

Summer Research Planning: What I wish I would have known...

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Part I – topics

- The basics – your summer
- Individual Academic Plan (Research Plan)
- Timing – short term vs long term
- Expectations: different views, including your own
- Structure vs unstructured time
- Funding/support
- Examples and case studies (through out and depending on questions)

NOTE: most likely need a Part II where more discussion can happen

1. Your Summer

- Lot's of different meanings to everyone
- Do you view as the third semester?
- Do you need unstructured time?
- Keep your goals grounded – but "those who dare win"
- Doug Nelson: "...there is a high correlation between not applying and not having a positive outcome..."
- Are you ready to maximize your summer productivity? What does that mean?
- Finish the book, manuscript, proposal, film/production, etc...
- The stakes are always high, regarding time and scholarship/research
- Time is your most valuable resource

1.1 Summer of Research and Scholarship

- Avoid the "summer of regret"
- Tropical systems... It can happen (Tropical Storm Fay, 2008).
- Defined, but flexible approach
- Avoid being overwhelmed (e.g. Climate Change)
- View accomplishments as a continuum, not just fixed points
- Look to your collaborations
- Mark your progress
- Again - the stakes are always high, regarding time and scholarship/research
- Downtime vs active-time
- Early Career Workshops, if it can really help you in your career

1.2 The Summer of 2000

- I was a new Assistant Prof., who started in January of 2000
- That summer came too fast.
- It was the first time I taught, condensed format
- I had to get a dormant Core Facility up and running
- Initial applications for funding, organized a session at a national meeting
- Working on last pubs from doctorate – careful on this transition
- Natural sciences inherently has a structured approach
- Field work, initial samples, first NSF-SGER (now called EAGER)
- Learning about FIU, regional field work, etc.
- Early Career Faculty are truly stuck in the middle

1.3 The initial advice, back in 2000

- Move on quickly beyond your doctoral work
- Submit an ACS PRF grant
- Establish some collaborations in your center
- Your first publication from you lab will take 3 years...
- Summer teaching is limited – focus on research
- Summer seed funding project through College and the Research Office
- Recruit students, learn about that cycle
- Center director had a defined approach to support my first summer (50/50)
- Learning about FIU, regional field work, etc.
- Spend your start-up as fast as possible, do not delay
- Build up your teaching portfolio (graduate & undergraduate classes)

1.4 looking back on that first year

- Focus on the publications you can control
- 80/20 rule
- Seed and early career funding are critical (many sources)
- Your first publication from you lab will take 3 years... this was true!
- Summer teaching was rare – I needed three projects going each summer
- Larger scaled collaborations were not as successful, with one exception
- Finding students is critical – and so is a good lab manager (see examples)
- Lab, Center and Department (and the college...) dynamics
- I am thankful for the faculty that brought me to the field and to their labs
- Initial mentoring from Faculty and Assoc. Center Director was critical
- I should have bought that house in the Roads... and IODP (timing matters)

1.5 An institutional point-of-view

- Summers are critical for both research activities and student success
- Successful summers are planned in advance
- How are investments in start-up funding and other support measured
- ROI, includes student success (graduation, publications, next positions, etc.)
- Summer instruction is as important as Fall and Spring
- Summer teaching effort can affect scholarly/research activities
- The university wants you to be successful
- Support is limited, and the economic environment is important to consider
- Never delay an effort, greet opportunities
- The Research Life cycle never stops...

