Running a Research Enterprise is Like Running a Small Business: Effective Resource and Personnel Management

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One of the most daunting aspects of academic life can be creating and maintaining a research enterprise. Research is a growing expectation in most academic settings, but if you are at a major research university, or have aspirations to move to such an institution, maintaining a thriving research program is a must. Participants are encouraged to bring questions and to contribute their own experiences and successes to the discussion. We anticipate this to be a lively session!

Focus of this session

Other sessions this week cover grant writing, time management, student research design and management, and getting published. While we can certainly devote as much time as needed to these topics, we plan to begin with discussion of resource management.

Initial questions on resource management

o Aspects of effectively running a small business

o How to manage money? How to handle the details of managing multiple grants? What if your grants dry up momentarily?

o How can you collaborate on resources?

o Advantages/disadvantages of technician vs. post doc vs. grad students (cost-benefit analysis)

o Other resource-related questions?

Potential questions for extending the discussion

o How to manage people? What are effective strategies to build up the team? How can you prevent or deal with conflict in the team?

o Recruiting grad students, post-docs, technicians, administrative support?

o What are good ways to promote and support vertical mentoring (post-docs, grad students, undergrads?). What are your expectations?

o Working with support staff

o Authorship and intellectual property in the team

o Other questions?

Potential Strategies

o **Think creatively about funding sources** to maximize your likelihood of getting funded.

o **Plan ahead**. It's no use waiting until your grant is about to run out to submit a renewal.

o **Talk with colleagues**. This can provide (i) potential collaborations, (ii) opportunities to share resources; and (iii) information on upcoming grant or experiment opportunities.

o **Only agree to participate in grants that will benefit you**. If you agree to work on something you're not interested in, *that* will most likely get funded.

o **Think seriously about taking on a research student** whose personality clashes with your own. This is not the same as saying all of your students must be like you, but rather a recognition of the interpersonal communication component of research.

o **Communicate your expectations** clearly to students and other collaborators. Communication involves repeating the same message in a variety of ways (e.g. having the student email or otherwise write a summary of a planning session for you to look over and approve or amend).

o **Have your students apply for fellowships**. In addition to looking good on their resume, it will give them ownership of the work and force them to clarify their own research plans.

o **Set limits**. Students can get daunted at different stages of their research (the code doesn't work, the thesis writing is overwhelming…). Provide realistic time and resource limits and review these regularly with your students. Explain the benefits and consequences of these timelines.

o **Be productive while maintaining high standards** and expect the same of your students. This is the only way to ensure repeated grants. Publish, publish, publish!

o **Communicate your results**, but not too widely until they're close to being in journal form.