to network within your institution—it will probably lead to opportunities within your own department as well as opportunities in other departments and offices on campus (e.g., career services, the center for teaching excellence, or service learning). These kinds of opportunities will often lead to great learning experiences, career development, and personal growth. The same is true about the opportunities that will come when you network beyond your institution. Doing the networking that will lead to those opportunities, however, will take some time and effort on your part. It probably won’t always be easy or comfortable for you to do, but the benefits are too great to pass up.

Conferences

First, it’s important to figure out where you should be looking for networking opportunities. Perhaps the easiest place to network outside of your institution is at professional conferences. Many, if not most, ECPs regularly attend conferences. Usually, the goal of conferences is to present your research. However, keep in mind that another goal of conferences is to network. Conferences are the perfect place to network, as these gatherings are ripe with opportunities to meet other people interested in your area(s) of research or teaching. And, to make the networking a bit easier, most people expect you to network at conferences—they anticipate (and even secretly want) you to approach them to strike up a conversation.

At conferences, paper sessions are one great venue for networking. When entering a paper session, try to get there a few minutes early and sit near other people. We often find that, at paper sessions, people do not always sit close to each other and they do not always mingle (i.e., network) as much as they could. There is often an awkward silence during the minutes before a paper session begins. As psychologists, we should know better! Be a maverick—once you sit down, strike up a conversation with the person beside you. Who knows, you might meet someone great. One of us once attended a paper session at a regional conference and bravely sat beside a complete stranger and struck up a conversation. It turned out we had both attended the same university and we both had taken many of the same classes with the same professors. We exchanged business cards and we have been in contact ever since. She has
been a great resource for my teaching, as we teach many of the same classes and she has more teaching experience than I do. She often shares her lecture and assessment approaches with me, and she recently asked me to send her some suggestions for effective in-class activities.

If you attend paper sessions that are related to your research and/or teaching interests, you will more than likely listen to presentations given by people with whom you might like to get to know and perhaps even collaborate. If you find a person’s presentation to be right up your alley, be sure to stay after the session to speak with him or her. Typically, there are a few minutes saved at the end of a session for audience questions and mingling. Consider going up to the presenter and introducing yourself and offering to exchange business cards. One of us attended a paper session at an APA convention and, at the end of the session, made it a point to say “hello” to one of the presenters (who shares our research interests) and exchange business cards. We have been in touch ever since the convention (this was two years ago). We are each other’s “go-to editor” when we need someone to carefully edit our manuscripts, and we are currently developing a research study that will combine participants from both of our schools.

At conferences, poster sessions are also a great venue for networking. Poster sessions actually have a networking “leg up” over paper sessions, as they were designed to get people talking and networking. While paper sessions are an easy place to passively sit and listen (and quietly exit when the session is over), poster sessions encourage interaction and exchange. When you attend a conference, consider attending some of the poster sessions and chatting with the presenters. Doing this will not only increase your “conference karma” (read: if you visit presenters’ posters, people will visit when you are presenting a poster), but also it will give you the chance to network and perhaps make some great contacts.

Before (or upon) arriving to a conference, try consulting the conference program to find poster sessions that match your research and/or teaching interests—these are the sessions that will provide the best opportunities for you to network. Although you can certainly attend a poster session and casually browse the posters, it is more effective if you determine before the session which posters you would like to see. When you arrive at a poster that you have planned to see, take some time to strike up a conversation with the presenter(s). If, after some chatting, you feel that this may be a good networking opportunity, be open to exchanging business cards. If you are on the other side of the poster (i.e., the presenter), don’t forget that this also provides an opportunity for networking. Posters are usually grouped into sessions by shared topic, so it is possible that the presenters around you share your interests. Try striking up a conversation with the presenter beside you (it beats awkwardly standing at your poster alone). Also, remember that you can network with the people who stop by your poster. The best way to make yourself appear open to chatting with people who approach your poster is to smile, say “hello,” and strike up a conversation. Ask where they are from, where they went to school, if they are enjoying the conference. As we ECPs know, despite our best efforts, there are always some people who come up to our poster, glance at it for 30 seconds, and hurriedly scuttle off. However, don’t forget about the other set of people who will come up to your poster with the
intention of really engaging in a dialogue with you. These are the people with whom you should network, because they are often trying to do the same. At a recent APA convention, one of us had a great networking experience while presenting a poster. A person came up to the poster and said that he had seen the poster listed in the conference program and had made it a point to stop by to see it. It turned out that we share many of the same research interests, and after a great conversation, we exchanged business cards. A year later, we continue to stay in contact, and he has been a great resource for navigating the tenure process, as he is already tenured.

At conferences, paper and poster sessions are not the only places to do your networking. Most societies and associations host member-wide cocktail parties, mixers, meals and coffee breaks that are designed to get people talking (read: networking) and swapping business cards. Attending these events will give you many potential opportunities to network with both early career psychologists and more senior faculty. It can sometimes feel overwhelming to attend these events, especially if you are attending alone. Remember that many people attend these events alone, and most people who attend would like for someone to approach them and strike up a conversation—in fact, this is the purpose of these kinds of events.

If you attend an APA convention, the Early Career Psychologist Council typically holds several sessions, including a social hour for ECPs. This is a great way to meet other ECPs in a relaxed environment. If you are a member of one (or more) of APA’s 56 divisions, you should consider attending some of the events that they offer at the APA convention. When you are a member of an APA division, you will typically receive e-mails or postal mail as the convention approaches with information about division-specific events that will be held at the convention (e.g., social hour, hospitality suite events). You often find these events listed in the convention program. Rarely are these events invitation-only.

When you attend other psychology conferences, be sure to check the conference program for “early career” events. At many conferences, there are events planned with early career people in mind. Also, look for other events listed in the program that hint to networking, mentoring, and social hours.

**Colleges and Universities in Your Area**
For most ECPs, the most obvious place to network outside the institution is at conferences. However, networking outside your institution may not always require planes, trains, and automobiles. There may be colleges and universities right in your area that offer excellent networking opportunities.

Consider spending an afternoon browsing the Web sites of nearby colleges and check out the faculty in those colleges’ psychology departments. While you are at it, you do not have to limit yourself to just psychology departments. You might be able to find contacts in related fields, such as anthropology, sociology, education, or biology (as well as student or faculty organizations). If you come across people who share your research and/or teaching interests,
consider contacting them individually via e-mail and introducing yourself. Perhaps extend an invitation for coffee or tea.

You might also consider asking your current colleagues if any of them have any contacts in the area where you will be, or are currently, working. For example, one of us moved to our new job location about a year ago. When I arrived, I sent an e-mail to many of my colleagues (i.e., friends from graduate school and former professors) and asked if any of them have colleagues in my new location. Sure enough, a former professor has a friend who works in the psychology department of a university located near my new job. I called this person and introduced myself, and I made sure to mention that her friend is my former professor. After a casual conversation on the phone, she invited me to attend her department’s next colloquium. I attended, and I had the pleasure of meeting and networking with many psychologists at the event.

Another networking approach you might try is to contact the chairpersons of relevant departments at colleges and universities in your area. Inform them that you are new to the area, and that you would be happy to give a colloquium or brown bag talk to faculty and students. Departments often like to invite academics in the local area to give talks (it is more convenient and less expensive than bringing in academics from other parts of the country). You may find that you are taken up on your offer. We had a colleague who took this approach when he arrived at a new school as an assistant professor. Not only was he able to share his work with a new audience, but he also got the chance to meet new people and network with potential colleagues who were geographically close to him. Because of his attempts to reach out to other institutions, he was invited to join research centers, share resources across different campuses, and use his experience to found his own research center—supported by many of the same colleagues in whose centers he worked upon arriving in the area.

**Community and Social Events**

Remember that there are many community and social events that could provide the opportunity for you to meet potential collaborators, contacts, and professional friends. Cultivating contacts within a community can help you establish research opportunities, develop service-learning opportunities, and create teaching partnerships. As developmental psychologists, both of us have had to spend time fostering relationships with community-based institutions and their members, such as superintendents at public school districts, deans and professors at foreign universities, leaders of Native American groups, and directors of non-profit organizations. Simply reaching out in an email or phone call can create many of these contacts, but attending community and social engagements is often the best way to create these contacts. For example, one of us spent the better part of an hour at a friend’s cocktail party talking to a fellow guest who shared similar professional interests but worked in a different country. Even though the party was simply a gathering of friends, these two people with similar interests met and began talking about their own work and then how they might work together. It is too early to tell if it will lead to a professional collaboration, but business cards were exchanged (a good reminder to get some business cards, carry them with you, and don’t hesitate to pass them out) and the foundation was set. Do not overlook these types of
community and social events to reach out and build both your professional and personal networks.

In addition to attending community and social events, it will be worthwhile for you to become involved with one or two local community organizations. Volunteering with a community organization with vastly increase your community of contacts. It will increase your chances of meeting and working with like-minded people. One of us has a colleague who, as a developmental psychologist, has worked closely with local school districts and after school programs. Her expertise has benefited the organizations and the partnership has led to various conference presentations and publications based on their collaborative research. So, find an organization in your area whose mission you value and volunteer your time. You will meet new contacts, do good work, and people will learn your name.

Online
Not all networking needs to happen face to face. There are many networking opportunities available to you in the digital realm. For example, we know of research collaborations that have their roots in email listservs. People who responded to each others’ posts on the listserv continued communicating with each other, and then began fruitfully collaborating with each other. The same could be said for other electronic spaces, such as blogs, message boards, and social media sites. Almost all professional organizations have an electronic space for their members to interact with one another. For example, the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) (www.teachpsych.org) has a blog, E-books such as this one, a Facebook group, a professional development program, and access to two different listservs. Spend some time searching the Internet for such sites where like-minded people gather to communicate, and start participating. It can be intimidating to start posting your thoughts on professional listservs and blogs, but remember that you have something worthwhile to share. However, be judicious in how much time you spend posting and reading others’ responses to your posts. These online spaces should not be the place to air personal grievances, complain, gossip, or annoy others by flooding their inboxes with your ideas.

If you cannot find sites like this that match your needs...create your own! It might take some time and work, but creating and maintaining a blog, message board, or group page on a site like Facebook could pay off richly in terms of networking and collaborations. For example, when the two of us were charged years ago with founding and chairing a student organization for one of the professional organizations to which we both belong, one of the first things we did was create a group page on Facebook. As different chairpersons have taken over the committee, the Facebook group has been used in varying amounts to varying success—but it has always provided a place for student members to communicate and receive important information.

How Should You Network?
Not only must you know where to network, but how to do that networking. It is not easy for various reasons—it can be time consuming, nerve wracking, effort intensive, and awkward. In
fact, it can be so awkward at times that we have included a whole section below on dealing with the awkwardness of networking (because if you have not had an awkward networking experience yet, you have not been networking enough!). But first, we want to focus on other techniques and approaches you can use to successfully network.

Once you have figured out where you want to network, it is important to remember that timing is essential. You need to be aware of the best time to approach someone. As we stated above, it is a pretty safe bet that people expect to be approached at a conference or if they have posted something to a listserv or message board online. It is a less safe bet that people at a dinner or cocktail party are interested or willing to entertain your attempts at networking. It might take some practice, but it is important to learn how to read and interpret the situation you are in, and to determine if approaching someone for professional reasons is appropriate.

One way to keep the importance of timing in mind is to remember that the true purpose of networking should be to build relationships with people and not to simply advance your own career. This may sound a bit counterintuitive—people usually equate networking with career advancement. And it’s true—the better you network, the more likely you are to have opportunities for advancement. But you should think of this career advancement as a secondary benefit. Make your primary reason for networking to meet people and to get to know them. As you get to know more and more people, greater opportunities will be presented to you. People do not like to feel like they are being used, and if your networking results in them feeling that way, it could very well backfire on you. So remember, people first!

While people expect to be approached at conferences or in online spaces, you don’t want to come across as pushy or disrespectful. As such, it is important that you do not force a conversation onto someone who is not willing or does not have the time for one. If you bump into people at a conference with whom you want to chat, go for it. But if they tell you they only have a minute or two before they have to run off to a meeting or symposium, respect their time. If you want to continue your conversation, invite them to meet you for coffee or lunch or drinks at the hotel bar. Do not interrupt them if they are talking to someone else or otherwise engaged. And do not monopolize their time, especially if it is clear others want to talk to them (or they want to talk to someone else).

One of us once attended a student poster session on campus as a faculty advisor to some students who were presenting some of their work. The president of the college attended the session, apparently to talk with students about the work they were sharing. Students were excited for the chance to show off their hard work, but many did not get the chance to do so. As soon as the president walked into the room, he was approached by a member of the campus community and held in conversation with her for nearly an hour. It was clear that the president wanted to end the conversation and explore the students’ presentations but was not able to do so without being rude to the woman who was talking to him. Whatever she was sharing with him was probably very important, but this poster session was not the time to discuss it, and it resulted in a lot of disappointed students. On the other hand, keep in mind that at conferences and poster sessions, what may look like casual conversations between friends could be
meetings between collaborators or colleagues who are taking advantage of being in the same room to make some plans. So, be aware of your surroundings, ask if it is a good time to chat, and be considerate of time.

