Succeeding in a Faculty Position at a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution (PUI)

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Why Work at a PUI?

- **Passion for teaching at the undergraduate level**
  - I really enjoy the intellectual stage that undergraduates represent

- **Passion for research**
  - Granted we tend to work in niches
  - But, there are ample opportunities for funding, publication, and recognition within one’s field
Getting a Job at a PUI

- Finding the right position to match your interests
  - Research expectations
  - Teaching responsibilities

- Council on Undergraduate Research (www.cur.org)
  - How-to Booklet on getting a job at a PUI
The Application Package

- Importance of the cover letter
  - Balance between teaching and research expectations
  - Make sure it speaks to the PUI environment
- Teaching statement
- Research statement
- References
The Campus Visit

- Flexibility in teaching responsibilities
- Autonomy over teaching responsibilities
- Contact hours
- Infrastructure to support research – lab, start-up funds, institutional matching money for equipment, institutional funds for travel
- Expectations for tenure – does everyone give a different set?
Balancing the Demands

- Put on blinders – tenure decisions are based on teaching and scholarship – enter into service responsibilities judiciously (better yet, avoid at all costs at the institutional level)
- Integrate teaching and research
- Devote summers to research – involve students in a summer program to build momentum for the academic year
Tom’s (Surefire?) Tips for Tenure

- Don’t expect a checklist

- Establish yourself as a teacher and scholar
  - Check wind direction (with regards to teaching)
  - Shun service

- Follow institutional criteria

- Get research going immediately by seeking external funding
Why write grant proposals?

- Most chemistry projects require money
- Refines your ideas – whether or not the proposal is funded
- Impresses your department/institution
Why many faculty members at PUIs do not write grant proposals?

- Claim that they do not have the time
- Convince themselves that they won’t get funded
- They really aren’t serious about doing research
Writing More Competitive Proposals

- Read the instructions
- Have an excellent idea for research
  - informally test your ideas on colleagues
- Excellent ideas are usually ambitious
  - not just a continuation of or derivative of prior work
- Explain the significance of the work to the discipline and possibly society
- Clearly explain the experimental work that will be undertaken
- Clearly explain how the experimental work will answer the questions you pose to study
- Provide a plan B if plan A is risky
- Be succinct in your descriptions
- Note that all of the comments above relate to the SCIENCE
- Convince the reviewers that you can successfully undertake the project
  - Institutional support and infrastructure
  - Appropriate collaborations (with letters of support)
- Address the impact the work will have on undergraduates
- Convince the reviewers that undergraduates can undertake your line of work (or set up collaborations for especially ambitious aspects of the project)
- But remember that the reviewers really want to be convinced that high quality science will be done
- Find colleagues who will provide substantive and critical comments on a draft of your proposal
- Listen to those colleagues
- If the proposal is rejected, resubmit a revised version that addresses the criticisms raised by the reviewers
  - unless the criticism is that the general idea does not merit funding
- Talk to the program officer – she or he won’t bite!
Remember:

You will never get a grant unless you submit a proposal
Sources of Funding

- Research Corporation (www.rescorp.org)*
- Petroleum Research Fund (www.acs.org)*
- Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation (www.dreyfus.org)*
- National Science Foundation (www.nsf.gov)
- National Institutes of Health – AREA program (www.nih.gov)
Programs of the NSF

- Research at Undergraduate Institutions (RUI)
- Major Research Instrumentation (MRI)
- Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)
- Course, Curriculum and Laboratory Improvement (CCLI)