

Staying the Course: Staying Motivated in a Competitive Writing Environment

WSU College of Education
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Welcome!

- * Introductions, all campuses
- * We can all act as a resource for each other. These workshops create community to tackle issues faculty often don't discuss.
- * What challenges do you have staying motivated in grant seeking and grant writing?

Common Challenges

- * Motivation (internal / external)
- * Personal feelings about rejection
- * Time management
- * Need for support, training, mentoring, editing
- * Writer's block (internal editor)
- * Concerns about tenure process and performance

How do I deal with taking rejection personally?

- * Today's grants environment is much more competitive
- * About 1:10 grants once awarded. Now it's often 1:60. (e.g., NSF = Now 2-12% funded, used to be 16% funded).
- *
Expect rejection. Use as a learning process, continually improving your work for success.
- * You're not alone! Chat with colleagues about projects, proposals, and submittals. Faculty at all levels experience rejection. (Some areas receive more funding than others, e.g., sciences).
- * Count your successes (accepted LOI, a few points off an award, fellowship, internal WSU award, etc. You're on the right track!)

How do I address repeated rejections?

- * This is normal!
- * Fit YOUR project into THEIR needs and guidelines, not vice versa.
- * Make sure your project is INNOVATIVE.
- * Focus on RESULTS and OUTCOMES.
- * Establish your CREDIBILITY, experience.
- * Focus on ACCOUNTABILITY and ASSESSMENT.
- * Address reviewer comments. (Multiple reviewers, different ones each time. Focus on issues of agreement between reviewers...Trends vs. outliers).
- * Form your own review team. Ask for comments on drafts from supervisors, colleagues, grant officers, WSU grants staff and editors.

Addressing rejection (cont.)

- * **Try smaller grants, different grant types (foundations, state, local, internal WSU).**
- * **Combine small grants and funding sources to complete a project**
- * **Find creative ways to do project with less funding (grad student experience, etc.).**
- * **Add collaboration & partnerships (federal grants want broad impacts)**
- * **Take workshop, attend a retreat, find a mentor.**
- * **Use staff editors, WSU Foundation, OGRD, pay outside editor**
- * **Read grant writing books (available in my office).**
- * **Read successful proposals, project abstract and reviewer comments**

Addressing rejection (cont).

- * Take a workshop, attend a retreat, find a mentor.
- * Use editors: lgirardeau@wsu.edu. WSU Foundation, OGRD, pay outside editor
- * Read grant writing books (available in my office).
- * Read funded abstracts (on agency sites)
- * Ask to see colleagues' reviewer comments and drafts of successful and unsuccessful proposals (their choice)

I just don't have time!

- * Everyone can find an hour a week or write page a day.
- * Create a list or pie chart of your time on a typical day. Include home activities and tasks.
- * Cut out small tasks you don't enjoy or that can be delegated, consolidated (e.g., 8-9 pm Wed, mindless tv)
- * This creates at least 30 minutes a day or a few hours per week. Rearrange times so you're fresh (in morning, before checking email, etc.)
- * Create regular, enjoyable writing time (page a day, hour a day, 2 hour block a week, etc., on topics you enjoy).

Time Management (cont.)

- * Choose competitions with short “letters of intent” instead of writing a full proposal. Only a few pages to jump through 1st hoop.
- * (LOI’s are common for foundations and large federal grants if you catch the correct deadline cycle).
- * Some proposals require letters of support and partnerships. Think ahead and plan for meetings!
- * Collaboration and meetings add time to a grant project, but are worth it (funders like partnerships btwn depts., institutions, schools, agencies for nation-wide impact).

Motivation

- * Trying DOES count in the tenure process
- * Supervisors count submissions, not just your awards. (Each department and supervisor differs)
- * They also want to see improvement.
- * Are you learning from the process? Trying new competitions, different types of grants? Willing to partner and collaborate?

Motivation (cont.)

- * Internal vs. external motivation: *Write for joy, not tenure*
- * Choose projects you're *passionate* about. Enthusiasm will shine through, increase chances for success.
- * *Write because you care.*
- * Focus on your desire to change the world instead of “funding your project.” This commitment will shine through (especially for foundation grants).

Help, I have writer's block!

- * Don't try to write perfectly the first time. E.B. White wrote up to 16 drafts of each piece.
- * Embrace CFD's ("crummy first drafts"). Just get your thoughts on paper, to get used to writing regularly.
- * Try "free writing" (5 minutes without stopping, to banish internal editor).
- * Try writing by hand, or in your native language.
- * Brainstorm stupid ideas first, to free up creativity for great ideas.

Writer's Block (cont.)

- * Secrets of effective people: *“Never check email in the morning.”* (10-20 minutes to refocus after interruption).
- * Try writing for 30 mins in morning before checking email
- * Find another time when you're alert (after workout?)
- * Create sacred space: favorite café, chair, music
- * Make commitment (time, duration, place, topic)
- * Try 4 sessions, reassess. *Habits take awhile to form.*

Assistance with Writing Process

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Faculty Research Development Coordinator

*I help COE faculty identify funding sources,
focus projects and edit drafts*

WSU Foundation: helps with contacts, background, success history, etc.

COS Pivot, grants database hosted by WSU.

(Platform may change: use Pivot while you can).

Shared Strategies

*What has worked for you for “Staying the Course”?

*See colleagues as collaborators, partners for grants, mentors and shared resources, instead of competition

*Together, we can make WSU stronger, gain funding