Also keep in mind that if you are at a community or social engagement, not everyone there will be interested in a professional conversation (even if he or she is an expert in the same field as you). As strange as it might sound to an ECP, not everyone eats, drinks, and sleeps with their latest research question front and center in their minds. Probably even fewer attend a community event or party hoping to have an intense academic conversation. Be respectful of the situation and be alert to the nonverbal cues the other person is sending you. If he or she keeps commenting on how delicious the pigs-in-a-blanket are, take it as a clue that you should save your work related conversation for another time. This does not mean, however, that you should not talk to the person. It is okay to chat with people about the weather, sports, current events, and so on. Not all of your networking attempts have to be formal, structured, or constantly work-related. In these situations, try to make a friend...who might be a good collaborator in the future.

When you are engaged in a conversation with someone, be sure that you employ social skills that will help you give the best impression that you can. For example, you want to be sure to make eye contact. If you shake hands, give a firm handshake. Also, be sure to smile. Try to have a balanced conversation. In other words, do not monopolize the conversation. Share things about yourself, but in return, ask questions. When you talk about yourself, be honest—no need to exaggerate or make things up. When you network, you don’t have to try to be somebody else—just try to be the best version of yourself.

If you consider yourself not the most gregarious person, you might find networking face to face to be a bit challenging. It will help you to practice your networking before you attend a social event. Have some questions ready that you have rehearsed once or twice. Try practicing your networking on a few friends. Perhaps ask a friend to join you for some events—he or she can serve as a networking “buffer.” Remember that most people are flattered to be approached by someone, and remember that you are probably not the only one at an event who feels shy about networking.

What Do You Do When Networking Gets Awkward?

Sometimes, your attempts at networking are going to fail, and it will not always be your fault. Believe it or not, the researchers whose work and writing inspires you might not have a very well developed set of social skills. Or, as we mentioned above, they might be busy, or you could be just one of many people vying for their attention. What is worse, some of these failed attempts can be quite awkward and embarrassing, and might make it harder to approach someone the next time you have the chance. But do not let this keep you from trying! Just like in the game of love, you cannot let one awkward or embarrassing networking interaction keep you from the search for the collaborator (or mentor) of your dreams.

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Often times, what we think are awkward attempts at networking or at approaching someone at a conference really only feel awkward to us and not the other person. Remember what you learned in your adolescent development class about your imaginary audience and personal fable...unfortunately, no one is paying as much attention to you as you think they are. And if they are paying attention and witness your networking failure, most will not remember it past lunchtime. So do not let the potential for embarrassment or the experience of previous awkwardness keep you from networking.

Once, at a conference, one of us approached one of the leading experts in our field after he gave a presentation. Because the person was so well known, there was a rather large group of people waiting their turn to talk to him. I waited patiently while the others talked to him and tried to make an impression. He was kind and sociable, but clearly not very interested in remembering the names or details that people were sharing with him. I, however, was sure I would be different because I worked closely with someone who claimed to know him well. I was certain that by dropping that name, I would become relevant to this expert and we would have a meaningful conversation. Instead, after I had introduced myself as so-and-so’s collaborator, the expert stared at me for a moment before saying “Oh, good,” shaking my hand, and moving on to the next person in line. He had no idea who I was talking about! For me, it was embarrassing and awkward. But I survived it, personally and professionally. And since then, I have been able to make connections with other people I have approached at conferences. This awkward and personally embarrassing experience did not ruin my networking abilities or future successes (in fact, this same scenario played itself out for me not once, but twice, and I survived both). Embarrassing or awkward attempts at networking will not ruin you, either. They will occur once in a while, but you can accept them, laugh at them, and move on.

**How Do You Take Networking to the Next Level?**

Even though the focus of our chapter has been on networking, we do not want to end without a few words on how to move your networked contacts into research and/or teaching collaborations. As a lot of us probably know from personal experience, exchanging business cards is not the same thing as creating a long-lasting collaborative relationship. That would be too easy!

Collaborative relationships take time to develop because they require mutual trust between collaborators. It is hard to trust someone with your research ideas, data, samples and community contacts—and it is hard for your collaborator to trust you, initially, too. So, first, be patient. A couple of days after meeting a new potential collaborator for the first time, send an email and mention how nice it was to meet him or her. Try not to be pushy, but you can be straightforward about your hopes to collaborate. Ask if they are doing any recent work on your shared topic of interest, or if they plan to attend any conferences in the future (you might be attending the same ones). Or, offer to send along some of your recent work, or to participate in, or co-plan a symposium you are proposing for a future conference. If the person responds, good! If the person does not respond, that is okay. But here is where it gets tricky – do you
contact them again or not? That is probably something you have to decide based on your first meeting with the person. If you do contact them again, and they still do not respond, it might be a good idea to accept that he or she is not interested (at least right now–maybe they are just very busy) and you should let them be.

Because collaborative relationships require mutual trust, be sure to earn that trust with your collaborators quickly. Try to meet the deadlines you set for yourself by getting drafts back to your collaborator when you say you will (or as close to that time as you can) and allow your collaborator a little wiggle room if he or she is late getting back to you. Talk about how you are going to divide up the work (including potential authorship order) as early in the process as possible. And always, always give credit where credit is due.

**In Conclusion**

We hope that our chapter has given you tips and techniques that will help you feel more comfortable and skilled with networking. As an ECP, you have a lot on your plate. It is important to remember that networking within the broader field is a great tool for juggling it all with finesse. As you network, you will be building a community of people to whom you can turn when you are in need of assistance (and be sure to return the favor, of course). The more you network, and the better you will be at it, the easier it will be for you to achieve your professional goals. So, get out there and network!

**Author Note**

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**References**


Striking an appropriate balance between teaching, research, and service is a daunting task at any stage of your career. However, this may be particularly challenging for an Early Career Psychologist (ECP), who is likely attempting to “learn the ropes,” as well as balance them. Negotiating academic and university commitments will be different for each person, and most will find that the equilibrium that worked just a few years ago is no longer appropriate as life moves forward and circumstances change. Throughout this chapter, I will offer suggestions, both from my own experience and that of others, aimed at making this task a bit more manageable. The material put forth in this chapter identifies key issues to keep in mind as you continue to balance the ever-present and competitive demands of the “three-ring circus” that is the job of a faculty member.

All Things Are Not Created Equal

Please allow me to shatter any illusions that may still linger by saying that you cannot be perfect at everything. By earning a Ph.D. you have already demonstrated that you are hardworking, self-motivated, industrious, and maybe even a bit masochistic. Your internal perfectionist is driving you to excel (sometimes at all costs) in all three arenas: teaching, research, and service. However, by this point you have likely realized that being flawless in all three is impossible. Rather, you may have noticed that a rank-order system has already begun to form organically. It is likely that by this point, you have a preference for either research or teaching. You may have found that one responsibility comes more naturally or is more rewarding, while another may seem more frustrating or confusing. This is normal. The trick is to identify your preferences and pet-peeves and try to structure your work schedule in a manner that brings both professional and personal gratification, but does not allow you to ignore lesser desired tasks. For example, you may find that revising your lesson plan to include more up-to-date examples and hands-on demonstrations is highly rewarding, whereas transforming your current research program into publishable work is tedious. Without proper awareness and planning, you may find yourself with excellent student evaluations, but no evidence of your research productivity. In such a case, your natural tendency may be doing you a disservice. A bit of balance in your allocation of time could be tremendously helpful for earning promotions and achieving tenure. Your success as an academic will require that you fulfill obligations related to all three areas, and you want to ensure that you are aware of both your strengths and weaknesses so that you can perform to the best of your ability.
Not only do people have different talents and preferences with regard to their duties as a faculty member, but also departments and universities have different expectations as to the importance of each task. If you are at a liberal arts institution, you may find that your effectiveness as a teacher is given higher priority than your productivity as a researcher or your service to the university. If this is the case, you will want to prioritize the tasks associated with teaching, devoting slightly more energy to this arena and slightly less to the other two. The opposite may be the case if you are at a larger, research-focused institution. However, as discussed earlier, you cannot abandon your secondary and tertiary responsibilities. It is important to know how your university will evaluate you and assure that your resources and efforts are aligned accordingly.

### Teaching

Your teaching load will likely depend upon the type of institution and appointment that you have. Some ECPs will find that they are able to focus their efforts on just one or two classes per semester, while others are juggling upwards of three or four. In either case, the name of the game is being a dedicated and exceptional instructor, while trying to find time in your schedule to also meet the demands of your research and service expectations. A number of possible ways to achieve this goal will be detailed, including options for strategically selecting classes and times that work best for your schedule and utilizing existing teaching resources available both online and at your school.

As an ECP, you are likely at the bottom of the totem pole when it comes to making requests about what classes you will teach and what days/times you will be assigned. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to speak to your department chair about the possibility of “stacking” your classes on certain days to allow for the opportunity to devote valuable, uninterrupted time to activities like research and service. You may also discuss limiting the number of new class preparations that you will have in a given semester. To say the least, it is more difficult to teach a new class than one you have previously taught. You will be selecting a textbook, creating lectures, and maybe even inventing activities. Accordingly, you may want to see if it is possible to teach multiple sections of the same course in a single semester. This will noticeably minimize the time you spend preparing outside of the classroom. Hopefully, your chair remembers being in your shoes and is already looking out for you. However, if this is not the case, a very polite request or reminder may help to jog his/her memory.

If, however, you are in a department where your wishes cannot be accommodated, there are still other things that you can do that will help to balance your teaching load with other responsibilities. A helpful tip to remember is that you do not have to “reinvent the wheel.” There are a multitude of teaching resources available to you, and it will make striking a balance between competing goals much easier if you can utilize the fruits of someone else’s labor. For example, many textbooks come with sample slides and test banks. Some ECPs may choose to utilize these resources exactly as they are and others will use them as background or as a starting point from which to add their own flavor. Either way, these teaching aids can cut your preparation time considerably. There are also a number of online resources that are both
credible and creative. I recommend taking a look at the Society for the Teaching of Psychology’s (STP) website (http://teachpsych.org) for sample syllabi, blogs, and discussion boards for idea sharing. You may also want to seek out *Teaching of Psychology* journal articles and books on effective teaching practices (e.g., Buskist & Benassi, 2012). Whether you are preparing a class for the first time or revising a course that you have taught many times, seeking out examples of other educators’ tools will help to provide a new and different perspective on a given topic. Often, these resources are created by scholars who have wisdom and experience to share. Why not take advantage of their insight and know-how?

Similarly, there is a wealth of knowledge within your own department and at your own university. If you feel comfortable, you may find it useful to share syllabi or lecture slides with other faculty who are teaching (or have taught) the same courses as you. Particularly for classes like Introduction to Psychology, you may find that someone who specializes in a particular area can offer a great activity or demonstration that you had not thought of given your training in a different area, and vice versa. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, no matter where your colleagues are in their careers, they are likely striving, just like you, to find a balance between their competing obligations to teaching, research, and service.

If your college or university has a Teaching and Learning Center, this is another great resource to utilize. The staff of the center will be trained to help you maximize your efforts in preparing and conducting class. The initial investment of an hour or two with them could result in many saved hours over the long run. From tips for learning students’ names and methods for infusing your classes with more active learning, to helping you identify places to improve or even videotaping your class so that you can see first-hand your own teaching style, there is a wealth of information to glean from a few visits to your campus’ Teaching and Learning Center.

**Research**

Meeting research responsibilities can be challenging for many people. Unlike teaching, which has frequent deadlines that offer immediate feedback and often gratification, research takes longer and can go for extended periods of time without a sense of completion or fulfillment. This section will discuss tips for staying on top of your research, including the importance of goal-setting, the use of colleagues as sources of support and feedback, the utility of engaging in the larger research community as a way to move your personal research program forward, and the role of research assistants.

Because designing, conducting, analyzing, and writing-up research is a lengthy process, it often helps to plan in advance how you will tackle each task. Looking at the broader picture will help you to anticipate what issues will need to be addressed over the course of a semester, year, or more. You may find it beneficial to start each academic year by setting goals pertaining to a particular research project or your overall research program. These may include the presentation of material at conferences, the publication of completed work, the search for external funding, or the use of research assistants. Once you begin a semester, it becomes much more difficult to set or meet goals that you have not already put forth. At the end of
each semester, a self-evaluation of whether you are on track with your research will help to identify any areas in which you may be excelling or that have room for improvement. This process also leaves you better able to anticipate the feedback that you will receive from your department chair or tenure committee. Accordingly, you can quickly make adjustments that are necessary to succeed in this arena and better balance your duties of teaching, research, and service.

