

COE/Provost Symposium: How to Be a Productive Scholar
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Summary of Useful Tips

Panelists: Doug Lombardi, Univ. of Maryland; Erika Patall, USC; Logan Fiorella, Univ. of Georgia, Athens.

What tips do you have for Associate Professors on staying productive?

Panelists:

- Limits on service. We need systemic values shift so Associates aren't asked for so much service.
- Formalize the mentoring structure
- Provide leadership programs and professional development specifically for this rank.
- Define meaningful impacts
- Expand your research topics, keep it fresh to stay motivated
- Try out new roles for collaborations and inspiration.
- Collaborate internationally, keep doing some conference travel.

Laura Hill (Vice Provost)

- Document the impact of your service
- Admin roles should be valued in the T & P pathway (*ideally*)
- Community engaged research should be valued (not just international). (*ideally*)

How do you balance writing grant proposals and managing grants vs. writing and publishing papers?

- “Pre-crastinate.” Start grant proposals early so you have time for papers with no rushing.
- Keep track of annual due dates. Some grants or journal articles are due in specific months each year. Arrange your schedule in advance to prioritize those months.
- Task orientation: For a specific week or month, prioritize one task (a specific proposal or paper).
- Grants and publications can inform each other, align, synergize.
- Be strategic about which grants you go for. Proposal writing takes time. Make sure it's a good fit and that your project / team are competitive. Also make sure it's project you'd be enthused to conduct for the entire grant period if you win.

What daily habits increase your motivation and success?

- To-do lists are helpful, but go beyond that to identify when you'll do a task.
- Block out time for each specific task in your calendar (online or written).
- Over time, you'll be able to estimate how long a specific task will take.
- Only do things you see value in (which adds motivation). Of course some tasks are required, but try to find a deeper meaning and see their value to you in the long run.
- Ask for help from colleagues for some work tasks, and delegate some home tasks to family.
- Separate your to do lists into categories: teaching, grants, publications, research, etc.
- Take care of your physical and mental health, which will make it easier to do good work.
- “Walk and talks” with colleagues address both meetings and health needs, and are enjoyable.
- Choose your 6 most important to-do's each day, and do them first thing in the morning if possible. Otherwise, the day gets away from you.

What do you wish you had known to meet expectations and stay enthused about work (by rank)?

- As an assistant professor, I had to learn how to manage grants and help fund students. This took a lot of time. Be strategic about recruiting the right students for research.
- As an assistant professor, training students on writing, analysis, etc. took a lot of time. Make sure you don't have too many grad students to mentor. Ideally, some grad students can be matched with associate and full professors, not just assistant professors.
- Associate and Full: Your family configuration and roles may change over time and rank, and your work habits may need to be adjusted along with that. Be prepared to navigate that.

How do you achieve a good work / life balance?

- If you have children, set boundaries at work, e.g., not working weekends and/or evenings.
- If you have a partner, set aside time focused only on them. For example, a regular date day. This may be more often in the summer.
- When you take time off to recharge, you'll actually be more productive in your work.
- Build a sustainable system of research vs. personal time that works for you, without sacrificing your family life.

What makes a good mentor?

- Mentoring can occur at different levels (student, assistant, associate, full, staff and more). It can also take different forms at different times or for specific projects.
- Good mentors are very important for graduate student support. This increases retention.
- Think of your students as your mentors too. They can help you do better.
- Good mentors have good work/life balance. They're good humans as well as good researchers.

What are the key elements for faculty to succeed? One or two takeaways?

- Find people you like to work with for research teams. Research can be fun with a good team.
- Leave room for risk-taking in your research. Try new projects, topics and teams, especially after tenure to stay motivated. Keep in mind that not all projects work out, but it's an adventure.
- We need good mentors, good collaborators and good students. Find your people!
- Achieve a good work / life balance, using techniques that work best for you.
- Take care of your health, with good sleep, exercise, and mental health supports.