

Transition from Fellow to Faculty:

The Top 10 Lessons I have learned **(or wish I had learned)**

Samuel R Dominguez, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor
Departments of Pediatric Infectious Diseases
and Microbiology
University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine

With help from my friend and colleague, Sarah Parker, MD

Lessons Learned

- 1. Find good mentors**
- 2. Ask**
- 3. Interview elsewhere**
- 4. Meet often**
- 5. Collaborate**
- 6. Write, Write, Write**
- 7. Diversify**
- 8. Be Flexible**
- 9. Do what you love – enjoy what you do**
- 10. Don't forget what is most important**

FIND GOOD MENTORS

Types of Mentors:

- clinical
- research
- career/life

Find mentor who will let you
take your project with you

Beware of the anti-mentor

What to ask for:

- **Protected time**
 - Limited clinical duties (but not too little)
 - Limited administrative duties
- **Technician**
 - Extra hands are your most valuable resource
 - Almost impossible to have a productive basic science project without a technician if you also have clinical responsibilities
- **Supplies**
- **Equipment**
- **Lab space (?)**
- **Start up money (?)**
- **Flexible schedule (?)**

Interview Elsewhere: Why?

- **Gives you leverage when negotiating**
- **Helps you realize your own value**
(prophet without honor in his/her own town)
- **Lets you see what else is out there**
- **Lets you see how things are done elsewhere**
- **Helps you realize what's most important to you**
- **Can lead to collaborations and/or new professional relationships**

Meet Often: With Whom?

- **Research committee**
- **Mentors**
- **Section head**
- **Department head**
- **Visiting researchers**
- **Leaders in your field at national meetings**
- **Program officer (at least via email/phone)**
- **With your mentees and technicians**

- **Be aware of what the criteria for promotions are at your institution**

Collaborate

- “Science by mail”
- Hard to survive in isolation
- Can often get more work done faster

- **How to find a collaborator**
 - Email people whose articles you like with questions
 - Invite people to come by your poster
 - Network at poster sessions
 - Volunteer to give a talk
 - Discuss with mentors

- **Word of caution**
 - Clearly define roles in collaboration
 - Experimental and reagent expectations
 - Timeline expectations
 - May need to define authorship ahead of time
 - Talk to your colleagues about whether someone is a good/fair collaborator or not before starting

WRITE

- **GRANTS**

- As many as possible
- You can't get funding if you don't apply for it
- Can get some good feedback

- **PAPERS**

- Publishing helps you to get grants and get promoted [academic currency]
- Think about “least publishable units” – think about your abstract and figures before you start the research (i.e. what do I want/need for this paper)
- If wait until you have the whole entire story, can get scooped
- This is why you are doing what you are doing – share your discoveries

WRITE: GRANTS

- **External**
 - **NIH: K awards**
 - **Person, project, mentor, institutional commitment**
 - **PIDS and IDSA**
 - **Disease specific foundations**
 - **Young/New Investigator**
- **Internal – utilize the resources at your own institution**
 - **TCH Research Institute**
 - **Colorado Clinical Translational Science Institute (CCTSI)**
 - **Bridge grants**

Useful Info

- **[Loan repayment: http://www.lrp.nih.gov/](http://www.lrp.nih.gov/)**

Diversify

- Have more than one research project
- Consider how your research is translational (use your MD to your advantage – important for funding)
- Acquiring other ID skills may be unexpectedly useful in the future
 - infection control, epidemiology, public health, clinical microbiology, clinical research, teaching, etc.
- **BUT: don't diversify too much – if pulled in too many directions, won't get anything done**

Be Flexible

- **Embrace - don't ignore - unexpected opportunities (even if they don't fit into exactly what you are doing)**
- **Go where the research leads you**
- **Don't ignore unexpected research results or surprisingly negative results**
- **Know when to stop**
- **Whatever you do, think of it as a research opportunity**

Why I Love My Job

- **Tremendous variety**
- **I learn something new every day**
- **Joy and excitement of discovery**
- **Ability to mentor and be challenged by creative and thoughtful students, residents, and fellows**
- **My colleagues**
- **Flexible schedule**
- **Ability to make a difference in children's lives - in individuals, in the community, and globally**

**What if it isn't
working?**

**What if you are
unhappy?**

Talk to your mentors

Come up with a differential diagnosis of why you are unhappy – try to dissect out the causes [is it me or is it the institution?]

Address the issues/make changes

Try something new

Look elsewhere

**#10: DON'T FORGET WHAT IS
MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU**

Lessons Learned

- 1. Find good mentors**
- 2. Ask**
- 3. Interview elsewhere**
- 4. Meet often**
- 5. Collaborate**
- 6. Write, Write, Write**
- 7. Diversify**
- 8. Be Flexible**
- 9. Do what you love – enjoy what you do**
- 10. Don't forget what is most important**