If you find yourself putting research on the back burner, then it is time to call in reinforcements. A great strategy to help you stay motivated is to seek out the feedback of friends and colleagues. You will likely find it useful to form collaborative relationships with others to help inspire and progress your research program. One possibility might be to continue working with your graduate school advisor. The transition of your relationship from mentor-mentee to a more equitable partnership may prove quite fruitful. However, you will want to make sure that your current institution is supportive of this collaboration. Some universities may prefer that you work to establish new connections and advance more independent lines of research. You may also choose to seek out experienced research partners that you have not had the opportunity to work with previously. Conferences may prove to be an excellent opportunity to introduce yourself to such people. With luck, they can help to shape and inform the trajectory of your research program. Another fruitful avenue is working with ECP peers in your field. Such collaborations may offer fresh ideas and additional resources. As discussed in Chapter 2, depending upon the work schedule you agree upon, this partnership may be a great way to have someone else help with the heavy-lifting during a particular semester, freeing you to devote time and energy to your teaching and service obligations. Finally, you may also choose to have support from others who are not in your field or even at your institution. Joining an interdisciplinary writing or research group connects you with others who are looking for similar structure and support with regard to setting goals and meeting deadlines (see Silvia, 2007). Working with others in this way helps to remove the isolation that may sometimes set in as you pursue your own research program. Hearing about the successes of others can be inspiring, whereas hearing about their setbacks can be reassuring that such things are normal. Writing and research groups are like any other support group in that the people with whom you are interacting are dedicated to helping you achieve your goals, just as you are committed to helping them follow through on theirs. Such relationships have the added perk of allowing you to potentially develop interdisciplinary collaborations that could open doors to future funding and publication opportunities that you had not previously anticipated.

Going one step further, it is always a good idea to stay current with the work of others in your field. A great way to accomplish this goal is to attend and present at local, regional, national, or international conferences. Think of these annual gatherings as a chance to get a sneak-peak at work being conducted and as a great opportunity to establish the collaborative relationships alluded to earlier. As with anything else, conference attendance will be much easier and more likely if you plan in advance. Deciding at the start of each academic year what conference(s) will be most beneficial to your work and feasible for your schedule will help to assure that all of the pieces fall into place. For example, who will cover your classes while you are away? Is
there funding to help offset the cost of travel? What research will you present and in what form (poster, symposium, round table, etc.)? Although invaluable for energizing your passion and expanding your professional network, conferences can be quite an undertaking. You will want to discuss with your chair how attendance and presentation rank as compared to other forms of research productivity. As always, you want to align your resources and energy to match the expectations by which you will be evaluated.

Finally, depending upon your institution, you will likely have undergraduate and/or graduate research assistants. Your ability to stay on track with your own research program, as well as successfully balance your efforts across work-related obligations, will depend on how you utilize and manage this resource. At one end of the spectrum, you may have students who help to conduct and administer your research. These students gain knowledge by learning about and becoming immersed in your hypotheses and designs. On the other hand, you may have more advanced students who take your ideas and apply them to novel situations or in new and unexpected ways. Compared to the previous, you may find this form of collaboration to be more fruitful and rewarding. It is also more challenging and time-consuming. Unlike guiding a research assistant who is focused completely on your work and for whom you probably have most of the answers, mentoring a research assistant who has chosen to extend your paradigm to new contexts may require that you hit the books. You will now need to verse yourself in the research related to the new context and, potentially, the statistical analyses that are appropriate for the new research question. Unlike collaborations with colleagues in the field, students will be looking to you for most of the answers, rather than supplying their own. Working with research assistants is a truly rewarding experience, as you are instilling critical thinking skills and possibly cultivating new peers. However, when thinking about finding a balance between your own teaching, research, and service obligations, you need to anticipate the vast amount of time that will be required and select research assistants with aspirations that are appropriate for the resources that you can allot. Where possible, you will want to invest the greatest amount of time into collaborative projects that have the potential to result in publications or presentations related to your research program. Symbiotic relationships that are capable of not only helping students develop necessary skills that make them competitive for graduate school or job markets, but also of producing tangible evidence of your efforts that extend your own vita are the gold standard.

Service

As an academic, you will frequently be presented with opportunities to perform service for both your university and your discipline. Particularly as an ECP, you will feel eager to demonstrate your enthusiasm and dedication. Unfortunately, this exuberance may lead you to over-commit. You will want to walk the delicate line between upholding important service duties, but not taking on so many that they negatively impact your ability to perform your teaching and research responsibilities.

Regarding departmental and institutional service, at a minimum, you will be assigned to a committee. This may take place during your first year, or a little later after you have become
acquainted with established policies. Committees will meet throughout the academic year and
demand differing degrees of effort depending upon their focus and purpose. Some will only ask
that you be present for meetings, others will require much more engagement and involvement.
As a general rule, it is best to be on a committee that requires little effort, but has relatively
high visibility. This placement gives you the best “bang for your buck.” In these committees,
not only does it take relatively little time to uphold your duties, but it also allows you to be seen
periodically by your senior colleagues and administration. It never hurts for them to be
reminded of your devotion to the institution and utility as a member of the faculty. You may
want to seek feedback from your department chair about what committees offer this type of
cost-reward balance.

A great deal of your service may also come in the form of academic advising. Advising can be a
very time consuming endeavor, as you work with students to select classes, gain internships,
and prepare for jobs or graduate school. At my own university, it is not uncommon for faculty
members to have up to 50 advisees for which they are responsible. Much like office hours for
students, I have found that having “structured availability” tends to help manage the chaos of
advising. I want to be available for my students’ needs, but find it most effective to have
days/times set aside for this task. I give my students a window of time during which they can
make appointments. However, I discourage the “pop-by,” as impromptu visits are less than
ideal for providing the most prepared and thorough advice to my students. Additionally, having
students drop by unannounced can distract from the successful completion of other tasks on
which I am working. It is okay to shut your office door or go a few hours without responding to
emails. Obviously, you are a caring and dedicated professor, as you are taking the time to read
this book. Your students and colleagues know this about you, even if you do not make yourself
available around the clock.

There will also be a number of opportunities to provide university service in other forms. For
example, you may be asked to attend open houses or serve as the faculty advisor for a
university club or organization. Although less formal than committee assignments and advising,
these efforts count toward your service to the university and should be included in any self-
evaluation or progress report that you are asked to complete. Typically, these types of
involvements can be a lot of fun, as they allow you to interact with students in a different
context. However, it is important to determine how much time is required prior to accepting a
leadership role and strongly consider whether you have the availability for such a commitment.
It may be that this is an exciting opportunity best suited for later, once you have gained a bit
more experience juggling course loads and research programs. Getting feedback from faculty
colleagues will help you to determine the amount of service credit the university gives for a
particular role, and how much time a position may actually demand.

As if your service to the university were not enough to keep you busy, there are many
opportunities for service to your larger field or discipline. If you are publishing, you have likely
already been asked to serve as a reviewer for a journal. Similarly, if you have presented at a
conference or won an award in the past few years, those organizations will likely look to you to
help select future presenters or award recipients. I think of it as a great honor to be asked to
participate in such a manner. However, you should not lose sight of the fact that even such privileges come with time commitments. You will need to ask yourself if you can realistically perform the duty of a reviewer in a timely fashion and without negatively impacting your other, more central duties of teaching and research. Again, you will find that proper planning will make this easier. If you can review during breaks or over the summer, it is easier to accomplish than during the semester when things are at their busiest. It can sometimes be difficult to learn to say no to a great opportunity. However, if you think that you cannot perform the duties of a position well (e.g., providing a less than thorough evaluation or being unable to meet the deadline), you owe it to yourself and the organization to decline. Rest assured that more opportunities will come your way.

In Conclusion

Even though I was selected to write this chapter on striking a balance between teaching, research, and service, I also find it to be an ever-present challenge. All you can do is be aware of your efforts in each arena and work to assure that you are not allowing any one duty to fall to the wayside.

Perhaps the two greatest resources that you have are (a) supportive colleagues and (b) a very reliable day planner. As the process is never ending, demanding attention during nights, weekends, and even holidays, you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed or exhausted. This is normal and may even be a sign that you are doing things correctly. When you feel this way, do not hesitate to reach out to others as a source of support. Your peers and colleagues can be invaluable to helping you see the bigger picture and motivating you to carry on. If they are not currently in the same boat, they have been there before and know how you are feeling. They should be able to provide not only tangible aid, in the form of syllabi and collaborative research, as previously discussed, but also in the form of moral support and confidence in the efforts that you are putting forth.

Regarding the need for a trusty day-planner (or electronic calendar for my tech savvy colleagues), I think that proper planning will serve you well as you work to keep all of your efforts on track. I find it helpful to give myself reminders that funding, research, or teaching deadlines are approaching. Knowing that I have two weeks, then one week, finally one day to finish a grant application or presentation abstract helps to keep me from missing opportunities that are important not only in the short-term, but over the long haul as well. These reminders also prompt me to start working on a task sooner, which gives me greater opportunity for thought, revision, and my best work.

Additionally, taking the time to write out your goals and put forth a timeline will help to not only achieve your aspirations, but see how the day-to-day activities in which you are engaging fit into the larger picture. This process may keep you from feeling frustrated or thwarted by the length of time it takes to cross something off of your “to do” list. Rather, you are seeing how each day small pieces of the puzzle are coming together to yield a finished product. Laying things out in such an explicit fashion may also help you find points of overlap between different
areas of work. If you are able to publish research on a new teaching method or fulfill service obligations through a class activity, these will become most evident with planning and foresight. Finding a harmonious manner to bridge different areas can help you achieve optimal outcomes with less effort, freeing up time and resources to devote to other important responsibilities. Finally, seeing your deadlines on a calendar may serve as a good reminder of how very much you are doing and give you the confidence to decline an opportunity if you do not have the time for it.

One of the biggest assets and disadvantages to being an ECP is our unbridled enthusiasm. If we are not careful, it can lead us to over commit and burn out. In this chapter, I have focused solely on the duties related to successfully navigating your academic appointment, but it is worth noting that these tasks do not take place in a vacuum. Quite likely, there are a number of personal demands on your time that must also be negotiated. As addressed in the next chapter, you will want to assure that your calendar has room allocated for family, friend, and even personal (including sleep, exercise, and fun) time. If you are not taking care of yourself and these other very important aspects of life, you may find it hard to maintain the passion and zeal that make all of this hard work possible.

Although you have a Ph.D. in psychology, you may find life as an academic akin to the role of a ringmaster. True, there may be fewer clowns, tightrope walkers, and animals (although there are probably still a few) than at the circus, but you will likely become quite skilled at dividing your energy and efforts between three “rings.” Although challenging, our jobs provide a uniquely rewarding experience. I believe that only those who have the opportunity to juggle so many obligations can feel so completely gratified, particularly when we find a suitable balance between the roles of teaching, research, and service.

References


Chapter 10

Work-Life Balance for Early Career Academics: From Divided Attention to Integrated Roles

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To write a chapter on work/life balance would presume I have mastered it, which is not the case. But for a tenure track professor with a toddler, it is a teetering scale I cannot avoid. We often go into academia thinking it will be great for families given the relaxed schedule and “free” time in the summer only to find out that summers are often our busiest time. Working in academia can serve as a double-edged sword as it provides great flexibility but at the cost of intense pressure when pursuing tenure. This chapter will focus on ways to manage the work-life balance for those in the early stages of their career, specifically focusing on family-friendly polices within your institutions, managing your time and flexible schedule, as well as seeking support from mentors and an academic community.

The balance between work and personal life has been of central importance in many occupational spheres, particularly in academia. To that end, Diane Halpern devoted her APA Presidential Initiative to work and families in 2004, which led to greater understanding and appreciation of this balance, both on the part of employees and employers. The original conceptualization of work-family balance was focused on the presence or absence of conflict, as family interfered with work or vice versa (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). The definition of work-life balance is now applied more broadly to emphasize that both work and personal life can be fulfilling in a mutually supportive and beneficial way. Balance is not simply delegating responsibilities and completing tasks but engaging in meaningful roles both at work and outside of work (APA, 2004).

Halpern and Cheung (2008) have challenged the conceptualization of work-life balance even further by stating that the focus should be on integration of work and family, not merely balancing all of our respective spinning plates. Just as science informs practice, work should inform our personal lives and our personal lives should benefit from our work. Caring equally for both our work and our relationships outside of academe ultimately leads to the best adjustment. It is important to note for faculty just starting their careers, this integration is a learned process that develops over years. Other scholars have clarified the term integration by emphasizing that it is not necessarily equal time divided between work and family—work may require more hours served. Rather, you still find equal satisfaction in both domains (Rapport, Bailyn, Fletcher, & Pruitt, 2002). In a study of working executives, those that identified themselves as “dual-centric” (meaning equal emphasis on work and family) were less stressed and felt more successful than those that were “work-centric” (Families and Work Institute, 2006). For example, in an attempt to integrate work and personal life, an early career
When reviewing the literature, amusing titles are hard to ignore but paint a dire picture. For example, “I’ve worked very hard and slept very little: Mothers on the tenure track in academia” (Fothergill & Feltey, 2003) or “Mixing motherhood and academia—a lethal cocktail” (Munn-Giddings, 1998). The gender gap in academe is widely documented in the literature. There is cause for concern for women, in particular, as they consistently are in lower-paying, less prestigious, non-tenure track jobs (Marcus, 2007; Mason, Goulden, & Wolfinger, 2006).

