



## Scholars or Bankers?

I became an assistant professor some twenty odd years ago. I was hired not only to fill a retirement slot, but also to add a new dimension to the department. In that I was one of the first in a crop of growth biologists trained in animal sciences, the faculty members in the department to which I was hired determined that the addition of a new discipline might add more opportunity for obtaining grant funds. It was a bit daunting to know that my longevity at a major agriculture university on the west coast depended on me becoming a successful banker--rather than a solid scholar. Coming into the department after immediately defending my Ph.D. work, and not possessing a post-doctoral training period, added to the pressure. Whereas, I thought that developing my science identity was the most important for me to accomplish, I was quickly prompted to write as many as fifteen grant proposals each year. I was one of the lucky new Ph.D. scientists. I obtained three research grants the first year on the faculty. I have subsequently obtained steady (but not necessarily outstanding) research support for the duration of my career at the major agriculture university on the west coast.

Perhaps one of the sensitive areas that I still periodically think about is the tools that I was provided to initiate my career, when I arrived in the department. Start-up funds? Compared to the amount provided to today's scientists, the twenty-three thousand dollars that I was provided as start-up funds did not go far, especially considering that I entered a completely empty laboratory. Research technician? I was provided a half-time research technician that became invaluable to me, as he was quite adept at obtaining glassware, small equipment items and other "cast-off" materials from other laboratories. Indeed, midnight raids were somewhat common, especially if another faculty member was retiring, or someone was slowing down their research program.

During the first six years, the time required to "prove" oneself in order to obtain tenure and promotion to associate professor, I worked sixteen to

eighteen hours per day--up to seven days a week. I felt that I was constantly under scrutiny from other faculty members and from administrators. Never, did I really feel that I was supported, and that everyone was behind me for the tenure race. While I did make tenure and was promoted to associate professor, I resent that specific time, because without all of the stress (self-imposed or otherwise) I could have been so much more productive. As a full professor, I now see that to be the case.

My department has recently hired three new faculty members and is in the process of hiring two other faculty members. The cycle seems to be repeating itself, however. New faculty members are hired on with the expectation of their obtaining huge, multi-year grants. Start-up funds? At least the start-up funding has increased--up to three hundred thousand dollars per faculty member in the area of molecular biology. Research technician? The norm of a one half time research technician is still in place. New people, new level of initial funds, and a bit of technical support--seem reasonable? Maybe. However, unless the attitude of "you are only as good as your last grant" can be replaced with true scholarly support, I suspect that some of the new faculty members will not make tenure and promotion in my department.

When obtaining my Ph.D. training, I do not ever recall ever being disciplined in how to obtain money for conduct of research. How many out there have been? Is that something that is learned at the post-doctoral level? I doubt it. Seems as if it is learned through trial and error, with a heaping tablespoon of stress dumped in for good measure. I am hopeful that the new faculty members in my department can all be successful, but I am left thinking how many of our new faculty members were actually trained as scholars, rather than bankers.

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