

# NAVIGATING THE ACADEMIC CAREER TRACK AS A JUNIOR FACULTY

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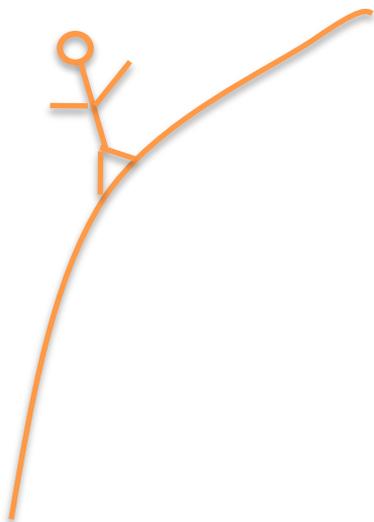
**University of Maryland School of Medicine**

# BACKGROUND



# YEAR BY YEAR

## Year 1



Everything is slower (especially the first ~6months) than you ever expected. Be patient.

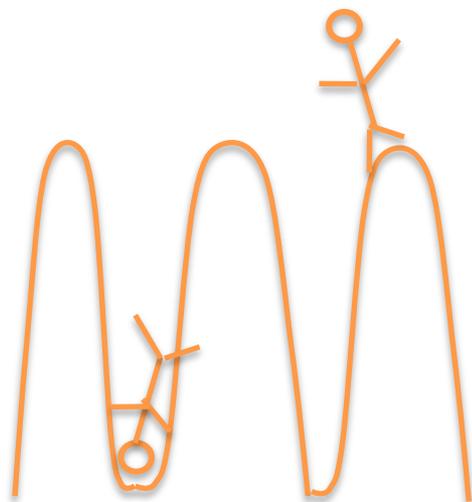
Figuring out how to manage students, Postdocs, technicians.

Working toward your first R01 grant.

Focused, selfish time.

Still spending bulk of time in the lab.

## Year 2



Many ups and downs.

Rejections and rewards.

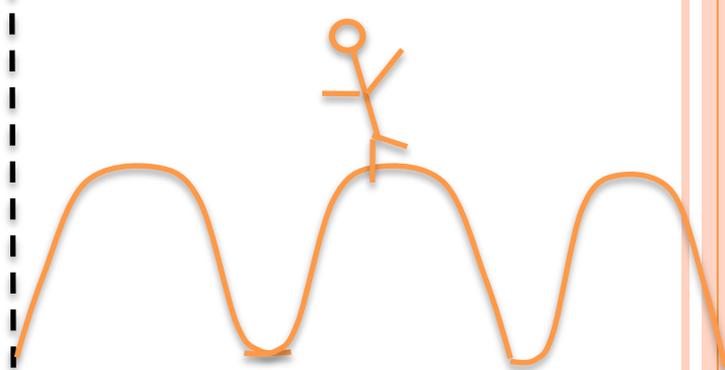
Better management skills.

Getting consistent/reliable data but the lab seems to implode when you are away.

More grant writing, teaching.

Lab time is intermittent.

## Year 3-4



Grants and publications are coming through.

More responsibilities- journal reviews, grant reviews, student committees, seminars.

Consistent data.

The lab stays intact when you are away.

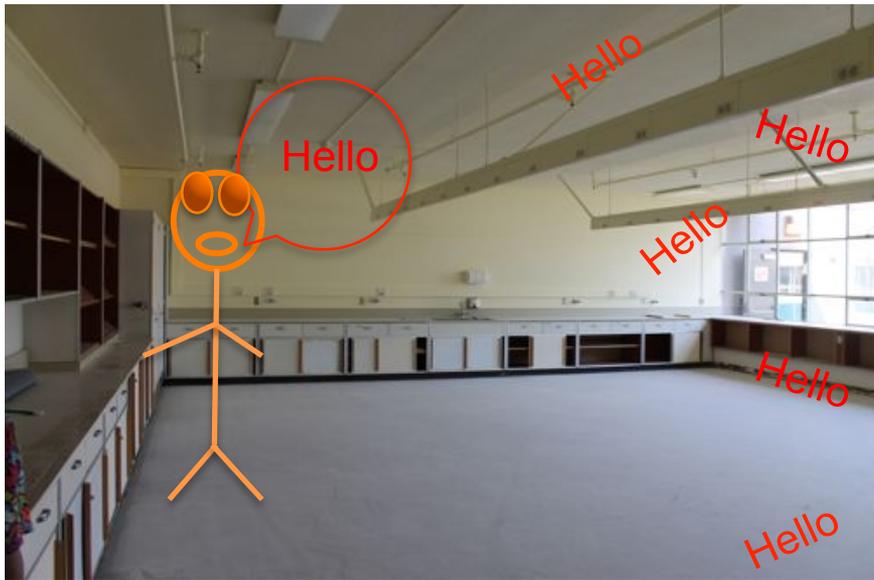
More grant writing, teaching.

Lab time is minimal.