For those planning a family, clocks are ticking everywhere. Biological clocks, Ph.D. clocks, and tenure clocks all lead to negative effects for women in or seeking tenure-track positions. Looking at responses from the Survey of Doctoral Recipients (SDR), marriage and young children have a negative effect on women securing a tenure-track job (Mason et al., 2006). This effect may be in part because women are more likely to limit their search for a faculty position because of their husband’s career (Mason, et al., 2006). In addition, the Ph.D. clock is ticking such that the likelihood of securing a tenure-track job decreases as the years after earning a Ph.D. increase. Thus for those choosing to start a family and then enter the job market, it is difficult to re-enter academia. For those in a tenured position, family status was not an independent predictor of achieving tenure. Unfortunately, women were overall less likely to receive tenure than men, regardless of family status (Mason et al., 2006). This imbalance may be in part due to discrimination against women but also evidence of the cumulative burden on women negotiating responsibilities at work and home.

However, there is hope that balance can in fact be achieved. For example, Sax, Serra Hagedorn, Arredondo, & Dicrisi (2002) reported that among a nationally representative sample of full-time teaching faculty, gender differences in faculty productivity, as measured by number of publications within the last 2 years, was predicted by level of interest in research—not family related factors. Thus, having children and marital status did not affect research productivity, when controlling for age, rank, department and intrinsic motivation to conduct research. The remainder of this chapter will focus on practical considerations given the challenges for both male and female academics. Though family planning often burdens the mother to a greater extent, the majority of the issues surrounding balance and integration with work and personal lives still concern men. Considerations for specific populations (e.g., male ECPs, academic couples) will also be discussed.

**Flexibility**

Regardless of gender, marital status, and occupational level, studies find that flexibility, in both the timing and the location of work, contribute positively to the work-life balance (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris, & Weitzman, 2001). Given the emphasis on flexibility, when you are on the market or have landed a job, ask about the flexibility of your work schedule. Is it possible to stack your courses, such that you only teach 3 or 4 days a week, or teach evening or 8-week courses? Online courses in general may be more time consuming initially with the preparation...
and time spent managing the course. However, with a heavy teaching load, teaching an online course or stacking your classes may allow you to work from home one day a week. When considering committee and service work, ask what the term of service is and how many hours a week would be expected from this service. It may also be important to know how many other faculty members are on the committee as this affects the limitations of scheduling meetings. You will also want to keep in mind the departmental and university expectations regarding service when making such decisions (see Chapters 7 and 9).

Permeability
Another facet of flexibility is the level of permeability within personal and professional roles. Specifically permeability “involves the degree to which role barriers may be penetrated for interruptions” (Colbeck, 2006, p 35). Working from home may allow such permeability. Possible strategies might include discussing research with colleagues or students from home, grade papers during a child’s nap time, taking personal calls at work, or meeting friends for lunch in between classes. The key to success in managing permeable roles is mastering divided attention, being able to switch between personal and professional roles very quickly and be fully engaged in the current role. Research shows that women have greater difficulty managing permeability and perceive greater differences in ideal versus actual allocation of time and roles compared to men (Colbeck, 2006). These differences may be in part due to the consistent findings that women spend more time on family and household duties than men (Robinson, 1997). This implies that women in the United States may ideally want to evenly allocate time to work and personal life but experience greater conflict when they actually spend more time on family than their ideal expectations.

Family Planning
For early career folk, planning a family can be especially challenging. Pre-tenure faculty most likely do not have the option of sequencing work and family (i.e., pulling back from work to raise young children). As the saying goes, there is no perfect time to have a baby. There is some evidence that indicates that academics who delay starting a family (i.e., after career and professional identities are established) are more likely to earn tenure (National Science Foundation, 2004; Philipsen, 2008). Having children during the pre-tenure phase can be even more challenging for ECPs than for academics already tenured because you are in the process of establishing your career and figuring out how to be a parent. If you are planning a pregnancy or adoption, most polices and personal experiences support timing it such that the interference is minimized. As we know, fertility decreases with maternal age and thus it becomes more difficult to plan a summer baby. Knowing that we cannot always control the timing, your efforts should also be focused on setting up a plan for success once the baby comes. This plan involves knowing the ins and outs of institutional policies and setting up contingency plans for early delivery (e.g., convert class to online or hybrid format).

Given these concerns, it is important to investigate your university’s family policies during the family planning stage. By law, schools are required to offer up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave without jeopardizing your position based on the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). It may also
be possible to job-share while on leave. Talk to your department chair, colleagues, and dean to brainstorm the best way to “cover” your duties. Of greater importance are the policies on tenure and sabbatical. Schools commonly offer the option of “stopping” the tenure clock for familial reasons, including birth or adoption of a child or caring for a family member (see Chapter 11 for more detail). Pre-tenure faculty should also seek very specific expectations for requirements of tenure and advancement (e.g., minimum number of publications, presentations, etc.). In addition, some schools allow applicants to apply for promotion before tenure such that it is possible to apply for associate status before going up for tenure. Each university weighs personal factors differently when evaluating tenure. It is important to know how much your university takes these into consideration when evaluating faculty productivity. Sabbatical leaves also differ with respect to “time earned.” If you took leave, you should inquire whether that will delay your eligibility for sabbatical. As with all these policies, it is essential to have a pulse on the acceptance and implications of these policies at your institution. For example, if a leave of absence is offered but no faculty member has yet to take one, it may be a subtle form of disapproval. If the polices are unclear, you may want to consult with your department chair, faculty mentor, and/or human resources director. Parental and family leave policies, though more common now, are only successful in mitigating work-life balance if the university climate is supportive.

When considering a family and your career track, it is also important to have a grasp on how different types of academic environments might differ on the family friendly policies as well as campus climate regarding families. To that end, Wolf-Wendel & Ward (2006) compared family policies at different institutional levels. They found that liberal arts colleges were the most progressive, offering a variety of family-friendly policies (e.g., FMLA, maternity course releases, paid maternity leave, stopping tenure clock), followed by research institutions (i.e., majority offered FMLA and stopping tenure clock policies), while community colleges were the most limited (i.e., only offered FMLA; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). With respect to institutional expectations, women at research schools commonly reported they felt they would be viewed weakly if they took advantage of FMLA policies while female faculty at liberal arts colleges reported they were expected to have the baby in May and they would only have one pregnancy before going up for tenure (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006).

Establishing Priorities and Goals

When setting personal and professional goals, we have to ask ourselves what is most important at this current time. Lee, Reissing, & Dobson (2009) recommend while comparing costs and benefits to ask yourself, “When I look back on this decision 10 years from now, how important will it be to me that I chose this course of action?” (p. 79). Is it more important to present at a national conference or take a vacation with my family? Recognizing that we cannot do everything, what is the best solution given your current goals and circumstances?

It is also important to recognize that our goals are time and context dependent such that they will evolve over time. Deadlines may necessitate that you turn in early career awards or grant applications but you may choose to defer attending multiple conferences in a year while your
children are young or your parents need care. Often as a function of faculty self-evaluations, we are asked to make goals for the upcoming academic year and reflect on the previous year’s goals. This is a time to consciously think about our priorities and to make changes accordingly (e.g., is that manuscript ever going to be published?).

When considering the vast number of requests for additional service or instructional duties you will receive in your early career, is it possible to say NO? Often times saying no is dependent on the expectations within your university and tenure requirements. However, when setting your goals and priorities, it is important to explicitly set limits before the semester starts. For example, decide how many manuscripts and books you will review, how many new courses you will prepare, and on how many graduate student committees you will sit given your current workload. When you choose university-level committees to serve on, choose the most visible committees. Some factors are not malleable (e.g., course load, elected committees, manuscripts to write); however, it is critical to establish what can be respectfully declined. That being said, the waters might be difficult to navigate here such that if you are constantly a nay-sayer, the requests might stop coming.

**Redefining Roles**

We have to realistically evaluate our priorities, assessing whether it is personally acceptable to be “good enough” or to be at the top of our field, striving to publish in the top-tier journals. Working mothers and fathers also have to evaluate parenting and familial priorities and what is “good enough” parenting. As part of redefining our personal and professional goals, Halpern and Cheung (2008) discuss the idea of overthrowing the tyranny of the SuperMom syndrome. As parents, we do not have to bake something homemade for every school event nor attend every soccer practice, just as professionally, we do not have to say ‘Yes’ to every request that comes in our inbox. If possible, delegate some of the incidental tasks at work (e.g., to teaching assistants or research assistants) and at home (e.g., cleaning or lawn service).

We should still strive for high standards at work and home, including being the most productive when we are at home or work. It might also be advisable to switch gears to our “professor” role at work and “partner/parent” role at home. This switch involves devoting complete attention to your family at home (e.g., not checking emails on your phone at dinner) and job duties at work (e.g., not letting the disagreement with your partner interfere with your presence in the classroom). Studies have shown that it is not so much the hours worked that disrupts the balance but the intense absorption in work that interferes at home (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). The emphasis should be on being present at home, that is to say the ability to avoid work-life spillover. This spillover can apply to our many different areas of our life outside of work, including family, friends, romantic relationships, being active in our community, etc.

**Time Management**

If we can better manage our time at work, the assumption is that we will not be as consumed with work at home. Managing your time, including keeping careful track of your calendar but also multi-tasking, is important to all of us. But for early career folk, our to-do lists seem even longer. Baumeister and Tierney (2011) discuss the benefits of a to-do list in their recent book on
willpower. They report that most of us have too many goals and daily to-do lists that are unrealistic. We need to practice the divide and conquer approach, as Benjamin Franklin did (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). This approach involves making explicit and specific goals but also monitoring those goals daily and recognizing where time is spent inefficiently. They also recommend making a NOT to-do list. The idea here is that our unconscious tends to focus on unfinished tasks such that it depletes our willpower to focus on current tasks (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). If you write down the things you do NOT have to complete, the current tasks can be managed more efficiently and with less anxiety.

So how might this approach be practiced? If your goals include writing a manuscript and preparing a tenure dossier, you should schedule explicit time for those tasks in your day. I have heard multiple senior faculty members recommend setting one hour a day to write and not allowing anything else to interrupt that time. Do not check your email, answer the phone, or door during that one precious hour. Preserve that time at all costs. This one hour might not be best as the first hour of the day because the blinking voicemail light or inbox (i.e., unfinished tasks) might be too distracting. (For more tips on writing, see Belcher (2009) and Silva (2007)).

As for preparing the dossier, it may be that you devote a specific day to collecting and organizing artifacts for your dossier (e.g., affectionately referred to as D-Day by my colleague). To Baumeister and Tierney’s (2011) point, you must be specific. If your goal is writing a manuscript, then your daily to-dos might be to finish the methods section or decide to what journal to submit.

Seeking Support

Seeking social and professional support through mentoring is very beneficial, especially for those early in their career. These mentoring relationships can be formal or informal. Research shows that the benefits of mentoring come mainly from personal contact, focusing more on the relationship than structure (Arnold & Johnson, 1997). Mentoring has been shown to increase faculty productivity in terms of publications, presentations, and grants (Blau, Currie, Croson, & Ginther, 2010). Green and Hawley (2009) suggest that mentors in the early career can be especially helpful for building confidence and developing a professional identity. When assessing the successfulness of mentorship outcomes, it is recommended that the mentor-mentee relationship continue for a minimum of 12 months and if possible, to work on a product together (e.g., an institutional research grant, review a manuscript or dossier; Thorndyke, Gusic, & Milner, 2008).

With respect to specific ECP concerns on work-life balance, a mentor should be one that models self-care and balance in his or her own life. Therefore, it may be appropriate to select a mentor who has similar circumstances and values as you. ECPs should ask mentors how they manage both personal and professional lives but also what might be the consequences if not balanced. In the first few years, prepping multiple courses while maintaining research and service can seem overwhelming. A mentor can provide perspective on the big picture as we might be redefining our roles. Given that the success of mentorship depends on the depth of the relationship, it is also important that you feel comfortable disclosing to your mentor. If the
situation arises that you do not feel well suited, it is advisable to request another mentor (possibly from your department chair) the following academic year.