2. Research Plan – in general

- Establishes you as an independent academic researcher
- What will your group, program or lab look like over time
- You are bringing this vision to your “new” university/college
- Your successes and activities provide your “unit” an image of what you you will contribute to the department and your research community
- Your future research agenda will set you up for success
- Be careful about what you propose to do and accomplish
- It's your really your path on the map of your early career, and on

2.1 Summer plans

- Avoid simple summer pitfalls
- 3 months is really shorter than you think
- Come with goals that are realistic, and follow through
- If you need structure – make it so
- How much down-time do you need to be productive?
- Institutions know that early-career faculty need help with planning at times
- Balance time off, which is needed with productive time too.
- When can you attend a writing retreat, conduct field work, etc.
- How much time is needed to write after basic research is completed
- If you write government reports – make them papers/manuscripts

2.2 Summer planning approach

- Block time – weeks not days: vacation; workshop; conference; field work; lab work...
- Choose a couple of high-priority projects/efforts
- Be flexible – stay left of “bang”, or eliminate issues on the horizon
- Hurricane Wilma example
- What how much time you volunteer – the Rene Price doctrine
- Consider strategies to avoid uncompensated work – never easy (look to mentor)
- Be careful if focusing on one specific effort/project (even books have different sections).
- Build efforts off one another, use a multiplier effect (80/20 rule)

3. Timing – long vs short-term

- What is your long term goal:
 - a) promotion?
 - b) Completing a body of work?
 - c) solving a important societal problem

- What are you short(er) term goals
 - a) funding - cycle
 - b) presentation at a critical symposium
 - c) social media profile
 - d) improving instructional methods/development

3.1 Oceanographic expedition approach

- High-risk high reward activities are not avoided
- But, they are not always sustainable
- Mix obtainable goals with high-risk
- Initially try high-risk activities at the start or end
- Make sure you will always have some results
- Equipment will break, be lost, and storms happen
- Never stop
- After an intensive effort, force some downtime to reorganize
- Priorities can change during a voyage



4. Expectations

- Your view
 - 1) it's going to be different than someone else's, it's normal
 - 2) what activities are important for your field
 - 3) expectations are different for early-career vs mid-career vs late-
- Collaboration – what to consider – and the norm today
 - 1) not treated the same by all fields
 - 2) most major efforts in advancing fields are clearly collaborative in nature
 - 3) in the past this was not always the case
- Your body of academic effort includes your summer effort

6. Funding and Support

- What do you need to be successful
- Differences between funding and support
- Seed funding can be found in all fields
- One goal - independence
- Summer funding
- Other support mechanisms – workshops, early career in particular, AIRIE (June deadline)
- Humanities and STEM
- Recent foundation projects funded at FIU
- Other groups might need additional talent
- State funding vs federal too (report issue)





Mojave – project





Mojave – Silver Lake





Mojave – Lake clay

6. Examples

- Early Career Workshops – typically funded, you apply to attend
- Research based summer schools (watch effort)
- Collaborative proposals, know when it's a good thing
- An unexpected event can create a new line of investigation/scholarship
- Summer funding from other sources: Foundations; EAGER, RAPID, etc.
- RCMI – project here at FIU
- Humanities has seed funding
- Summer teaching
- Interdisciplinary efforts – new areas – at the boundaries we learn the most
- ORAU, national labs

In closing

- ...stay tuned for Part II in the future
- This is only advice, and you need to establish your own individual approach
- However, it is advice from over 20 years of experience
- The good news, we each learn from our experiences
- When the universe is trying to tell you something listen.
- Stay positive, work through issues
- Communication is key, solve misunderstanding early on, or get a mentor to help
- 80/20 rule (consider if you are in charge of sub-part of a project – that's positive)
- Reasonable requests are often met with reasonable responses
- Give credit where credit is due – collaborate well, take the higher ground
- Good graduate students are incredible, the opposite can be true too (intervention)

What I would have told myself 20 years ago

- Those with the new toys win
- It is race
- Good collaborators can make all the difference, keep those relationships
- Communication, communication, communication
- Always have alternative plans/approach (at least 3-layers deep)
- Look to positive individuals as career role models (changes over time)
- You will need close academic friends to vent to (even at other institutions)
- Know when to walk away from a crowd
- Get as much mentoring training as possible to help with your graduate students
- Take blocks of time off when possible – academics is not a balanced life
- Most academics believe in what they are doing, consider different points-of-view

Questions



**Thank you for
Your time**

East Sea, IODP Exp. 346, near Oki Ridge