Balancing the Demands: Succeeding in a Faculty Position at a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution (PUI)

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Understand the Criteria

- Expectations in areas of teaching, research and service
  - Don’t expect a checklist

- Where is the decision made?
  - Institution? Department? Both?
  - Agreement between department and institution on messages and expectations?
Teaching: Department/Institution

- Experimentation with teaching? Pre-tenure – best to follow the established direction
- Importance of student course evaluations?
- Teaching versus research? Or research as teaching? Or teaching integrated with research?
- Number of new preparations? Important to establish some courses through repetition
Scholarly Work: Department/Institution

- Published work versus student experiences?
- Importance of grants?
- Value of collaborative work?
  - If you do collaborative work, essential that you explain to evaluators your significant intellectual contribution to the work
How to Get Tenure?

- Put on blinders
- Goal is clear – get tenure!
  - Make decisions with this goal in mind
- Establish yourself as a teacher and scholar
  - Avoid service – use your probationary status to advantage
  - Don’t volunteer
  - Just say NO!
Undergraduate Research Summit
http://www.bates.edu/x50817.xml

- Examine issues involved in undertaking and sustaining chemistry research at PUIs

- Provide recommendations on how to enhance the amount, quality, productivity, and visibility of research at PUIs
Establishing Yourself as a Scholar

- Write grant proposals
- Write more grant proposals
- Write even more grant proposals
  - Look under every rock for $$
- Devote summers to research
  - Involve students to build momentum for the academic year
- Don’t let teaching consume every minute
Teaching Strategies: Pre-tenure

- You do get better at balancing the demands
- Be judicious in the number and scope of assignments and labs
- Be guarded with office hours
  - Schedule group sessions instead of encouraging individual visits
- Seek a teaching schedule that leaves blocks of time for research
  - Protect that time for research
- Encourage student collaboration in classes
Why write grant proposals?

- Most chemistry projects require money
- Refines your ideas – whether or not the proposal is funded
- Impresses your department/institution
- You may get the grant – provides resources and more incentive than internal money to actually get work done
Too many faculty members at PUIs do not write grant proposals because they:

- Claim that they do not have the time
  - Make the time
- Convince themselves that they won’t get funded
  - If you don’t submit, it is true that you won’t get funded
- Code for people who are not that serious about doing research
Generating Ideas

- Attend smaller specialty conferences
- Form regional disciplinary group
- External seminar speakers
- Council on Undergraduate Research (www.cur.org) mentor network
- Collaborations
- Sabbatical leaves
Creating Time for Research

- Teaching schedule
  - set up so have blocks of time
  - Unbalanced semesters

- Close door on research day(s)

- Collaborate with students
  - Develop system that encourages students to do research for course credit

- Incorporate research into courses
  - Probably better teaching/learning than traditional lab experiences
Writing More Competitive Proposals

- Read the instructions
- Attend proposal-writing workshop/CUR Dialogue meeting
- Have an excellent idea
  - informally test your ideas on colleagues
- Excellent ideas are usually ambitious
  - not just a continuation of or derivative of prior work
Explain the significance of the work to the discipline and possibly society

Clearly explain the experimental work that will be undertaken

Clearly explain how the experimental work will answer the questions you pose to study

Provide a plan B if plan A is risky

Be succinct in your descriptions

Note that all of the comments above relate to the SCIENCE
- Convince the reviewers that you can successfully undertake the project
  - Institutional support and infrastructure
  - Appropriate collaborations (with letters of support)
- Address the impact the work will have on undergraduates
- Convince the reviewers that undergraduates can undertake your line of work (or set up collaborations for especially ambitious aspects of the project)
- But remember that the reviewers really want to be convinced that high quality science will be done
Find colleagues who will provide substantive and critical comments on a draft of your proposal

Listen to those colleagues

If the proposal is rejected, resubmit a revised version that addresses the criticisms raised by the reviewers

- unless the criticism is that the general idea does not merit funding

Talk to the program officer – she or he won’t bite!
Remember:

You will never get a grant unless you submit a proposal
Sources of Funding

- Research Corporation (www.rescorp.org)*
- Petroleum Research Fund (www.acs.org)*
- Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation (www.dreyfus.org)*
- National Science Foundation (www.nsf.gov)
- National Institutes of Health – AREA program (www.nih.gov)
Programs of the NSF

- Research at Undergraduate Institutions (RUI)
- Major Research Instrumentation (MRI)
- Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)
- Course, Curriculum and Laboratory Improvement (CCLI)