It is important to seek support not only from senior members of your department but also of faculty who have been recently hired. If your institution does not automatically connect you with a mentor, you should request one within your first year. A mentor within your department can aid in learning the departmental policies and expectations. A mentor outside of your department should be able to provide a broader picture of campus climate. This person might also provide a safer outlet to disclose professional concerns. It is also helpful to create a mutually supportive network of faculty members in the same stage of your career. If you have relocated, these peers might have helpful information on child-care, housing, and social networking. Another valuable resource for finding an external mentor is available through the Society for Teaching Psychology’s Professional Development Program (see www.teachpsych.org for details).

Recommendations for Policy Changes

There is still a great need for supportive policies. If in a position to request such changes of your administration, the following policies provide greater support for ECPs struggling with work-life integration. Beyond the required benefits of FMLA, institutions should strive to also have on campus childcare and after-school care, release time or course adjustments for elder care and births, and support networks (e.g., faculty forums for parents, counseling services; Philipsen, 2008). Mason and colleagues (2006) argue that dual-career programs to assist both partners in finding appropriate employment and reentry postdoctoral appointments would both benefit women in academia. Philipsen (2008) recommends that the policies that do exist should be well-publicized in a central location and that faculty members should not be stigmatized for taking advantage of them. Family-leave policies were originally meant to mirror the purpose of a sabbatical in that faculty will return back to work refreshed and more productive. Philipsen (2008) recommends redesigning the tenure process such that a probationary period is offered to all faculty, which by proxy would extend the tenure clock for everyone. In addition, she argues that tenure requirements should be outcome based, not time based. This would eliminate the stigma of those who do “stop the tenure clock” and provide transparent expectations or guides for early career faculty.

What about Men?

The majority of research on work-life balance focuses on the disproportionate burden on women. This is not to say that men do not also face legitimate barriers to integrating work and personal lives. As aforementioned, men still struggle with parenting concerns, especially for single fathers and/or divorced fathers. Men are more likely to get married once on the tenure track than women, thus may have difficulty adjusting to new personal roles (Mason et al., 2006).

A recent qualitative study by Reddick, Rochlen, Grasso, Reilly, and Spikes (2012) found that among academic fathers pursuing tenure, conflict and job strain negatively affected both their
relationships and their health. These academic fathers reported using compartmentalization, seeking social support from colleagues, and communicating with their partners to cope with the stressors (Reddick et al., 2012). In addition, though family-friendly policies may exist on campus (e.g., paternity leave), men seldom take advantage of them for fear of being evaluated as less committed to their jobs (Reddick, et al., 2012). Thus it appears that very similar concerns and strategies are appropriate for both men and women in pursuit of integration of work and family.

**Who Has Time to Date?**

Though the majority of literature on work-life balance focuses on personal roles of marriage and parenting, it is equally as difficult for ECPs to manage their personal and professional lives when seeking dating partners. In fact if you search the literature on challenges for faculty when dating, the majority concerns ethical issues of faculty dating students. Though the research is sparse, it can be difficult for early career academics focused on earning tenure and preparing courses to find time to date or to dedicate the time needed to maintain a new relationship. As previously discussed, managing time includes making specific and realistic goals for dating (e.g., attend a new-faculty mixer, sign up for an online dating site or recreational sports league). Anecdotally, online dating sites provide an opportunity for busy academics to meet people. As a former skeptic of these dating sites, I have changed my tune as three faculty members on my floor married their partners after meeting online. In particular, for those academics who have relocated, the online sites may be a way to establish new personal networks.

**Academic Couples**

As many as 35-50% of academics also have a spouse or partner employed in higher education (Astin & Miller, 1997; Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, & Rice, 2003). Academic couples report greater flexibility and permeable roles as it is easier to blend professional life with personal life (Creamer, 2006). This is often the case of academic couples who collaborate. However, just as parenting carries a heavier burden for the female academics, it appears that collaboration may also disproportionately harm women. When couples collaborate, the expectation is that the male partner carries more responsibility for the research and publications, evidence of our gender attributional biases. Thus, it is suggested that each partner develops his or her own professional identity. This intellectual autonomy, which might be manifested by redirecting your research agenda, should better prepare both members of the couple for tenure (Creamer, 2006).

**Additional Resources**

There are a number of valuable resources for ECPs concerned with work/life balance. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has published guidebooks on Pregnancy in the Academy (Thornton, 2006) and the Family Medical Leave Act (Euben & Thornton, 2002). The National Clearinghouse on Academic Worklife (http://www.academicworklife.org/) contains resources for researchers, administrators, faculty, and others interested in academia and work. The APA Committee for Early Career Psychologists (CECP) created a resource guide
for early career psychologists that can be found at http://www.apa.org/careers/early-career/resource-guide.pdf (Nicolas & Weber, n.d). Lee et al. (2009) offer some useful questions to ask a dean or department head as well as recently hired faculty regarding work-life balance (see Appendix). These questions would be useful during the job interview process but also in a mentoring relationship.

**Conclusion**

Professorship is one of the most autonomous jobs. We often have the choice of when to write, grade, or even what to discuss in class. With the combination of planning, exercising our flexibility, setting goals, and seeking support, it is possible to maintain a sense of balance between personal and work life. After all, those with the least amount of work-family conflict are typically the happiest in their job (Halpern & Cheung, 2008). Work-life integration is what we should all strive for throughout our careers, to find meaning in our work while flourishing in our relationships. I also recognize, personally, that some of this balance is easier said than done. But just as we hold our students and colleagues to high standards, we should do the same for our institutions and ourselves. The need still continues for deans and administrators to recognize the benefits of family-friendly policies to retain female faculty and close the gender gap in tenured positions. Hopefully as more ECPs secure academic jobs, equipped with the collective knowledge of their predecessors, they will be more successful at managing the demands of divided attention and integrated personal and professional roles.

**References**


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Appendix

Questions about the Extent to which an Academic Position Promotes Work-Life Balance (Lee et al., 2009, p. 80).

Directed to a Department Head or Mentor

- What are the university policies with respect to parental leave and its impact on tenure, promotion, teaching, and sabbaticals?
- What is the departmental record for tenure achievement by faculty who have taken leave?
- What initiatives have the university made to promote work-life balance?

Directed to recently hired faculty:

- To what extent does your position allow you to have a work-life balance?
- What are the formal policies regarding issues such as parental leave, the “tenure clock”?
- What is the climate like with respect to work-life balance?
- How important to work-life balance to most professors in this department or university?
- What are the typical challenges to work-family balance?
Chapter 11

Navigating the Tenure Process

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If you are reading this chapter, you have probably landed a tenure-track position. Congratulations! Your next big hurdle is getting tenure. Clearly, most junior faculty feel anxious about the tenure process (Greene, O’Connor, Good, Ledford, Peel, & Zhang, 2008). This chapter is devoted to providing information and tips on how to be proactive during your probationary period to increase your chances of a positive review.

As you read this chapter, it is important to remember that there is not a magic formula for getting tenure. You must consider your case in the context of the tenure requirements at your institution (Diamond, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial that you know the various issues to consider and some basic questions to ask about the tenure process at your institution. In other words, you should inform yourself. In fact, informing yourself is one of the first steps to take while preparing for your tenure review. Most institutions have a written statement of requirements for tenure along with an explanation of the tenure process. Find this literature and study it carefully. In addition, you should investigate whether your department has specific criteria for tenure, as departmental requirements may not necessarily align with the expectations of the institution (Hansen, 2008). Informing yourself of departmental and institutional expectations will give you a general idea of what is necessary for you to get tenure at your institution. However, be prepared for the guidelines to seem somewhat vague or unclear. Many junior faculty members experience anxiety and confusion about the tenure process due to the ambiguity of the process and requirements for tenure (Greene et al., 2008). Indeed, you may feel that everyone you talk to has a different opinion about what is important or what you need to do to get tenure. First, know that the lack of clarity is an issue at many institutions (Greene et al., 2008). Second, also know that there is plenty you can do to improve your chances of a positive review. In what follows, I will provide some advice and discuss important considerations as you prepare for your tenure review.

The Big Three: Teaching, Scholarship, and Service

Most institutions require accomplishments in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. However, institutions vary in how they weigh the achievements in each category (Green, 2008). For example, institutions that value teaching often place the most emphasis on success in teaching or weigh it equally with a productive program of research (Diamond, 2004), while service usually carries less weight. Clearly, you want to excel in all areas. However, it is also important to determine where to focus most of your time and energy. Therefore, you should
investigate how your institution weighs each category and let that guide how you spend your time.

It is worth noting that many teaching-oriented institutions are in a transition phase in regards to how teaching, scholarship, and service rank (Gregorutti, 2010). At such institutions, it may be that achievements in teaching have historically been the primary factor that determined a successful review. However, the institution may have changed so that the more current model weighs accomplishments in scholarship equally with successful teaching. If you find yourself at an institution in transition, you will likely hear some faculty members argue that the institution is still primarily interested in effective teaching, while others recognize the growing significance of active participation in scholarship. In such cases, you should discuss these issues with your department chair, the dean, and members of the tenure committee for clarification regarding the expectations for tenure. In addition, it would be helpful to review dossiers of faculty members who have recently received tenure. You can look at the type and number of publications as well as their teaching evaluations as a guideline.

Once you have determined the relative importance of “the big three,” it may be a good idea to create a timeline for yourself over the coming years before your tenure review (Abselar, 2009). Creating a general timeline will help keep you organized while you attempt to achieve your goals in teaching, scholarship, and service (Abselar, 2009). In this timeline, you might outline what needs to be done in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service each year before tenure. It is important to realize that activities within the timeline will likely change; you may have to completely re-prep a course, new research projects will come up, and old projects will fail. Obviously, you have to maintain a degree of flexibility with your schedule. However, if you find you are falling behind on certain goals, like scholarship, because you spend too much time doing other activities, like service, you need to reprioritize your time.

**Teaching**

At teaching-oriented institutions, your achievements in teaching will most certainly undergo careful review. Therefore, you should familiarize yourself with the requirements and expectations related to teaching. Below are some questions you should ask.

1. What are the general expectations for teaching?
2. How is teaching effectiveness evaluated (e.g., student ratings, faculty/peer observations of classes, syllabi, sample tests, teaching statement, reflections on teaching, etc.)?
3. Is there a minimum requirement for student ratings?
4. Are there certain characteristics that are more important than others (e.g., presenting material effectively, course organization, interactions with students, etc.)?
5. Is advising counted under the category of teaching? If so, how is it evaluated?
6. What kinds of resources are available for teaching-related activities? (e.g., teaching excellence office, funds for travel to teaching conferences, etc.)?

**Effective teaching.** If you are brand new to teaching, you likely have some anxiety about teaching your courses. First, know that there is no perfect teaching style. The best advice I
have ever received regarding teaching is to “teach myself.” Teaching yourself means that you should conduct a class that you would like if you were a student. I found that this strategy allows an instructor to teach to his/her own strengths. Some instructors are excellent lecturers, others are great at engaging students with hands-on activities, and some have a knack for creating an atmosphere of active learning through discussion. Capitalize on those strengths! At the same time, it is a good idea to allow room for growth in weaker areas. If you know you are not effective at facilitating discussion, consult other instructors who have discussion-based courses. Then incorporate discussion into your courses, making use of strategies you have learned from others. Do this often enough so you begin to feel comfortable with that new method. In summary, you want to teach to your strengths, but do address any weaknesses, too. Finally, know that there are many resources available for teachers of psychology, including websites, journals, and both local and national teaching conferences. You can visit the website for the Society of the Teaching of Psychology to find information on all three (www.teachpsych.org). In addition, many institutions value faculty development related to pedagogy, such as attending teaching conferences. Be sure to include such attendance in your curriculum vitae.

**Student feedback.** Getting student feedback on teaching effectiveness can provoke anxiety because of possible negative feedback. Negative feedback challenges our egos, especially when we devote so much time and effort to our classes. However, criticism can be extremely useful because it allows us to view our classes from the students’ perspective. Clearly, we must be cautious when interpreting their perceptions of the course. Nevertheless, negative comments can provide valuable insight into your teaching effectiveness.

When reviewing negative feedback, it is important that you do not take it personally. Instead, consider your course goals and expected student outcomes before reading the evaluations. Then, as you read the evaluations, determine whether the students’ comments indicate that a particular method or technique you use in class actually works against those goals and/or outcomes. If so, the student(s) have a valid point. Thus, you can identify certain methods or approaches that may not be effective in achieving your objectives. For instance, in one of my classes, I made use of discussions as a way to encourage students to think about the material independently and to be able to talk about it with others. However, many students expressed that they felt intimidated talking in a large group, and therefore did not participate. I realized that large-group discussions were not effective in achieving my goal. Therefore, I changed the format of the discussions so that students interacted in smaller groups, and each group shared key points with the whole class at the end of discussion. In the end, my course goal was met and the students were more satisfied with the experience.

Obviously, there will also be times when you identify negative comments or complaints about a technique or strategy that you feel cannot or should not change. In that case, it may be worthwhile to address the class and tell students why you employ certain methods and what you hope to achieve with those methods. For instance, I have had students complain that they do not like that they must learn material from the book that is not discussed in class. I used this feedback as an opportunity to remind students that I do not lecture straight from the book and...
believe that it is a fair expectation of college students to be able to read and learn material from a textbook. They may not like my response, but at least they know my expectation.