# FIRST DAY AS A JUNIOR FACULTY

Empty lab



Empty office



**“Yesterday I was a Postdoc, today I have to set up a lab from scratch!”**



## WHAT TO DO FIRST??

- Animal protocol- depending on the institution this could take a few months. (If using viruses- Biosafety committee)
- State Drug License/ Federal Drug License- could take 6 months or more!
- Once those two have been set in motion then focus on ordering equipment, etc for the lab- this is the fun part. It's like Christmas!
- Try to get big ticket items ordered early on. This can be a lengthy process depending on the your institution.



# NEXT.... HIRE GOOD PEOPLE

- Don't hire people to start the same day as you. Excess salary when the lab is not running. You want to maximize your start up.
- Start with a good technician to help with the setup and deal with ordering, etc....
- Bring in Postdocs once the lab is up and running or close to up and running. Postdocs are trained and incredibly productive.
- Students? This takes more time from you. Requires more attention and training from you. Students have excess time away from the lab for classes, student stuff, qualifying exams, etc.
- Undergrads?
- Hire people that get along. Personality conflicts can take up extra time and energy.



# HOW TO HIRE PEOPLE

- Technician- word of mouth or someone you know, University posts the ad for you
- Postdocs-Word of mouth (send a flyer to Neuroscience departments/colleagues), Neurojobs
- Graduate Students- Professor rounds, social hour, teaching
- Undergraduates- Send flyers to local Universities, contact undergrad departmental advisors
- Be prepared to screen multiple people and be selective



# MANAGING PEOPLE.... NO ONE TRAINED ME TO DO THIS

- Completely different from managing students while during your Postdoc or PhD training.
- Everyone has a different personality, different motivation, different skills- try to be adaptable to these different traits.
- You rely on them to produce for your success and productivity. But try to remain impartial.
- Don't expand too rapidly. Start with 1-3 people and figure out your limits for management.
- Try to be as present as possible when you have new people undergoing training.
- Ultimately you are the boss, you have the final say. Be firm but fair.



# BUDGETING.... NO ONE TRAINED ME TO DO THIS

- Negotiate the start up so that you have what you need to get your lab up and running and productive.
- Don't be scared to spend but don't go crazy spending everything at once.
- Animal costs and salaries suck the the money out of the startup.
- Always a few unexpected costs.
- New lab packages- meet with companies. Sharpen those bargaining skills.



# YEAR 1-2

- Setting up the lab- Animal and biosafety protocols, drug license, ordering equipment/reagents, breeding up colonies...
- Experiments: Try to be in the lab doing experiments to increase productivity for grant data/publications and set the standard for the lab.
- Many little dramatic administrative hurdles but they were resolved quickly.
- Focused/selfish time. Collaborations should be minimal. Should be exempt from teaching/committees (Year 1).
- Be present.
- Mentoring committee (help with grant writing, APT advice).
- But away the bravado. Ask questions.
- Travel Awards (ACNP, WCBR) and early career investigator grants.



# GRANT WRITING

- Most efforts should go into the first R01.
- Make use of your mentoring committee/ senior faculty.
- Add a few extra layers to that thick skin you developed during the PhD and Postdoc years.
- Contact experts in the field.
- Talk to people who know your work/ keep your friends from your Postdoc around.
- Research Career Development (RCD) Office, Workshops (NIH, RCD), Foundation Relations Office (private grants).
- Can't wing it. You need focused big blocks of time.
- Talk to your PO.
- Persevere.



# PEERS

- Seek support/advice from other new faculty (this is a valuable support system).
- Start a monthly lunch/meetup with other junior faculty to discuss setting up, grants, mentoring, etc.
- What if I am the only new faculty?



# SENIOR FACULTY

- Biggest input for grant writing.
- Mentoring committee.
- They expect you to ask questions, they expect you to be anxious.
- Be gracious and thankful for advice even if it is painful and critical. They are providing their time to help you.
- Be cognizant of your Chair during the job negotiation process- will they support you and your research, is there a bridge program in place if funding runs out, have they established a mentoring committee for you?



# FOCUS ON YOUR RESEARCH BUT DON'T BE A HERMIT

- Participate in seminars, journal clubs, social hour
- Find a few faculty to start a joint lab meeting
- Attend meetings/conferences, stay in touch with people in your field
- Give seminars, symposiums
- Invite/host seminar speakers
- Chair symposium/panels (WCBR, IBNS, SOBP, ISN, FENS..)



# RESPONSIBILITIES

- Say yes to most things (grant reviews, journal reviews, seminar invitations) but know your limits. Don't overcommit.
- Committees within your institution. Usually you do not need to volunteer. They will seek you out.
- Teaching responsibilities- again they will seek you out.



# APPOINTMENTS, PROMOTION, AND TENURE (APT)

- Meets yearly to evaluate you.
- Reviews your grant status, publications, lab productivity, mentoring experience, institutional committees, seminars and presentations, conference attendance, visibility in the field, extramural activities, teaching participation and evaluations.



