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Panel on Research Strategies for Junior Faculty
Friday, October 26 at 11:30 a.m. in McCormick Lounge, Coffey Hall

The purpose of this panel was to learn from successful women faculty members about what has worked—and not worked—in the research strategies they have developed on their path to becoming productive researchers across a range of disciplines and methodologies. As research is strengthened by considering work beyond both the substantive and methodological boundaries of one's own discipline, the goal of the panel was for every participant to take away new approaches and questions to ask about which research strategies they undertake in their own work. Below is a summary of what was discussed.

Participants

Badia Ahad
Associate Professor, Department of English
Director, University Core Curriculum

Noni Gaylord-Harden
Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
Director of the Parents and Children Coping Together (PACCT) Lab

Leanne Kallemeyn
Associate Professor and Program Chair (Research Methodology), School of Education

Sue Penckofer
Associate Dean, Graduate School
Distinguished University Research Professor, School of Nursing

Tracy Pintchman
Professor, Department of Theology
Director, Global and International Studies Program

Catherine Putonti
Associate Professor, Departments of Biology, Computer Science, Microbiology and Immunology
Bioinformatics Program Director

Moderated by Dana Garbarski
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology
Carolyn B. Farrell Endowed Assistant Professor, Gannon Center for Women and Leadership

Question 1. How do you plan your research agenda in the long term and short term (e.g., 5 year, academic year, semester, and week)?

- **Weekly.** Have a weekly meeting. For example, a Sunday meeting for 30 minutes on a Sunday to think about what you have going on for that week. Decide on the top **three** things that must get done that week, and **put them on your calendar** to hold yourself accountable to these appointments to focus on your research. Indeed, a running list just gets longer and longer, and more will get checked off if you dedicate a specific time and day to the task.
- **Semester.** Start off each semester with a strategic plan. First, set **two** goals that you want to accomplish during that period. Then, write down the necessary week-to-week tasks that are needed to accomplish each goal. Lastly, put it down in a calendar. In order to have the ability to retain some flexibility and to avoid overworking, it is suggested to work on one or two projects per semester.
- **Year.** Early career faculty say "yes" to too many committees and too many service opportunities, taking away time from their individual research. Each year, **evaluate what you committed to and what you said "no" to**. This will empower you to say "no" when you need to in the future.
- **Five year.** In terms of tenure-track faculty who are pre-tenure, the five year plan is important, and some faculty members found it difficult. Figure out the expectations of your department and your university in terms of number and type of publications. The portion of the five year plan that is focused on research sets the stage for the research goals in smaller segments of time noted above. It can be a moving target, but it needs to balance the criteria with which tenure and promotion are assessed. In order to make sure the research goals in the five year plan are not too global, not too complicated, and are **doable**, you must have **input**. Solicit input from your chair person, senior faculty members at your university, colleagues external to your university (at various levels of experience), and mentors.

Question 2. For you as a researcher, what does "writing" mean (e.g., does reading other literature that will bolster your research count as "writing")? Do you write every day or have another system of accountability for your writing practices?

- Our panelists agreed that writing is any work that brings a project closer to publication. Writing includes fingers on a keyboard typing, reading and taking diligent notes, searching for images, basically anything that helps bring something to publication. But if you are reading to avoid writing, then you are not writing.
- Having to write a paper for a conference will help get a manuscript started, offers a different way to think about your project, and is an opportunity to make connections and develop your social and support networks.
- Our panelists all follow different practices in terms of their writing. This is due to differences across disciplines, personal preferences, and competing constraints for one's time. Below are their descriptions of their writing practices and the justifications.
  - Writing every day, even in 10 minute spurts, for one hour. Writing everyday maintains momentum. Waiting for sustained periods of time does not take into account when life happens.
  - Writing once or twice per week. This allows for reasonable scheduling to block off time for that activity.
  - Writing in large chunks of time (over breaks). This allows for sustained time and attention for some kinds of research. Prepping next semester's courses before leaving for the semester facilitates this. During the semester, a good motivator for writing is committing to papers for conferences.
- Here are some tips for writing success:
  - Try figuring out whether a consistent setting, time, or even music playlist helps to facilitate your writing. This may take some experimenting to see what works best for you.
  - Acknowledge that writing can be lonely, challenging, and at times frustrating.
  - Don't force it, if it's not working for that writing period.
  - Collaboration is a great way to write papers, where people write their own section.
  - Schedule your writing and schedule around your writing. For example, schedule meetings by email so you can check your calendar to see what works best for your schedule.
- Remember, early career faculty are overwhelmed with teaching and service prep. But the work of the institution is always going to get done. Research is also part of your job—and indeed the part that determines your tenure and promotion—it just is not held accountable in the same way as the work surrounding teaching and service. So remind yourself to make your research and writing a priority.

