Navigating a Career in Government: Obtaining Tenure and Beyond

“What a long strange trip it's been…”

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• How did I get here?
• How can you get here?
• What’s expected
• Fruitful training guide
• Maintaining funding
• Maturing Relationships
• Best and worst parts
How I got here:

• Graduate work in Immunotherapy (LAK Cells)
• Postdoc - O’Shea/Ortaldo (Signaling)
  • Senior Staff Fellow (O’Shea left)
• Tenure Track Investigator (DAP12)
• Tenure (TREM-L)
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
Tenure-Track Searches
What are we looking for?

- Good Training
- Record of productivity (not abstracts, not “in preparation”)
- High Impact Area’s of Research
- A well planned, organized, workable, realistic research plan
- Good “On your feet” thinking skills
- Good References

Results in negotiation of official contracts:
- Personnel
- Budget
- Space
Road to Tenure

- Selection for Tenure-Track
- Site Visit number one
- Site Visit number two
- Blessing from Lab Chief
- Outside letters
- Institutional Promotion and Tenure Committee
- Letter
- Central Tenure Committee
Fewer Women on TT and even fewer are successful

- Total PIs: 1095
- TT PIs:
  - Men: 230
  - Women: 80
- Senior Investigators:
  - Men: 150
  - Women: 80
  - Total: 20%
Overall Success Rate from Tenure-Track to Tenure NIH Wide

- Success Rate: ~64%
- Grandfathered: ~58%
- Search: ~70%
Expectations- This is not academia

- High quality publications
- Collaborative Science is important- ”added value”
- Risky stuff that can’t be done elsewhere
- Community Service
- Institutional Biosafety Committee
- Search committees
- ACUC
- Fellow reviews
Maintaining Funding  
(The Site Visit Process)

• Fully external review

• Entire program under review
  • Productivity (Publish)
  • Innovation and creativity
  • Community involvement

• Two significant outcomes
  • Outstanding
  • Outstanding-Excellent
  • Excellent-Outstanding
  • Excellent
  • Excellent-Good

• Their opinion must get a 2nd from BSC
Outreach and Awareness

Funding 2000-2014 for the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in billions
Creating a Fruitful Training Environment for Students and Postdocs

- Make expectations clear
- Give feedback often
- Foster creativity and independence
- Challenge
- Encourage new directions
- Help them network
- Introductions
- Joint Meetings
- Don’t be an ass!
- Delegate some responsibility
- Let them take stuff with them

BEATINGS WILL CONTINUE UNTIL MORALE IMPROVES
Maturing Relationships with Partners
Favorite and Least Favorite Parts

Least Favorite:

- Government Red Tape
  - Ethics - massive headache for simple things
  - Travel - think cattle
- Training -
  - computer training
  - ethics training
  - travel training
  - safety training
  - credit card training
  - records training
  - government car training
  - sexual harassment training
  - diversity training

- No Teaching
- No Grad Students
- Lower salaries
Favorite and Least Favorite Parts

Favorite Parts:

• Its academic science
• No grant writing
• Fellows and students
• Flexibility
• Tenure is closer to real tenure