Approaching evaluations in this way allows instructors to make criticism constructive. It is also more effective than wallowing in self-pity in terms of making improvements in a course. Doing a mid-semester evaluation in all courses provides an opportunity to get feedback and make changes early in the course. Therefore, I recommend using this approach with mid-semester evaluations as well as the end-of-semester evaluations.

Student ratings and comments about an instructor are often included in a tenure portfolio. In addition to this, you may want to include departmental averages as a comparison (Diamond, 2004). Your department chair should be able to provide that information. You might also consider making use of other materials that document your teaching effectiveness. For instance, it would be a good idea to include sample syllabi and assignments in your portfolio. Furthermore, you may want to demonstrate student learning outcomes with a pre/post test (taken at the beginning and the end of the semester), or samples of student papers that include a rough draft and the final paper. Both provide documentation that students are making progress in your course. You might also consider including any documentation showing that a particular course changed behavior or attitudes or resulted in changes in the curriculum (Diamond, 2004).

**What to do with low ratings?** First, you need to be honest with yourself. If you did not feel good about the course all along and you are not surprised by the ratings, you need to consider what you might change about the course in the future. If, however, you felt you were effective as a teacher in the course and are surprised by the ratings, I offer a number of strategies to address the issue in your tenure portfolio and in subsequent teachings of the course.

One factor you should consider is the course itself. If possible, find comparable evaluations of the course taught by other instructors. If ratings for the particular course tend to be low, the scores likely reflect something other than your teaching effectiveness. Clearly, you should include such comparison scores in your portfolio.

After you have carefully considered the student feedback (see previous section) and decided on any possible changes you will make to the course, you might ask a colleague to sit in on that particular class in the future to get an outsider’s perspective. Clearly, you want to pick someone who you respect and trust as a teacher. If your institution has a center for teaching, you might inquire whether someone from that office could observe the class a few times and give feedback. In either case, you should ask the same individual to come back later in the semester to observe the changes you have implemented. Afterwards, consider asking the individual to write a letter about their experiences in your classroom and with you as an instructor to include in your tenure portfolio. This letter could serve as a strong supplement to low evaluations. Anyone can have a bad semester, or do a bad job in a class. However, not everyone will work so hard to make improvements in a class. Therefore, if you do get outside feedback, find some way to document it. In fact, some institutions require peer evaluation of
teaching, so it would be necessary to include written feedback on your teaching in your portfolio.

Do note that it may not be necessary to start out with stellar teaching evaluations. If your teaching evaluations improve over time, highlight that fact in your portfolio. Improvement in teaching evaluations over time can show your dedication to teaching. Thus, you might include a brief explanation of the changes you made in the courses and how your approach to pedagogy has evolved over time.

**Managing your time.** It is often difficult to balance scholarship and teaching. One effective way to prioritize both activities is to consider the organization and timing of different activities in all of the courses you teach each semester and of scholarship activities. If you have certain times during the semester when you need to focus exclusively on scholarship, be sure to avoid collecting students’ papers during those times. You should also decide what works best for you, personally. For instance, some faculty would rather do all of their grading at once, in which case papers for all courses should be collected around the same time. However, other faculty prefer to space out grading, and thus collect papers from different classes at different times throughout the semester. Decide what is best for you, personally, and for success in both teaching and research.

**Scholarship**

Even at teaching-oriented institutions, active engagement in scholarship is usually considered a necessary and significant requirement for tenure. Clearly, institutions will have different views on the acceptable level of productivity and what exactly constitutes scholarship. Thus, one of the first steps you should take is informing yourself of the requirements of your institution. Below are some questions to ask about scholarship.

1. What are the general expectations for scholarship?
2. What counts as scholarship (e.g., publications, news articles, talks, posters, etc.)?
3. How is scholarship ranked (e.g., publication in a high vs. low tier journal, poster vs. talk, etc.)?
4. Is there a minimum requirement for presentations and/or publications?
5. Is it important that students be actively engaged in your program of research?
6. Is it important that students present at conferences or for students’ names to appear on publications?
7. What kind of support or resources are available for scholarship (e.g., start-up funds, departmental or institutional funds for equipment/resources, institutional grants, assistance for federal grants, etc.)?

After you have a general sense of what your institution expects from you regarding scholarship, you can begin to work towards fulfilling those expectations. Perhaps the most common suggestion regarding scholarship is that you must guard your time (Abselar, 2009). This is sage advice. It is very easy to allow teaching-related activities and service responsibilities to override your scholarship. Therefore, you should make a plan for yourself regarding when and where
you will work on your research. You could consider setting aside certain times of the day or even days of the week for scholarship. Be sure to stick with this schedule as much as possible. On a more general level, you might create a timeline for your program of research. For instance, you may decide to focus on data collection during the regular semester and use any breaks to develop new projects or to write. Alternatively, some people may find that data collection is more efficient over the summer and spend more time planning future projects and writing during the academic year. Determine what works best for you given your schedule and the type of research you conduct.

Another strategy to encourage active and continuous participation in scholarship is to make yourself accountable. An excellent way to increase accountability is to establish strong collaborative relationships with other scholars in your discipline (Hansen, 2008). The benefit of collaboration is two-fold. First, you will feel accountable to that person, and therefore, more motivated to complete the project. This effect leads to the second advantage; you are more likely to get that work out (i.e., submitted for publication) sooner.

A second way to make yourself accountable is to recruit students as research assistants and prioritize their active engagement in your scholarship. Involve students in every part of the research process, from the development of an idea, to establishing the procedures and materials, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting the results (e.g., either in a manuscript or in a poster or talk). It may help both you and the students to establish a lab routine. For example, create a lab schedule in which students have designated times when they are expected to be in the lab working on assigned duties. In addition, you might consider setting up weekly or bi-weekly lab meetings to make sure that both you and your students stay on task. Finally, you may find that establishing a “hierarchy” in the lab helps both you and the students manage the various projects in your lab. I have found that a lab manager is essential to keeping my research assistants and activities in the lab organized. The lab manager is in charge of establishing the lab schedule, training new research assistants, and maintaining files in addition to the normal duties of helping with project development, data collection and analysis.

Student research assistants can be a tremendous asset to your program of research. In addition, training young scholars is often a very satisfying experience. Finally, most teaching institutions want to see that students are involved in your scholarship. Therefore, student involvement in your lab is beneficial on many levels. On a related note, if you do involve students in your scholarship, make sure they get credit for it. Have them attend conferences to present the work as much as possible. Include them as authors on any manuscripts. This effort gives students the credit they deserve, but it also serves as documentation that students are doing more than just collecting data in your lab. In other words, such documentation is proof that students in your lab also actively contribute to the science of psychology!

Clearly, once you complete a project it is time to start writing. You may feel that writing a manuscript is a more daunting task than data collection. In this case, consider setting small writing goals for yourself (Spiegler, 2010). For instance, when I am especially resistant to writing a given manuscript, I decide that I only have to write 100 words a day. Such a small task
seems much more manageable than one page a day and therefore makes me more likely to actually get started on the writing. This strategy may work especially well if you are writing during the semester and do not think you can find time to write on busy “teaching days.” You might also set aside time for writing at “quieter” times of the year, such as during breaks or over the summer. Experiment a little and find what works best for you (for more on efficient manuscript writing see Belcher, 2009, or Silvia, 2007).

Service
Once again, I include some questions to ask regarding the expectations for service at your institution.

1. What are the general expectations for service?
2. How is service to community, department, institution, and profession weighed?
3. Which committees are appropriate for junior faculty members?
4. How do I get involved/become part of a committee (by vote, assignment, volunteer)?

Service activities are usually easy to accumulate. In fact, it is easy to let service override teaching and research. Therefore, you must select your service activities wisely. Also, be willing to say no. Junior faculty members often end up being “work horses” and take on any and all service activities presented to them. However, at most institutions, service achievements receive low priority when making tenure decisions. In other words, it is very unlikely that you will get tenure with an excellent service record, but very little scholarship or poor teaching evaluations.

You will probably want to commit yourself to one or two university/college-wide committees during your probationary period. Therefore, you should investigate how to get on such committees. You may either be appointed to committees or you may have to be voted on to a committee. In either case, seek advice regarding how to become involved. There will be no lack of departmental service activities. Indeed, it is in your department where you may need to be more careful about how you volunteer your time.

Find out whether community service is included in the institution’s definition of service. You likely do more community service than you realize. Activities such as tutoring ESL, an Earth Day clean-up, giving a presentation on your area of expertise, or doing basic labor for a church, school, or other group might count as service. If so, list such activities in your curriculum vitae.

Do not forget that service to your profession is often quite valuable. This would include serving on a conference or society committee, reviewing journal articles, organizing conferences, etc. Be sure to document such activities carefully.

As you choose various service projects, consider what the department and the institution deem worthwhile. For instance, Bonawitz and Andel (2008) claim that activities related to admissions are often not valued, whereas committee work is deemed more important. Knowing which activities are considered more valuable by the institution will help you determine where you should allocate your time and efforts to fulfill your service requirements.
Staying on Track

Getting feedback on your progress towards tenure is vital to your success. You may think you are on the right track, but find that senior faculty and administrators have a different opinion. In some departments, a mentor will be assigned to you. If not, you should establish a mentor/mentee relationship with someone you respect and trust (see Jones & Tucker-Allen, 2000). First and foremost, you can ask this person for feedback on your accomplishments and advice for improvement in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. In addition, you can go to this person with any questions you might have about the institution or the department. It is important that you are open to your mentor’s advice. After all, feedback is worthless unless you make use of it.

Many departments have a third-year review process during which a sub-committee or the entire department reviews your progress in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service up to that point. It is an excellent time to get feedback and make adjustments before going up for tenure. You might also inquire whether the department has an annual review process. If not, ask if it is possible to initiate one. Although the third-year review benefits the probationary candidate in terms of feedback, an annual review would offer the added advantage of more immediate feedback. In other words, you could make any necessary modifications to your teaching, research, or service much earlier in your probationary period.

Documentation of your accomplishments in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service is paramount. This fact is obvious enough. However, too often we forget to document activities or achievements and they go unnoticed. Update your curriculum vitae every few months. Keep a running list of your service activities. You might also maintain a file related to accomplishments in teaching (e.g., thank you notes from students or any other evidence of teaching effectiveness).

Taking a Leave of Absence

If you have to take a leave of absence for any reason during your probationary period, you should investigate whether it is possible to extend your tenure clock. If you are allowed to extend your probationary period, you should seriously consider giving yourself more time. There are several factors that should contribute to your decision. First and foremost, you want to think about your achievements up to this point. For instance, you should ask yourself whether you have clear and consistent evidence of effective teaching. In addition, you must determine whether you have established an active and productive research program. Finally, decide if you have participated in a sufficient number of service activities. This estimate can be difficult to surmise on your own. Seek advice from your colleagues both in and out of the department, especially those who have recently been through the tenure process. You should also discuss this plan with your department chair. Discussions with others will give you some perspective on your current accomplishments and will help you make an informed decision.

Another factor to consider is the purpose of your leave of absence. In many cases, a leave of absence is necessary because of a major change in life circumstances. You have to consider
that your life may not be “back to normal” after your leave. For instance, if you take medical leave, it is likely that you will have many doctor appointments and will still experience negative symptoms, even after you return to work. These after-effects will clearly influence your ability to focus and the amount of time you spend on work-related activities. The same holds true for junior faculty who take maternity/paternity leave. When you return to work, it is likely that your child will still not sleep through the night. The exhaustion and emotions of parenthood, especially when the child is very young, can interfere with work. Unfortunately, we cannot predict the future and it is impossible to know how your life will be after your leave of absence. However, you might try to talk to others who have recently taken a leave of absence. Specifically, ask about their experiences with transitioning back to work. This conversation may at least give you a more realistic idea of what to expect after your leave.

Finally, if you came in with credit (i.e., years towards the tenure clock), you might consider if you have had sufficient time to establish yourself at your institution. In other words, you may have evidence of teaching effectiveness, successful scholarship, and a strong service record. However, there may not be enough evidence to satisfy the department and/or the institution. Obviously, you would need to discuss this with your department chair and possibly your dean. The institution may have a policy regarding a minimum number of years before going up for tenure. If not, the chair and the dean should have enough knowledge of the tenure process to give you sound advice on whether or not you should extend your tenure clock.

The Meaning of Credit

If you came in to your institution with credit, find out how exactly how credit is defined. In some cases, credit only counts as time towards tenure. In that case, any work you have completed before you arrived at the institution will not count towards tenure. Neither publications nor teaching-related achievements during the “credit” period would be considered in your tenure portfolio. Other institutions may consider any work completed during your credit time (i.e., years counted towards tenure at a previous institution). Either way, it is important that you know how the institution views credit so you can map out goals for yourself during your probationary period.