Question 3. How have you decided whether and when to collaborate with other scholars? In what ways have you collaborated with other scholars?

- The panelists discussed different types of and justifications for collaboration as well as issues to keep in mind.
- Types of collaboration
  - Grant proposals
  - Co-publication with colleagues and students
  - Co-editing of books
  - Conference presentations
  - Writing groups to exchange manuscript and give each other feedback
  - Writing accountability group to check in on progress
- Reasons to collaborate
  - Efficiency in one's scholarship
  - Accountability in one's scholarship
  - Learn new ideas and perspectives
  - Facilitates interdisciplinary perspectives on a subject of interest
  - Continue to learn from colleagues
  - Motivation to complete parts of scholarship
  - How we build future generation of researchers and scholars in many disciplines
- Issues to keep in mind
  - Find out how much collaboration is valued in your department.
  - Do not rely solely on collaboration. Have sole or lead authorship of some pieces (as sole authorship is rare in some disciplines).
  - When collaborating, outline expectations of each person's role beforehand, and revisit periodically.
  - Note potential asymmetry in junior/senior faculty member collaborations:
    - The sense of urgency that a junior faculty member might feel to publish is different than the sense of urgency that a senior faculty member might feel.
    - You might pitch an idea to a senior faculty member but you may be doing the bulk of the work.
  - Do not stay in a working relationship that does not work for you.
  - Set deadlines and stick to them, even if collaborators are not meeting them.
- Opportunities to find collaborators
  - Going to and presenting at conferences to find out who is working in similar areas.
  - Making connections within the university at departmental and school colloquia, workshops, and luncheons.

Question 4. How have you decided whether and when to incorporate graduate and undergraduate students as research assistants and collaborators? In what ways have you collaborated with graduate and undergraduate students?

- The panelists discussed different types of and justifications for collaboration with undergraduate and graduate students as well as issues to keep in mind.
- Some departments and disciplines do not value collaboration with students. Be aware of what your department values, as faculty can always collaborate with students later in their career. If necessary, protect yourself and your time first if you are on the tenure track and collaboration with students is not valued.
- A lab setting is that in which the multiple researchers are working together on related projects. This lab model exists not just in the "sciences," but in any discipline in which a professor mentors several students on related sets of projects.
  - In some cases, undergraduate students make a commitment of at least one year, including the summer, ideally longer, to the lab. When this is done, the faculty member makes a commitment to them as well, not just through experience for their CV but through publication, travel to conferences, and so forth.
  - Both graduate and undergraduate students who are more senior in the lab train those who are newer.
  - Students help to pick their own replacements when they graduate.
  - Devising some sort of project database is needed to divide up project/publications. For example, an Excel spreadsheet with the list of publications being worked on, the division of tasks, and where each project stands with respect to each task. This also allows the lab to see overlapping efficiencies across projects (tasks that benefit multiple projects simultaneously).
  - The goal is creating a culture of shared success in the lab where students have taken ownership of the research and become independent researchers, doing what they will be doing for the rest of their career. You can begin to rely on feedback from research team of graduate and undergraduate students.
  - When you submit your tenure portfolio, you want to highlight your work with undergraduate and graduate students.