Reflecting on the First Few Years
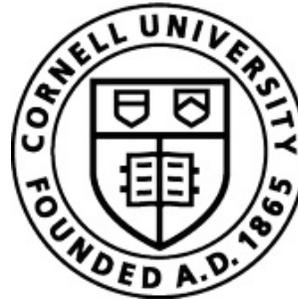
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Reflecting on the First Few Years

It's a firehose of opportunities. Knowing what to choose is *hard*

Think long term

Find great collaborators

Give yourself permission to fail. It's ok to be "a bad person"

It's a firehose of opportunities

- You will get asked to do a LOT of things. Especially if you're a woman
  - This is a good thing
- If possible, try to find someone who can help you triage (e.g., a mentor)
- You HAVE TO say no to a lot of things (even if you would want to say yes)
  - It's ok to be a "bad person"
  - *"Thanks for the invitation, but I unfortunately have a conflict and can't make it"*
  - *"Apologies, As junior faculty, I really need to focus on my research and won't be able to do a good job. Unfortunately I must decline"*

Research

- *What I regret: spending lots of time on too many projects that went nowhere*
  - Try to choose only a few things, even if all 1000 opportunities seem awesome
- MAKE time for research. e.g., block off mornings, block off a whole day, find ways to NOT be interrupted
  - Prioritize it above ALL the other things that WILL come up. *("I have a conflict")*
- Find and work with great collaborators
  - Even if you think you need to "prove yourself" by working alone
  - Motivated by same problems
  - Complementary skillsets
  - Productive (i.e., they actually DO work)
  - Fun to work with

Funding / Grant writing

- Figuring out how to get funding is/was *really* stressful

- Think long term. Do things now that will get funded 2-3 years from now

- Find and work with great collaborators
  - Even if you think you need to "prove yourself" by doing it alone
  - Learn how they write grants
  - SO MANY tips and tricks that can improve your chances
  - Bigger, better ideas

(Ph.D.) Students

- Probably the biggest challenge I didn't expect
  - I've made lots of mistakes, wish I'd done some things differently

- Student recruitment is *hard*

- Most of them won't be productive for ~2 years
  - Think long term
  - Make time to do research yourself (especially writing)

- Invest in group culture, peer support, help them to help each other
  - Take time to discuss and reflect on the general research process

Teaching

- "We really need someone to teach X, Y, Z"
- Try to get/negotiate for courses you WANT to teach
- Try to make sure you teach the SAME courses a few times
- Invest in creating structure, it saves time later. Think long term
- But some things don't scale

How do you deal with feeling overwhelmed?

- Failure is a part of the job, it WILL happen (often). It still hurts.
    - Rejected grant proposals
    - Teaching failures
    - Student mentoring failures
    - Collaboration/project failures
    - Saying "yes" when you should say "no"

- Peer support (no one knows better than other junior faculty)
- Self care (e.g., exercise OR sit in silence and stare at the wall)
- It's ok to think about quitting. It can help to make it explicit
- Think long term

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