Minority Candidates

Minority candidates face special challenges during the tenure process. Some challenges may come from the institution (e.g., discrimination) and others may stem from personal circumstances (e.g., childcare demands, household demands, etc.). A discussion of the challenges and ways to overcome them could be a chapter in and of itself (see Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Trower, 2009). Therefore, a full discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, you do want to familiarize yourself with possible challenges to help equip yourself with tools and strategies to overcome them. Admittedly, it may be difficult to overcome certain institutional challenges, such as policies and procedures, especially as a junior faculty member. Nevertheless, you can attempt to work around such challenges as best as possible. Common advice includes finding a good mentor and establishing support for research and teaching (Bonawitz & Andel, 2008; Trower, 2009), similar to the advice included in this
chapter. In addition, Bonawitz and Andel provide a list of suggestions that could be useful for minority candidates. The important theme in this list is to select service and teaching activities wisely. That is, you should choose service activities that are respected and valued by the institution. This approach may seem obvious. However, Bonwitz and Andel point out that minority candidates often feel obligated to participate in service activities and that certain activities are less valued than others. For instance, although your department may appreciate you teaching extra courses, that service will likely go unnoticed or will not be considered at all in your tenure case. If various activities are not valued, they become “time sucks.” Your time may be better spent on scholarship or improvements in teaching. The main point is that you want to focus your time and energy on activities in teaching, scholarship, and service that are valued (at the time of the tenure decision) in your department and at your institution.

Creating the Portfolio

First and foremost, you must find out what needs to be included in your tenure portfolio. Most institutions will have literature that explains the expectations and requirements of the portfolio. Know that some institutions have very specific requirements. For instance, you may find that you have a page limit for certain documents or that you can only include a certain number of syllabi or only a certain number of sample student papers. You want to know this ahead of time. In addition, you want to know if you must submit the portfolio electronically or as a hard copy. If you must submit hard copies, you will need extra time before the deadline to make the copies and organize each portfolio. It is of utmost importance that you know the expectations and requirements of the portfolio well before submitting it. You might ask recently tenured faculty if you can review their portfolios to see what others have included in the past.

Diamond (2004) advises that your portfolio establishes both the quality and significance of your work in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. This point is important; individuals outside of the area of psychology will review your portfolio. Therefore, they may not appreciate how course content influences evaluations, how research is conducted in psychology, or the significance of certain professional service activities. Therefore, you want to provide evidence of the impact and significance of your work. In the area of teaching, you might include an essay that describes the importance of your teaching to students, the department, and the college. Also, if you have published articles in the area of teaching, you might highlight these publications. Regarding scholarship, many people outside of psychology do not understand the process of psychological research. In other words, they may not know how many participants are needed in a typical experiment, or how many experiments are usually included in a publication. If you have to include a statement of scholarship, it may be a good idea to offer a brief description of psychological research to give reviewers some perspective as they learn about your work. You might also include information about journals in which you have published (e.g., rejection or acceptance rate or impact factor, whichever is most meaningful). Finally, another way to indicate the significance of an article is to state how often it has been cited since publication. A final strategy to document the quality and significance of your work is to solicit letters from people who can comment on your
performance in each of the areas of teaching, research, and service. For instance, someone who has observed your classes can most certainly talk about your impact in the classroom. An expert in your field of research could comment on the quality of your research as well as its significance to the discipline. Finally, fellow committee members can speak to your efforts and contributions to various service projects.

You want your portfolio to be more or less completed about three to four weeks before the deadline. This timeframe will allow you plenty of time to proofread and make modifications to all documents. However, know that it is very easy to miss your own typos or mistakes. Therefore, it is always a good idea to ask someone else to proofread your portfolio.

**Conclusion**

In summary, there are three main strategies to employ in order to prepare yourself for a successful tenure review. First, you should inform yourself of the tenure requirements in your department and at the institution. Second, you should consider how to make the best use of your time and efforts to fulfill the necessary requirements. This process includes selecting teaching, research, and service activities carefully and organizing your time wisely around these activities. Finally, actively seek and make use of feedback on your progress in teaching, scholarship, and service activities. Clearly, these tactics do not guarantee a successful review. However, they will certainly increase your chances of a positive outcome. Good luck!

**References**


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I was flattered to receive the invitation to provide expert advice on how to avoid becoming a “deadwood” faculty member. However, I was reminded of a familiar quote from Mark Twain: “When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it’s a sure sign you are getting old.” It occurred to me that if Twain—one of my favorite, albeit untrained, psychologists—came to mind so readily in relation to this request, that there were probably other gems from his work that would assist me in the reflective process. At times we agree; at other times I will quibble or take issue with Twain’s wisdom. I celebrate him as a writing partner, but I’m also pleased that this format gives me the last word.

To be good is noble;
but to show others how to be good is nobler and no trouble.

~Following the Equator

Although Twain was never employed as a college professor, he was no stranger to the lecture. His biographers point out that he was wildly popular on the lecture circuit, systematically using his locution skills to point out human foibles while he replenished his bank account. Consequently, he offered a strong and personal observation about the value of imparting wisdom to others.

Goodness in the contemporary professoriate typically tends not to be defined in terms of nobility but rather in terms of the metrics of accountability. How potent are your student evaluations? How “productive” is your scholarship? What is the scope of impact of your service contributions? The complexities of finding the right blend of these activities and maintaining the right blend over time to produce the most impressive performance metrics occupies much of the focus of this text. However, rarely do we savor the nobility of the mission. Being a vibrant professor over time means embracing troublesome conditions—potentially learning hundreds, perhaps thousands of names; managing the ever-increasing distance in age between you and your students; coping with the information explosion that seems attendant to any thriving discipline; adjusting to changing technology; and that is just to name a few sources of strife.

However, I believe the faculty members who genuinely thrive over the length of their careers must be convinced of the nobility of what they do. They will never know the extent of their
ultimate reach in the classroom, but they extract strong reinforcement from the possibilities. Thriving professors tend to maintain links with their students so they can realize how many of those possibilities play out. News of the highly sought job or acceptance into a top flight graduate program can be ecstatic for the student but the professor can rightfully wallow a bit in this vicarious accomplishment as well.

To challenge Twain’s conclusion, teaching/showing others the path is clearly noble, but done right, it is also going to be a great deal of trouble. A simple example should drive the point home. Most dedicated faculty surrender weekend freedom on a Sunday night to “get ready” for the work week to come, just as they work well beyond the confines of a 40-hour work week. In this instance, Twain was flat wrong: showing others how to be good is lots of trouble.

A healthy and wholesome cheerfulness is not necessarily impossible to any occupation.

~"The Undertaker's Chat," Sketches New and Old

The most enduring and very best professors I know tend to be optimistic to the core. When such teachers assemble a syllabus, they do so in anticipation that this version will be the accumulation of the best ideas they have developed throughout their teaching careers, no matter how long those careers might be. In fact, most cherish the delusion that this time the course may just be perfect. We are usually disabused of that notion even before the first class is over, but the quest to approximate perfection seems to be a necessary element of the motivation that keeps professors invested in and excited about the process.

Maintaining optimism, especially in a climate of cost-cutting and “doing more for less,” is challenging. However, enthusiasm prevails when professors can find joy in watching even one student’s intellectual potential. An insightful comment, a unique research hypothesis, or a passionate argument from a promising student can do much to offset the forces that work to erode enthusiasm for our work.

The happy phrasing of a compliment is one of the rarest of human gifts and the happy delivery of it another.

~Mark Twain’s Autobiography

Coming to terms with the power one has as a professor can be a very heady experience. Providing effective developmental feedback or criticism, whether during class or as part of “the teachable moment” beyond the class, is an art. The professors with greatest impact thoroughly understand how much power they have to inspire students’ best performance through carefully constructed phrases. They also recognize that ungraceful messages, ham-handed delivery, and unbridled sarcasm can be stultifying for students. Knowing when and what to say in relation to the delicate interaction that constitutes the teachable moment can be a true hallmark of the vibrant.

However, the best professors are not just individuals who enthusiastically spew verbal bon
mot at every opportunity. They also recognize that they have the burden of establishing and maintaining high standards and accepting nothing less than performance that matches or exceeds those standards from their students or from themselves.

One strategy that tends to work in driving home the importance of striving for excellence is simply asking students at the conclusion of a project, “Is this your best effort?” That question sometimes produces what I like to call the “hair part phenomenon”; students quickly look down to their desktops to minimize their connection with you. Instead of the usual visual field of faces, all you see is the tops of heads in the students’ desperate attempt not to be volunteered for an answer. Their squirms and avoidance confirm their work was the result of “economy of effort” (a term I prefer to use over “lazy”). For such students, pursuing excellence is simply not part of their core values…yet.

Vital professors point out accurately and confidently to students that the professors are bringing their best to this context. Consequently, they should expect nothing less from students. Such standard bearing reinforces character building. Subsequently, the professors demonstrate vigilance in modeling inspiring performance and rewarding inspiration when students achieve. Helping students embrace the joys of intellectual life through skilled reinforcement establishes a nourishing feedback loop for students and professors alike.

I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did.

I said I didn't know.

~Life on the Mississippi~

When young professors begin their careers, there is an inherent torment in being discovered by their students as frauds. They worry about not having all the answers. In fact, most brand new professors can lay claims to the imposter phenomenon until they experience some success and feel some traction in the classroom. A truly liberating alternative as professors gain experience in the classroom is discovering the pedagogical power of saying “I don’t know.”

Being able to respond to a student’s question with “I don’t know...What do you think?” means the professor is actively pursuing Boyer’s (1990) scholarship of discovery, the thinking through of hypotheses unrehearsed and actively modeling the critical thinking skills we hope to foster. Instead of anxiety caused by exposing one’s own limits, the experienced professor recognizes the tough question as a humbling but rich opportunity to exploit in the interest of encouraging student curiosity.

This strategy can take on a playful edge to promote deeper engagement of students in their reading. As evidence of good and faithful homework preparation, one can require students to bring a question to class that grows out of their reading that might stump the professor. Cast as a game, students may be more inclined to dig deeply to find those elements that can prompt the professor to say happily, “I don’t know...What do you think?”
It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble.
It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.
~Often quoted but source unknown.

I have been around long enough to recognize that some truths I conveyed as a young professor or therapist simply have not endured under continuing scrutiny from the scientific community. I actually enjoy the prospect of having to revise the “truths” of psychology as our science sharpens the knowledge base. I think this process reflects the true communitarian approach to building science and necessitates our ability to tolerate ambiguity. This reality demands that professors must keep one foot in ambiguity. Enduring professors do not just get over frustration caused by ambiguity; they relish it.

Communicating the significance of ambiguity tolerance to students is another matter altogether. We know from the work of Perry (1970) that the college journey for most students involves a beginning stance of preferring a simple, black-and-white world in which the professor is the ultimate authority. Consequently, students experience enormous strain when their professors respond to questions with “It depends on...” Typically, the answer that follows will be replete with variables and contingencies for which beginning students have little patience. This frustration may set the stage for the student believing the professor who cannot answer a simple question is probably not particularly good at his job.

Seasoned faculty members develop explicit strategies to bring students out of the dualistic mindset of taking a black vs. white stance on important issues. They point out that human problems do not really yield to simple answers and invite the students to brainstorm other potential variables that might influence the behavior in question. They extol the virtues of tolerating ambiguity and being intellectually excited about thinking through the possibilities.

Supposing is good, but finding out is better.
~Mark Twain in Eruption; Mark Twain’s Autobiography

Professors who are the most fulfilled in their work over time are those who craft research agenda that provide a sense of purpose or even mission. Although some luck may be involved in finding and pursuing a body of research, discipline, focus, passion, and sacrifice appear to be the main ingredients. The systematic pursuit of a coherent body of work can be a particularly daunting enterprise for those who do not discover the right mission. Their “productivity” is often conducted in service of producing the minimum number of publications to secure tenure and promotion in contrast to the fruits of intellectual curiosity.

However, professors are most likely to thrive and endure when their research agenda feel important and provide the opportunity to create and contribute in distinctive ways that have not been pursued by anyone else. When their work inspires others to pursue similar research questions, it is hard not to stay excited and active. When their work inspires their own students
to pursue a similar pathway, the satisfaction is boundless.

My own experience as a scholar would augment Twain’s observation: finding out (with others) is even better. Making a commitment to those with similar research interests tends to concentrate your skills. If those research alliances also include relatively young professionals, the mutual mentorship can do a great deal to enliven the later stages of the career. The protégé can benefit from the knowledge and navigational skill of the seasoned mentor and the seasoned mentor can relish the fresh energy that young professionals can bring into the mix. Including undergraduate research apprentices on the research team can also bring a fresh perspective to group processes.

