Survival and making it to tenure at NIH: “What a long strange trip its been”

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• How do you get there at NIH?
• How do you stay there?
• What’s the process
• Tricks to Tenure
How I got here:
From a handshake to a headache

The Handshake

Deputy?
Lab Chief

Investigator
Section Head
Route to Tenure-Track I: Full Search

- Search Committee from NIH and outside
- Completely open, “the fix” is not on
- Several are interviewed
- Lab Chief must hire from the list (top 3-4)
Route to Tenure-Track II: Stadtman Searches

- Started in 2010
- NIH Wide
- Not applying to specific position or institute
- Topic driven
  - Immunology
  - Cell biology
  - Etc
- SDs then select and create positions
Route to Tenure-Track III: Got it. Now what?

Results in negotiation of official contracts:
  • Personnel
  • Budget
  • Space
Tenure-Track to Tenure
First Stop-Site Visit

• Fully external review
• Entire program under review
  • Productivity (Publish)
  • Innovation and creativity
  • Community involvement
• 25 pages and 20 min
• Two significant outcomes
  • Continue
  • Discontinue on TT
• Their opinion must get a 2\textsuperscript{nd} from BSC
• Lots of attrition here

• Must have at least 2 before going for Tenure (~6-7 years)
Tenure-Track to Tenure
The Second Critical Site Visit

More attrition here
Tenure-Track to Tenure
Second Stop, the Lab Chief

- Lab Chief must agree to “put you up”
- Prepares a letter asking for your tenure
Tenure-Track to Tenure
Third Stop-Letters

- Use a list provided by you (largely)
- Need 12-16
- Must be big people
- Must be good, no really.
- No response is bad for you
Tenure-Track to Tenure
Fourth Stop-Institute Promotion and Tenure Committee

- Review work
- Future plans (5 pg)
- Letters
- Presentation by you
- Vote
- Prepare a letter of support

- Lots of Attrition here
Tenure-Track to Tenure VI:
Last Stop-Central Tenure Committee (CTC)

- Committee from all NIH
  - Presentation by Lab Chief and SD
  - Your IC can talk but not vote
    - Review work
    - Future plans (5 pg)
    - Letters
    - Your institute letter
    - SD Letter
- You are not there!
- Secret Vote sent to Director of Intramural Research

- Success at CTC is pretty good (~90) the trick is getting here!
Tenure-Track to Tenure V: Director of Intramural Research

- Appointed by NIH Director
- Responsible for all intramural Research
- Does not have to take recommendation of CTC
  - (likes unanimous votes)
- Very little attrition here
Overall Success Rate from Tenure-Track to Tenure NIH Wide

- Success Rate: ~64%
- Grandfathered: ~58%
- Search: ~70%
Fewer Women on TT and even fewer are successful

Total PIs

1095

230

TT PIs

Men

Women

150

80

Women

20%

80%

Men
Tricks to Tenure I

- Be very good!
  - Publish (double figure IF)
  - Survive site visits
  - Be improving, not peaked
  - Community involvement

- Network
  - Get help!
  - Collaborate*
  - Get good people
  - Remember those Letters

- Develop Independence
  - Hold projects/reagents

- Build a good package
Tricks to Tenure II

• Be very good!
  • Publish (double figure IF)
  • Survive site visits
  • Be improving, not peaked
  • Community involvement

• Network
  • Get help!
  • Get good people
  • Collaborate*
  • Remember those Letters

• Develop Independence
  • Hold projects/reagents

• Build a good package
Tricks to Tenure III

• Be very good!
  • Publish (double figure IF)
  • Survive site visits
  • Be improving, not peaked
  • Community involvement

• Network
  • Get help!
  • Collaborate*
  • Get good people
  • Remember those Letters

• Develop Independence
  • Hold projects/reagents

• Build a good package
Tricks to Tenure IV

• Be very good!
  • Publish (double figure IF)
  • Survive site visits
  • Be improving, not peaked
  • Community involvement

• Network
  • Get help!
  • Collaborate*
  • Remember those Letters

• Develop Independence
  • Hold projects/reagents

• Build a good package
KEEP CALM AND GOOD LUCK