# 1 MONTH IN MY LIFE

- Review 4-6 journal articles (2-6 hours a week)
- Review 1 Grant, usually in the spring, usually foreign research centers (4-10 hours a week)
- Working on at least 1 or 2 grants (15-60 hours a week)
- Working on at least 1 publication or review (2-10 hours a week)
- Travel (every 1-2 months)
- Meeting with graduate student once a week (~1hour).  
Postdoc meetings variable but I am usually in the lab at least 1-4 times a week talking to them (1-3 hours a week).
- Lab meetings every other week and joint lab meetings during the alternate weeks (~1.5 hours a week).
- Faculty meeting (monthly, 1 hour)- this is administrative.
- Committee time (1-6 hours month)
- Teaching (variable)
- Animal protocol- every 3 years or amendment-every 1-3 months (3-20 hours a week)
- IBC protocol or amendment- every 2-4 month (1-2 hours a week)



# TEACHING (EXAMPLE IN A MED SCHOOL)

- Medical school- sometimes you have to teach things you know nothing about

Fall- Two 1 hour lectures

Spring- One 2 hour lecture

- Graduate- usually you teach what you know

~3 hours of lecture a year

Spring- One ~1hour ethics discussion



## COMMITTEES (EXAMPLE OF MY COMMITTEES)

- Program in Neuroscience Training Committee- mainly meets during the application and interview process
- School of Medicine Council- Once a month during the school year
- Departmental Seminar Chair- Say yes to speakers and coordinate the time
- PhD and Masters student committees- 0-3 hours a month



## TRAVEL (EXAMPLE OF TRAVEL IN FIRST 3 YEARS)

- ~5 seminars a year. This year is 5 with potentially 2 more.
  - These are fun, similar to job talks but less stressful.
- ~2-3 meetings a year with ~2 seminars but this year is 6 (3 submitted panels).



# THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

- Not really the Bad but the Challenges
  - Starting the lab from nothing
  - Learning how to manage people and budgets
  - Writing the first grant (it gets easier over time)
  - Getting the first grant
  - Maintaining optimism/ keeping that thick skin
- The Ugly or What I like the least
  - Animal protocols and amendments (but it gets easier every time)
  - Inspections (IACUC, IBC)
  - Animal costs
  - Grant/ paper reviews

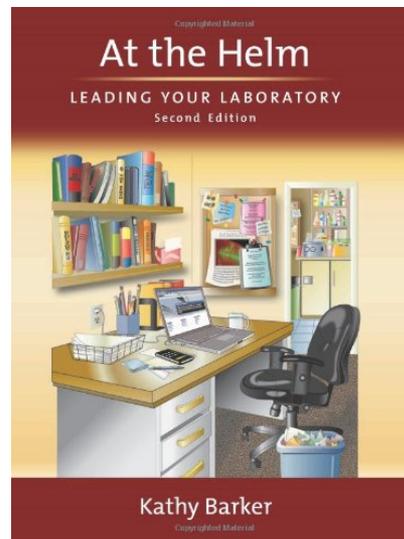
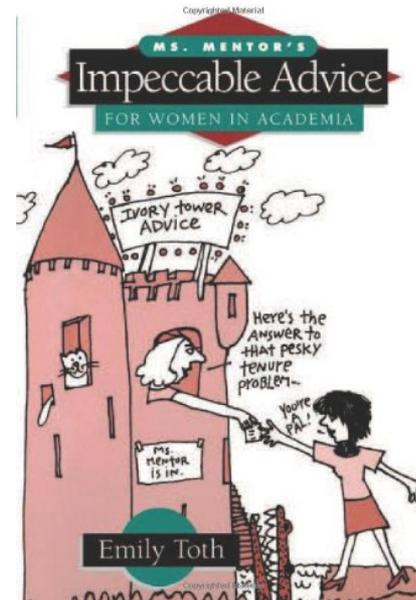
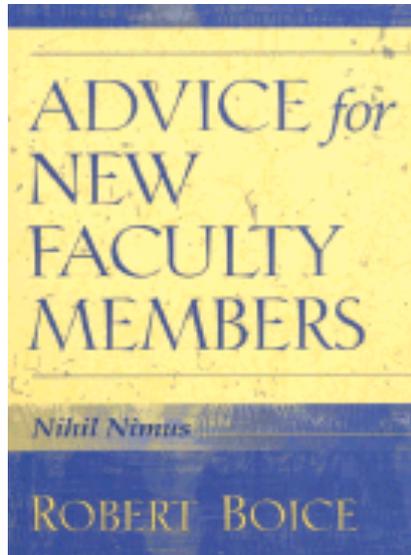


# THE VERY GOOD

- You are in charge, freedom to pursue your research goals.
- Good and consistent data. There are setbacks but with multiple people in the lab someone has a good graph.
- Obtaining your first grant.
- Watching the scientific growth of your mentees.
- Travel.



# RESOURCES



# THANKS!

- Sandra Jurado University of Maryland School of Medicine
- Brian Mathur University of Maryland School of Medicine
- Dennis Sparta University of Maryland School of Medicine
- Pamela Kennedy UCLA
- Michelle Mazei-Robison Michigan State University
- David Dietz University of Buffalo
- Deveroux Ferguson University of Arizona