Our science is relatively young. Although psychology students predictably go through stages where they erroneously believe everything interesting has already been discovered (leaving them no options for the independent research), the vital faculty member not only takes solace in how much there is yet to discover but helps students understand that excitement lies in uncovering and resolving how much we do not know.

It is poison--rank poison--to knuckle down to care and hardships. They must come to us all, albeit in different shapes—and we may not escape them—it is not possible—but we may swindle them out of half of their puissance with a stiff upper lip.

~quoted in Mark Twain’s Letters to Will Bowen

Although to outsiders the life of the professor seems quite charmed, academic life is filled with adversity. Cherished colleagues may depart for better opportunities. The most churlish and unpleasant colleagues always seem to stay put. Department chairs and deans may have motivational styles that jar or even undermine best efforts. Journal reviewers can be caustic and worse—they can be right. Tenure decisions can be negative, producing a kind of permanent scar tissue that prompts rethinking one’s life choices.

Student efforts can also be disappointing, and sometimes even heartbreaking. For example, the parade of studies demonstrating the magnitude of student cheating should be enough to drive any sane professor into insurance sales. The likelihood that your own students’ will disappoint you by violating academic standards at some point is almost a certainty. Sadly, the best and brightest may engage in academic misconduct under the perceived pressures for high performance (Callahan, 2004). Occasionally those pressures are unbearable, explaining why college suicide is a real and pressing threat to academic peace.

Faculty who stay vital embrace the fact that the career they have chosen, despite its rewards, will most likely contain a hefty parcel of frustration, disappointment, and grief. Experience tells us that what is exquisitely painful at the time of its occurrence will fade with time. The most grinding negative emotions can relent in short order, barring more serious personality challenges. Some injuries will take a while to heal.

Strategies that minimize the toll on the professor’s spirit focus on not taking the students’
behavior personally. They do all they can to promote positive ethics, including regularly reminding students when taking exams that they are making a choice about building a trust-generating positive character or taking the easy way out. Simple, regular reminders can help students stay oriented in the most appropriate pathways for their achievement.

The trouble ain't that there is too many fools,
but that the lightning ain't distributed right.
~ More Maxims of Mark, Johnson, 1927

Twain had a dark side. He often spoke harshly about those who disappointed him; wishing for the appropriate lightning strike to dispatch the miscreants is in keeping with that aspect of his character. Those who thrive in higher education do have to develop strategies for dealing with disappointments that go beyond the stiff upper lip. The ones who fare best as their careers advance are those who are not adverse to conflict but accept conflict as an essential feature of the human condition. They develop assertive strategies to protect their rights and their students. They avoid generating resentment through ineffective nonassertive approaches such as gossip, manipulation, or passive aggressive behavior. They are careful to keep in check any id monsters that might wreak havoc in their professional relationships. For example, they celebrate the accomplishments of their colleagues rather than be swept up in feelings of envy or jealousy.

When colleagues inevitably become the source of conflict, it is best not to approximate a lightning strike. Allowing yourself to believe in karma is a more healthful and adaptive approach. Perhaps the comeuppance that is deserved will transpire at another time in another context. Becoming preoccupied with being right or being the smartest kid in the room wastes valuable time and creative energy.

He had had much experience of physicians, and said "the only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd druther not."
~Following the Equator

Twain was especially smart in recognizing how important good health is to vitality. Although one can depart from the simple rules promulgated by Twain, the fact is professors must be in good physical condition to endure. Much about the professorial life is decidedly sedentary. However, the energy requirements for a genuinely engaging lecture or class experience are going to be most easily deployed when the professor is well slept, appropriately nourished, and not hung over. Nearly every vibrant professor I know in the late stages of the career has physical outlets from cross-country skiing, to rafting, to zumba dancing. They are as conscientious about maintaining positive health practices as they are in delivering a first-rate educational experience to their students.
Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

~Attributed to Mark Twain but never verified

Despite your best efforts, professional dissatisfaction can sometimes take hold and not let go. Faculty who do not thrive over time in their chosen settings tend to cast such challenges as problems with their terrible chairs or deans or institutions. Indeed, some collectives of academics can be riotously dysfunctional. Meetings can be massively time-wasting exercises and departments can function more like academics “gone wild.”

Seasoned faculty recognize that they have responsibility, whether formally in leadership roles or informally as supporting characters, to help their work group forge reasonable working strategies that will be mutually satisfying. In the worst scenarios, leadership may need to extend to activist strategies to get some changes made in the managers who are contributing to the chaos.

Sometimes professional unhappiness is not likely to be a “problem” caused by others but a problem of one’s own fit with the institution. Nagging feelings of discontent with the policies and practices of the professor’s institution may signal that the professor should find a new set of colleagues and a new challenge in a new setting. Professors who stay vital do a careful analysis and if fit is the issue, they move on rather than linger in a context where their values are not consonant with the values of their campus. Reluctance to throw off the bowline and sail off for a new set of risks can lead to the opposite of the vital professor. Unfortunately, the embittered and curmudgeonly crank is often a fixture in many academic departments.

Wrinkles should merely indicate where the smiles have been.

~Following the Equator

My favorite of many life mentors, Bill McKeachie, once confessed to me early in my own career that teaching gets harder each year. At the time, I thought he was uncharacteristically wrong in his conclusion. However, my own experience confirms the veracity of his statement. Students seem younger and younger and the struggle to connect with each new crop gets more challenging as their cultural experience has so little overlap with our own. However, it is Bill’s capacity for sheer enjoyment, not just of the generational differences, but with the whole of the teaching experience that has served as one of my most important lessons about how to endure. My conclusion is that it is hard to imagine another career that provides the opportunity for satisfaction and personal renewal than the careers we have been lucky enough to embrace.
References


Chapter 13

Realistic Expectations for Your First Few Years

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We hope you have gained valuable and practical information from this book—whether you are just starting your first position or will soon apply for tenure. What is important is that we remember our common experiences. We have found that by networking and discussing professional issues with other early career psychologists (ECPs), many of our questions are answered and fears allayed. There is no need to reinvent the wheel but rather use our shared knowledge as our best resource. The purpose of this final chapter is to review the overarching themes of this book as well as set some realistic expectations—as the breadth of advice may be a lot to take in. Finally, we would like to share our parting words of wisdom.

As you have probably gathered, there is quite a bit of information and a number of resources available for ECPs. One of the main themes recurring throughout this book is to take advantage of those opportunities—from mentorship programs, online resources, university cohort groups, conference presentations, etc. Parent organizations (e.g., STP, SPSP, APA) recognize the needs of ECPs and are prioritizing the dissemination of information and resources relevant to our unique position. Both within our parent organizations and university settings, networking relationships may provide one of the best routes to take advantage of these resources.

A second theme is to educate yourself on the expectations and policies within your university. This advice applies to research, teaching, and service, and is especially helpful when considering what is essential when going up for tenure. You also need to know the family-friendly policies when trying to balance personal and professional lives. Academics often use the metaphor of balancing on a three-legged stool where each leg represents service, research, and teaching, respectively. Depending on your institution, the expectations may differ and thus the legs of the stool may be of different lengths. As an ECP navigating new territory, it is essential that you are aware of these differences to ensure better balance.

Another common theme is utilizing our classroom time, not only as a means to meet teaching obligations, but also to accomplish research goals. Part of improving our pedagogical skills involves understanding them better and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) provides a resourceful avenue to this end. Pedagogical research is really the trifecta as it can lead to effective teaching, research opportunities, as well as tenure and promotion. SoTL can easily be integrated into your courses by using course evaluations, student assignments, as well as a myriad of other existing rating forms (see Gurung & Schwartz, 2009).
Setting Realistic Expectations

The value of the ideas, thoughts and lessons discussed in this e-book are designed to help you build a foundation for a successful academic career and have the potential for great growth throughout the years. For example, the chapter on networking within the broader field will be beneficial if you are looking to get more involved in your respective field and would like to build a network of peers. The chapter on work/life balance contains invaluable information about finding a happy medium between having a successful academic career and a family. The list of advice provided in this book goes on and on. However, you must always remember that even similar professional experiences are innately different. While we as ECPs have a lot in common, we each will have unique and different professional experiences depending on the field we are in and our respective institutions and their expectations. No one can be expected to do everything; one of the inherent lessons in being an ECP is to recognize when to limit yourself.

As you look to apply the information in this book, always do so with an understanding of the implications on the expectations of your institution. For example, if your university puts a strong emphasis on involving students in ongoing research, then you should probably devote more time and energy to setting up a successful research lab than other areas which are less valued by your institution. Likewise, some institutions put more weight on innovative teaching compared to research; therefore, it may make sense to invest more time in assessing your teaching to ensure students are receiving an outstanding classroom experience.

Our intent is to offer guidance to ECPs on best practices in the classroom, setting up a successful research program and getting involved in service. Even though not every chapter might be relevant to your experience, we hope that you found information in this book that fits your needs to better your academic experience. It is important to note, however, that you should never lose sight of your major objectives; focus on what matters at your institution so you can attain tenure in the time that you are given as an ECP.

Words of Wisdom

Stephanie Afful, Fontbonne University

I would impart two final thoughts for my fellow ECPs. The first is to put yourself out there. It may involve some level of renewed confidence, but please—nominate yourself for travel grants, teaching/research awards, service on committees, apply for internal and external grants, talk to someone new after a conference presentation, etc. These can be at the institutional or divisional level. My motto is that “you don’t know until you try.” My guess is that you will be surprised at all the opportunities that await you. My second parting thought is that we cannot be expected to perform well in this job (i.e., balancing teaching, research, and service) alone. The key is collaboration. To that end, it is crucial that we maintain the relationships we had in graduate school and work to build additional ones in our new universities and locations. Networking and mentorship will hopefully afford us the tools to actualize the academic we want to be.
Jennifer Stiegler-Balfour, University of New England
My advice to other ECPs is to immerse yourself in the university community from the moment you set foot on your new campus. Think about how you can add value to the department by making the best use of your strengths. Integrating yourself into the department and being an active participant will automatically fuel your desire to excel in teaching, research and service. Depending on the requirements of your university, you should consider your strengths and tailor your contributions accordingly. This is not to say that you shouldn’t attempt to excel in all three areas, but identify where you can contribute in the most meaningful way. This may be in the form of improving student learning through innovative teaching techniques or through involving students in a successful research lab that advances your field of study. Your goal should be to find a healthy balance between teaching, research and service in a way that will allow you to achieve tenure but also fits your strengths.

Jessica Good, Davidson College
My advice may sound cliché, but it is simply to enjoy your career. As graduate students, we were focused on graduating and getting a job, and as ECPs, we may be so focused on our future attainment of tenure that we don’t stop to enjoy the road to tenure. Being an ECP is difficult, of course. It is also really rewarding, and is a time filled with moments you will treasure for years to come—the pride in watching your first thesis student defend his or her project, the excitement of planning out a new course from scratch with limitless possibilities, the gratitude experienced when new colleagues go out of their way to help you, the sense of anticipation and opportunity when you have your whole career stretched out in front of you. So in the midst of the chaos of the first few years and the stress of seeking tenure, take some time to appreciate the moments along the way. We chose to become academic psychologists because it is a challenging and rewarding career. Take joy in the work!

Jared Keeley, Mississippi State University
As the token applied psychologist, my advice is decidedly clinical in nature: take care of yourself. These years will be both exciting and stressful. There are so many tasks to accomplish and engaging things to do that it is easy to lose track of taking time for yourself. However, if you are not healthy or well-rested, you will not be at your best to do all the wonderful things you do. That means eating healthy, exercising, getting enough sleep, and (believe it or not) taking time off. Just like you might have to schedule time in your week for writing, schedule time for lunch with a friend or going to the gym. These can be easy things to let slide, as we often have few degrees of freedom when trying to fit in all our duties. However, they are just as essential to our job. Do not forget to do things you enjoy that are not related to academia. Having fun and healthy interests outside of work keeps your batteries charged. You will find that if you are a complete person, you will be even better at work.

Sadie Leder, High Point University
I could not agree more with the thoughtfully selected advice of my fellow editors. In building from their recommendations, I would only urge you to remember that you are embarking on your own unique career and that you have the tools and freedom to make it anything that you like. Allow your passion, creativity, and enthusiasm to work together to craft the path that is
appropriate for you. Some will make their mark through research productivity, while others achieve greatness through their personal connections with students both inside and out of the classroom. Some will finally find time to prioritize the personal and family goals that were placed on the backburner in order to achieve the remarkable feat of earning a Ph.D. and obtaining an academic position. As you may already be finding out, there will be a number of opportunities that arise, and although it may not seem possible, each year you will work harder than the next. Please do not be afraid to follow your heart, even if that means having to say no to requests or possibilities that you know are not right for you. When you find what makes you happy, and you are true to yourself about what you want to do, the rewards will make all of your hard work worthwhile. I wish you the best of luck with your early career years. This time will be one filled with unique challenges and rewards. Savor and learn from them all!

Reference